



MEWSLETTER 98

January - February 2011

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This is the Rebel that Arleen and I took to Skye a few years ago, (from Robert Fairfoull in Ayr to Mark Johnson in Benbecula) you may remember seeing the story at the time. It did pass the next couple of MoT's, but then had a few problems which it was felt were best solved by a body off renovation – one thing led to another – read all about it inside!

The Register caters for all the under 1 litre Reliant 4-wheeled vehicles plus all of their derivatives: Foxes, Rebels, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, Jimps, Asquiths, Vantiques and all other specials including the Liege.....



The Reliant Kitten Register

Rebel parts stock held by: - Adrian Hanwell

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

E-Mail info@kitreg.org.uk

Rebel alternative parts list contact: John Blagburn

E-mail: wirelessjohn@googlemail.com

Kitten alternative parts list: ****Situation vacant****. Contact the Editor to volunteer.

Fox alternative parts list contact: Duncan Bradford, 52 St. Phillips Road, Norwich, NR2 3BN.

E-Mail hidunc@ntlworld.com

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme is run for us by Phil Hallam 4, Greenhead Holding, Stevenston, Ayrshire KA20 4JX

Tempest Registrar: Martin Seymour 19 Cedar Court, Churchfields, South Woodford, London E18 2QU

E-mail mseymour@freenetname.co.uk

Mewsletter pictures – should be sent to John Pearce at Toddbury Farm, Slapton Road, Lt Billington, Beds. LU7 9BP

E-mail john@atodini.co.uk

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.

It should be noted that opinions and ideas, information and advice printed in this publication are as recommended by our readers and others, and, while believed to be accurate and correct, such information is given in good faith, and it does not necessarily have the approval of the Reliant Kitten Register, and cannot be guaranteed by either the Editor, or the Reliant Kitten Register. Owners must satisfy themselves as to the suitability of any suggestions made within these pages, as no responsibility can be accepted.

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

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**SALES, SPARES, REPAIRS,
ENGINE RECONDITIONING**

Now while I wait for the better weather to enable me to get involved in making progress on old number three – which is still taxed, tested, and on the road, but not actually in use other than a twice monthly run out to keep things free and the battery alive, Mark Johnson has kindly enabled me to do an edition with more picture pages than text – yes I could have serialised it, and yes I could have pressed him for more details about how and how long etc, but I am beginning to try and focus on our 100th edition – no idea what to put in it, yet, but thinking about it – feel free to contribute. So, with thanks to Mark, who by the way is looking for the metal window lifting bracket that, with a rubber insert, attaches to the bottom of the door windows, his are in very poor condition.

Rebel Pick-Up Build

By Dr. Mark Johnson 2010

I have had my still unfinished Kitten based sports car since 1991, and have been a subscriber to the Register nearly as long (it still is not road worthy).

My sports car body once lived on a Ford 10 chassis which had long since been cannibalised for its Ford bits. I needed a chassis that would fit under the body and had a narrow track. I investigated becoming a Rebel chassis owner then, but the chassis was altogether more substantial than the kitten and the longer wheelbase was way too long for the body, in fact the body had to be lengthened by four inches to fit the shorter kitten chassis as I was not keen on shortening the chassis.



There ended my interest in Rebels for a while. Forward 15 years and I am living and working in the Outer Hebrides and driving a Rover 75 saloon, my Rover Metro having pretty much dissolved in the salt air after a fairly commendable 135,000 miles. All well and good except that my Boxer dog that practically lived in the Metro was not going to get on the back seats of my Rover! What I needed was a small estate car with a fibreglass body and a galvanised chassis. At the time Brian was selling his Rebel estate, but being a little slow off the mark it was already gone when I contacted Brian; but he knew of a saloon that was for sale and quite tidy. The seats were at least vinyl and so easily cleanable, and the body fibreglass, and so impervious to the salty Atlantic air.

I was put in touch with Robert Fairfoull from Ayr who had done quite a bit of work on the car, a Rebel saloon. It sat on Midget 13" wheels, had an 850 Robin engine, and a fairly recent red respray from it's original yellow.

Brian and Arleen kindly did all the leg work and delivered the car to Portree in Skye, which is quite a jaunt from Renfrew (thanks Brian and Arleen.) The car drove well and the larger Midget wheels made the gearing just about right for the more powerful but less revvy 850 engine. In fact it was a very usable car, and given that I work as a G.P. on an island, it was well suited to going up little tracks at night, being fairly compact and high off the ground. Given most of the roads here are still single track, it could be driven to it's potential without too much danger.

I put it through 2 further MoTs without any difficulty. But on the 3rd occasion it failed on the brakes and some minor chassis rot, so I took it off the road.

By this time I had become the custodian of my brother's MGB GT, and was using that regularly. It was even more fun on our roads, and had a hatchback. Whilst you cannot have too many cars, you can have not enough garages or time, and the MGB had taken over most of the roles of the Rebel, so I decided to take stock.

I lifted the Rebel's body off of the chassis and found that there was actually quite a lot of rust on the upper surface of the chassis. (*Always the case in my experience, Ed.*) The body was starting to look red with yellow spots as various bits of paint had peeled and one of the window frames was very poor. It was beyond economic repair.

Whilst it was not economic to repair the car, I could not bring myself to scrap it. I did not see a restored Rebel fitting back into my fleet. What I did not have was a van or pick up, and having several motorbikes to move and animal feed to collect, I looked at making a pick-up.

I discounted just cutting the top half of the rear of because the bed needs to be big enough to carry my Ariel or Velocette. That meant removing the body work behind the B posts.



Chassis in garage for repair and repainting

I just know I am going to be asked about the bike! Ed.



Now I know there are a lot of pictures, and I know they look better in colour. But one day..... Ed.



The chassis colour is red, like the body – not green like my eyes! Ed

Oh to have a workshop / garage like that, connected to the house as well, and a drive / garden that size, all that and sunshine too (you remember sunshine!) witnessed by the shadows in the outdoor pictures. Not to mention the time, enthusiasm, expertise, patience and motivation to make such progress. Aye, the green monster does need to be kept under lock and key. That said

Note the hydraulic clutch – master cylinder inside the chassis on the other side of the brake one, (which the later Rebels enjoyed (As a rule, all the 750's with one exception I know of) The hydraulic ones were always smoother on take-off, a great improvement, well, perhaps an early step towards the de-skilling of driving which has become so intrusive in “modern” vehicles in this writer’s opinion.

Mark, well done, keep up the good work. Ed.



Body being re-fitted to the refurbished chassis.





Back in the garage, and the conversion begins in earnest!



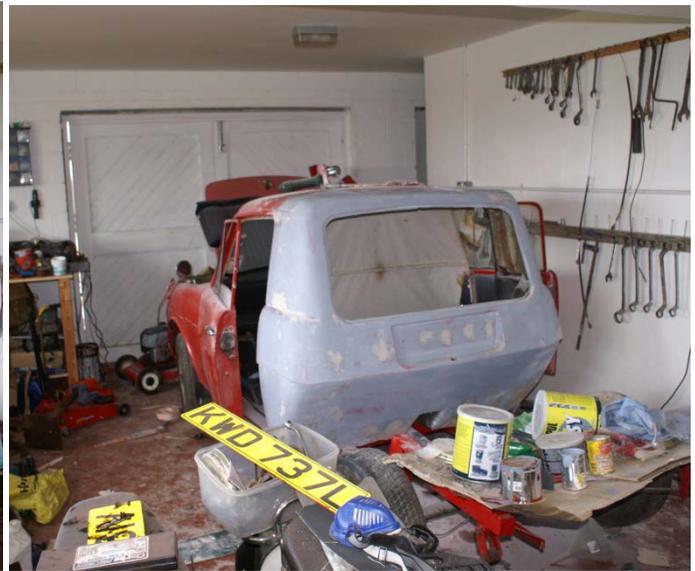
Before (previous page) and after the inverted boot lid – how neat is that?



The boot formed a perfect angle when upside down I left the number plate aperture in to give rigidity and formed the rear body shape with lots of P38 filler and fibre glass.



I then primed it and rubbed it down and then took a mould from it as it would have been very heavy. I used the mould to cast a new rear body section in red gel coat, in case the paint was ever scratched. I then removed all the parts of the buck and bonded in the new section. I took the paint down to the original grey gel coat, and made good a few old repairs with fresh mat.



The mould for the new cab rear, (above) and the resulting panel (over)

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*Oh bother – an odd corner – well, geographically speaking this is only a hundred miles away!*

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The new lightweight panel – above. Fitted to the cab - below





The body is currently sprayed red again and back on the chassis. I have a 12 gallon Rover P6 fuel tank that sits very nicely behind the body and my next big task is the rear suspension.



*Similar to our cover picture I know, and I am keen to see how he treats the wheels, as I have wheel issues with old number three to resolve. Ed*



Having made a fairly long body I need to extend the wheelbase. I considered using a Ford Sierra axle, as most of the components are attached to a sub frame, but I think on balance my best option is to use a MGB axle and make a 5 link suspension rather like the original Haynes Locost 7's. I am only looking for about a foot, so the axle should sit at the end of the chassis. I could use the original axle but I don't think that the casing is rigid enough for a 5 link system, besides which, I have a spare MGB axle.

I am sure that there are plenty of abandoned pick-up projects, even worse many derived from saveable vehicles, but I hope that I will end up with a useful vehicle that is basically still a Rebel.

Mark Johnson - Benbecula No. 205



I can hardly wait to see the finished dash! Ed.



John said 'You know what you should do?' to which I said 'no'. John replied 'Put the Reliant engine and gearbox in.' To which I said 'Off course, why did I not think of that?'

On our return from Australia at the end of January 2010 the Ruby rolling chassis was put into the garage and the body shell on blocks on the drive. The engine and gearbox was removed and stored away in the rented garage with the Tempest.

The Reliant engine and gearbox was removed from the Tempest and sat on blocks in the Ruby chassis to work out the engine mountings. The rear mounts were easy enough, the fronts took a little longer and needed more than one version, but I ended up with the engine and gearbox in the same place as the Austin 7 engine and gearbox, and the propshaft does not need changing or altering at all!

The front and rear springs were then removed to be replaced with flat springs and a sports front axle, lowering the chassis by about 5 inches. A new sports shock absorber, (friction type), is also to be fitted, which really look the business.

The next job was the body shell which needed a new floor welding in and the whole body shell rubbing down. The problem here was that the original owner covered the whole body with filler. Why I do not know but I had to knock and scrape it all off and then rub it down. This all took a long time. The shell is ready to spray now, but the floor is not welded in yet. The person who was going to weld it for me let me down, and now the weather is against us. Hopefully this will be done in the New Year with the spraying and then the shell can be married up with the chassis again.

The wings, bonnet, two doors and the spare wheel cover are already sprayed and are ready to fit.

This will leave the interior to rebuild. Seats, panelling, head lining and sliding roof. ( Is anybody in the Kitten Register good at head linings? Please contact me if you are)

All that will leave is fitting 15 inch wheels to replace the 19 inch originals.

The Reliant engine even at 40 BHP will provide four times the Austin 7 engine power. I cannot wait.... I can hear you asking 'What is going into the Tempest? Well..... (watch this space...)

Best Wishes for 2011 Dave Price No. 327 - Moreton in Marsh



Tempest Engine in the Ruby Chassis

# *Readers Letters*

I would like to thank Brian for advertising my Kitten in the magazine, I had about 8 people phone me regarding the advert. Which goes to show that members do read the mag Brian!!!!

I did end up putting it on ebay, and it has gone to a young man in the Leeds area.

One thing I did learn from the whole thing was NEVER trust your mail to the Post Office, a member phoned me from Cornwall and asked for some more photos of the car so I took more and posted them first class, - I did not receive a reply from him so I naturally thought that he had changed his mind about it, so it went onto ebay. 3 days on I had a phone call from the gentleman saying he had never received the pictures, so I sent another lot to him - this time first class and recorded delivery - it took 3 days to get to Cornwall!!

If I had known at the time I would have purchased a next day delivery envelope from the Post Office (it costs a couple of pounds for the envelope) but they are sure to arrive next day.

Why is it that one learns these things after the event?

I did not really want to sell the Kitten, but after the accident we had in July in our Micra (and the way that that car was redesigned for us) I was nervous of driving the Kitten, but I do hope that the new owner enjoys it as much as we did.

Once again Brian - thank you for your hard work for your readers.

Lyn Rodden, Preston No. 860

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And now for something completely different!

A senior citizen drove his brand new BMW Z4 convertible out of the showroom.

Taking off down the highway, he floored it to 120KPH, enjoying the wind blowing through what little hair he had left. "Amazing!" he thought as he flew down the highway, enjoying pushing the pedal to the metal even more.

Looking in his rear view mirror, he saw a police car behind him, blue lights flashing and siren blaring.

"I can get away from him, no problem!" thought the elderly nut case as he floored it to 150KPH, then 170, then 200KPH.

Suddenly, he thought? What on earth am I doing? I am too old for this nonsense! So he pulled over to the side of the road and waited for the police car to catch up.

Pulling in behind him, the police officer walked up to the driver's side of the BMW, looked at his watch and said, "Sir, my shift ends in 10 minutes, today is Friday and I'm taking off for the weekend. If you can give me a good reason why you were speeding that I've never heard before, I'll let you go."

The man, looked very seriously at the policeman, and replied,

"Years ago, my wife ran off with a policeman. I thought you were bringing her back."

"Have a good day, sir," said the policeman.

.....

Technical times

Hi Brian,

19/11/2010

I have now discovered that there is a product called Barcoat that can be used between the old and new paint to stop any reaction between the two. Fortunately I didn't have any problems myself. I have discovered however that the colour of the original paint and new is not a perfect match due to one being industrial and the other car paint, so it looks like I'll be doing some more spraying in the spring to get ready for Erddig.

Also whilst writing I remember reading in the mag fairly recently that some members are experiencing problems with the supply of tyres for the Kitten. I have just had a set of Falken tyres fitted which are made in Japan and seem quite good quality, reasonably priced and readily available.

I have also had problems with the reclining mechanism breaking on the drivers' seat. I managed to remove the broken piece (kite shaped) without stripping the upholstery and have made a new one out of steel, it looks promising that it will work but we'll see how long it lasts. The original was of cast and if the steel one doesn't last I might see if I can get a new one cast, I shall wait and see but wonder if anyone else has suffered the same problem.

That's it for now I'm sure you've got lots to do.

All the best, Malcolm (Rush) No. 352 - Whitchurch

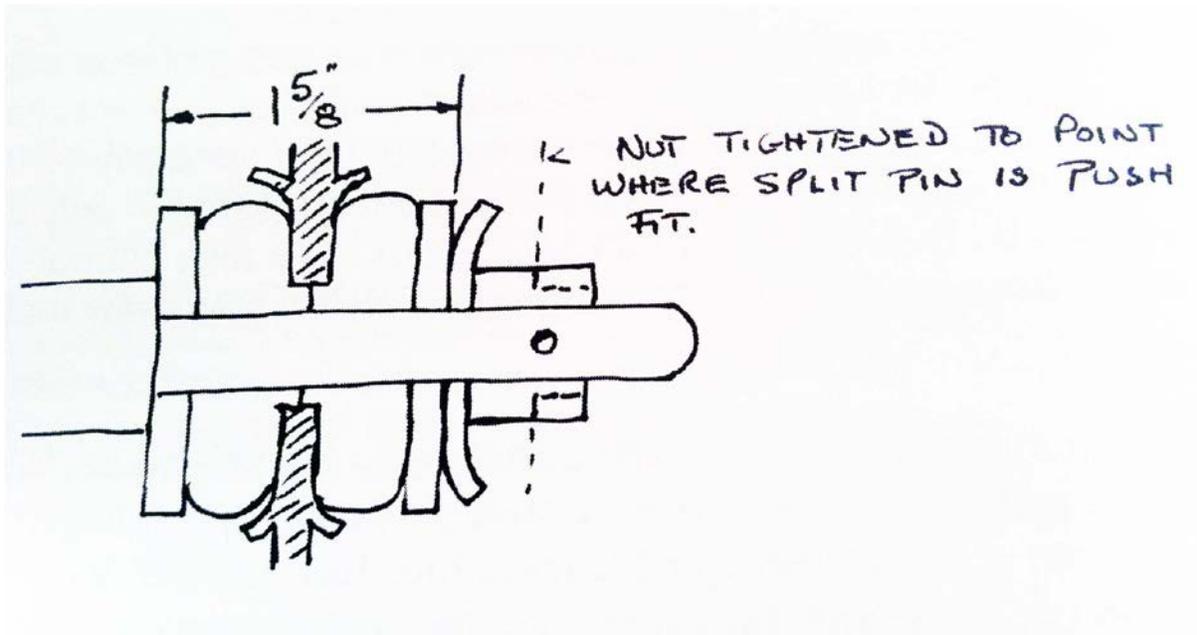
Thanks for that Malcolm, anyone who has had similar problems please get in touch, Ed.

Dear Brian,

22 - 11 - 10

Whilst fortified by excellent rhubarb pie, I fitted the poly bushes you had had Keith Gittus send to me for evaluation to the new "project".

With the lower wishbone horizontal the following sequence of assembly allowed the tie bar to slot into the wishbone without any leverage required.



Originally I thought the original plain washers were 1/8" thick, but they are 5/32" and your new additional packing washer is 1/8". This does not need to be dished. The compressed distance between the washer faces is 1 5/8".

Hope this is helpful. John (Box) No. 44 - Burton in Kendal

Following the arrival of the last edition I received a phone call from an ex RAC Patrol man who tells me that towing a disabled vehicle on an "A" frame is not a problem, and I am sure that the disconnection of the HT lead at the coil or distributor cap, or indeed the removal of the rotor arm would be a useful anti theft measure as well as satisfying the letter of the law as regards towing on an "A" frame!

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## Parts

Wow, I got a shock when re-ordering poly front suspension bushes ahead of the V.A.T. increase. The prices of some of them had shot up by 50%, so our £400 odd spend (to get a reasonable discount) did not get as many bushes as I had hoped! The good news is that we can finally offer lower wishbone bushes in poly too, (and the one on the front strut on the Kitten). Frustratingly they are not the very useful three piece ones that we enjoy for the top wishbones, but a single piece poly bush with a stainless tube. We have had a sample test fitted using just a vice, no heavy duty press required, and the poly does not bulge out in the manner that Triumph ones I have seen fitted do. The interference between the inside of the bush and the outside of the stainless tube (difficult to measure accurately when one of the materials is flexible,) is approximately 50thou, quite tight enough.

We have prided ourselves for some years past being able to offer the top bushes in poly for just a fiver a set more than the original metalastic ones, but now frustratingly the difference will be greater, especially so the bottom ones, but we can none-the-less do a full front suspension poly bush kit for a Kitten for £60 delivered, and £65 for the Fox. We also of course have anti roll bar bushes in stock in the poly material, but you knew that didn't you?

Talking of things you know, **I am constantly surprised by folk asking if I have any idea where they could possibly get things that we carry in stock! I am thinking of things like headlights, ball joints, steering racks, front dampers and front and back springs, to name a few of the common ones.**

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Sales and Wants

Stevens / Reliant CIPHER Sportscars



For sale, a unique part of motoring history. The CIPHER is a wonderful little sportscar designed by Tony Stevens. It is based on the Reliant Kitten chassis and running gear with the famous alloy 850cc engine. It has a top speed of 93 mph and runs at 44 mpg. Tony displayed his prototype CIPHER at the 1980 motor show, which received very good reviews, but it needed a huge investment to produce further cars. Tony Stevens took his design to Reliant's Manager Ritchie Spencer who agreed to take the design on as a trial. Two Reliant prototype CIPHERs were built but the project came to a stop because too much money was needed to get the design ready for production. 5 CIPHERs were built and one of these was acquired by TVR for evaluation by John Box in 1983. Peter Bird who worked with Stevens built two kits, but these were never finished.

The white/black Reliant Ciper prototype has been in the family for over 20 years now. My father had the chassis rebuilt but after that the project came to a stop. A second Ciper (green) was found and used by me for trips to the UK, Germany, and even did a Lands End to John 'O Groats rally in it in 1998. The last time the car was used was 8 years ago but by then the car was in need of some TLC, a new exhaust and some other repairs. It is a great little car to drive! It was at that time that a third Ciper was found, the red one and second Reliant prototype. This car was complete but is in need of a major rebuild. The Reliant built bodywork is better finished than the body on the green Ciper and it was thought the red Ciper would be a good spares donor. Of course this now sounds like a very stupid idea and all 3 Cipers deserve full rebuilds.

I've been a Reliant enthusiast since I was a child and my dad drove a Scimitar GTE and a GTC, soon my mother drove a Kitten and I, at one time owned 21 Reliants... from a Regal Mk6 and TW9 to a Scimitar Coupe and Scimitar Sabre. It all became too much to handle and we started to let some of the least interesting cars go over the years. But there are still too many and neither me nor my dad thinks we are able to rebuild a Ciper soon... So we've decided to try to find new owners who will be able to put the cars back on the road soon.

What is for sale :- VWK342X, White/Black Ciper, Reliant built prototype, complete but dismantled, rebuilt chassis. TKV648W, Red Ciper, Reliant build prototype, some damage to front but easy repairable, Car needs full rebuild including new windscreen but otherwise complete.

B387VOU, Green Ciper, built by Stevens, car was in good order when dry stored 8 years ago.



We prefer to sell the cars together and open to SERIOUS offers, please understand these cars are unique and need much work... Very reluctant sale :-Kind regards Thomas Touw: info@thomast.nl

Epilogue

I often receive odd things electronically, some are sad, some are funny, really many make me laugh, some just make me wonder, this definitely falls into one of those categories!

A Bad Day

There I was, sitting at the bar, staring at my drink, when a really big, trouble-making biker steps up next to me, grabs my drink, and gulps it down in one swig. "Well, whatcha gonna do about it?" he says menacingly, as I burst into tears.

"Come on, man," the biker says, "I didn't think you'd CRY. I can't stand to see a man crying."

"This is the worst day of my life," I said. "I'm a complete failure. I was late to a meeting and my boss fired me. When I went to the parking lot, I found my car had been stolen, and my insurance has lapsed. I left my wallet in the taxi I took home. I found my wife in bed with the gardener, and then my dog bit me, so I came to this bar to work up the courage to put an end to it all. I buy a drink, drop the capsule in it, and was sitting here watching the poison dissolve when you show up and drink the whole thing!! But enough about me, how's your day going?"

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Well, I had all but made up my mind that I had finished this edition by January the 10<sup>th</sup>, then realised I had not included John Box's helpful comments on the Fox tie bar poly bushes, and in particular the Les Smith / Keith Gittus additional washer, which, dished or not, clearly fills the gap most effectively, so I shrunk some of the pictures of Mark Johnson's Rebel to make room, then Dave Price sent me his "I did it My Way" update, more picture shrinking and even a couple removed, and then Alan Osborn sent me a couple of pages (thanks Al) and I decided to call a halt – grandparental duties and the extreme weather of late, together with the need to make some progress with old number three – no I have not forgotten about funding for that, a new bank account will be opened shortly. Anyway I must press on, make progress even, on a number of fronts – both cars need their MoT's before March (how did I manage to have them both due at about the same time and in the dead of winter?!?).

A bit of really good news to share with you, Frank Heil has the Cipher back on the road – the only one running in the U.K. Well done Frank. Speaking of Franks, we have had contact with our man in Chile, more next time. Oh, and Bob and Judith in Australia are fine.

Right, that's me, thanks to those who have renewed their subscription promptly, if you are not one of them, this will be the last Mewsletter you will receive until you pay your 2011 subscription.

I think it is fair to say that this edition has more pictures and less words than any previous edition, and I have just received a number of Kitten rebuild pictures, so you could be in for more of the same next time, and that would neatly take me up to number 100!

You can have an influence on that, you know what needs to be done! But please don't forget to exercise the grease gun first!!

Till next time, take care, *Brian*

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