



# MEWSLETTER 110

January-February 2013

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*We kick off this new year with a picture of Keith Gittus's excellent Tandy Fox Firecrest camper. Pictured here at the "Cars in the Park" in Lichfield last July. Keith actually bought this 1985 example at the Tamworth Heritage Festival in 2011..... It is believed to be one of the last three manufactured. Keith has carried out many jobs, both major and minor, to bring the car up to a superb standard, including upgrading to the later type "Fiesta" clutch, rewiring and re-plumbing. He now is looking for a drive away awning to make it perfect....*

*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 Tel: **01277 227708**

New Kitten / Fox / Rebel parts stock held by Brian Marshall Tel: **0141 886 6117**

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

Fox alternative parts list contact: Duncan Bradford, 6 Clabon First Close, Norwich, NR3 4HE.

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Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme is run for us by Phil Hallam 4, Greenhead Holding, Stevenston, Ayrshire KA20 4JX Tel : **01294 462089**

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Tel: **01939 261121** E-mail [tempest@eleventowns.com](mailto:tempest@eleventowns.com)

Mewsletter pictures – should be sent to John Pearce at Toddbury Farm, Slapton Road, Lt Billington, Beds. LU7 9BP Tel: **01525 758171**. E-mail [john@atodini.co.uk](mailto:john@atodini.co.uk)

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

# Dinky Cars

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A belated Happy New Year to you and yours.

I am from time to time reminded of my shortcomings, in particular I have never really embraced the internet as a serious source of much at all. However, isn't it difficult to understand catalysts? I received an email in November which made me, not for the first time, sit up and take a look at myself, and the Register, with a new perspective.

The email came from a potential subscriber, who has since joined us, Tim Hogben.

Hi Brian,

18/11/2012

The membership info etc arrived all ok thanks, I will do it asap. Just thinking about things do you keep an eye on eBay? For sale at the moment are; Kitten YFR 6R in Blackpool and Rebel ALV 415L in Diss, Norfolk.

All the best, Tim Hogben

*The answer to the ebay question was not really, so when the following email arrived from Tim, I thought for a few days, neither of the cars he mentioned were on the database, and, as you will be aware, one of the main reasons for the Register's existence is to keep track of the cars, even though some of them may only pass briefly through ebay, there is information there, and indeed if one were looking for something to do, the possibility of contact and indeed raising awareness of the Register, so,.... Whither it was the names and memories, Hogben and Diss that motivated me, I went to primary school with a boy called Hogben, and I once delivered a flat nosed pr-war Morris to Diss, after an aborted attempt when a wheel came off a trailer, I do not know, but...*

Hi Brian,

18/11/12

Just sent you two page links as a test, if you are happy with this I will send them as I see them if you don't want me to, please say so.

Tim (Berry) No. 956 from Clevedon. - **Thanks Tim, let's give it a go, Ed**

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Hi. Thanks for your reply of a few weeks ago it was very useful. I did reply at the time but for some reason it bounced back to me several times. I want to replace the rubber window seal for the rear window of my Kitten, do you know the best one? I have been looking at the sections supplied by Phoenix Trims, has anyone used one of their products or sourced the trim from elsewhere with a successful result? I do believe that the from side window rubbers can be obtained from them; which one is it?

Thanks for reading this

Derry Bowman 28/9/12

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Hi Brian,

Many thanks for that – definitely exciting news and will get postage off to you asap when they arrive – no problem about the delay, I've been fairly busy at the present so it's not been vital. Things have been a little busy with Marmaduke at the moment. I've managed to fit a pair of MGB GT seats in the kitten to replace the broken front seats, I will have to write something for the register about that – as it was ridiculously easy to fit and look the part with their 1970's styling, headrests and amazing recline mechanism. Unfortunately my kitten ones gave up the ghost from 30 odd years of hard use and the covers and foam were well on their way out anyway. I've kept them in the loft just in case someone needs spare bits – but the covers and foam and adjuster mechanism (driver side) have completely gone, so I doubt they will be of much use.

Thanks for confirmation of the brake adjuster kit – the Mewletters on the web are a fantastic resource and helped out as well, I've managed to track down a set of MPK1 brake adjusters on ebay (amazingly only £5) which arrived a week ago – so when the bushes arrive it looks like Marmaduke will have a trip to our local garage for a spot of remedial surgery! As the register doesn't have any spare - I'll keep my eye open for another set for the mutual spares as I'm sure I'm not going to be the last person after them.

Just a quick question on the Mewsletter front – we've been having problems with our post again here, I think largely caused by the succession of temporary staff we have – rather than a permanent postman we should have. The upshot is we've had a large set of mail go missing and stolen, and I suspect that our errant temps have nabbed my last Mewsletter along with all the others. I didn't want to bother you with it before as you were fairly busy, but if you have a spare copy of the last Mewsletter lying around, would it be possible to mail it down to me ? – I'll add some extra onto the parts cheque to cover this if that's ok ? Given our current post situation, it is making me wonder if you could give me an e-mail to let me know when the renewal notices are sent out – just so that I can be sure I don't miss out for next year ! Hopefully the post situation will be better then.....

Once again many thanks for all the help (apologies for the long e-mail) – and I'll try and find some time to write an article on the seats if you want it.

Best Wishes, Simon (Fitch) 939 from Leamington Spa  
(*Yes please Simon! Ed.*)

Hi Brian, Just to let you know I have just sold the Infamous Vampire Kitten LLW 132P to a couple in South Lincolnshire, and I have replaced it with a Rebel purchased from a chap in Lincoln (*John Flood, Ed.*) to replace the Kitten. It's WDO 988L it's a Rootes Rebel, in that it has a Sunbeam engine and gearbox in place of the Reliant unit, a very good conversion.

Regards, Kevin

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Dear Brian,

30/11/12

Please find enclosed my cheque for next year's Register subscription and spares contribution, together with the information sheet duly completed. I have sent the Tempest Register sheet direct to Roger..

Many thanks for another excellent Mewsletter, the photos really make it a first class publication, I am sure the Register membership will join me in saying thanks to you for your continual hard work in providing us all with a brilliant magazine.

Your memo to us about the increased membership subscriptions really helped to make my mind up which way to go as I did not know whether to have the digital version or the hard copy.

I have every Mewsletter since the start with the A4 sheets, then the first A5 magazines and now the excellent coloured versions, (except one, No. 104), and I did not want to end that with digital versions but felt guilty not doing so until I read your words about the subscription rates. So now I am happy to pay the very reasonable £20 and keep having the hard copies.

Am I an oddball keeping all the Mewsletters, does anybody else do so?

For some reason I have two Nos. 105 but no 104, has anybody got one they do not want? Or is there one still in your stock? I would be very happy to pay for it and the postage.

Before Christmas I will do an update on my Tempest and Austin 7 and email you for a future Mewsletter. John and Jackie Box called around in August 2012, and I was pleased to hear John's comments on the Reliant engine and gearbox fitted in the Austin 7. It is always pleasing to get an expert's seal of approval on how you have achieved what you set out to do.

Perhaps I am being fussy but I do not like things looking a bodge. It was also brilliant seeing John and Jackie again.

Best regards to you and yours for Christmas, not too many tipples though!

Dave Price - No. 327 from Moreton in Marsh

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Hi Brian,

30/11/2012

Oh why did I sell my Jimp? - I'm still Reliantless, but retain an interest in them. I have a Midas kit car and too many motorbikes, but look forward to your mag. So if I can stay on the mailing list I'm sure another Reliant will turn up.

Regards. Bev (Crook) No. 563 from Milton Keynes

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# Tempest News

At the time of writing the database has at least some information about 42 Tempests and Vantiques. By the time you read this I hope that number will have increased and a lot more data submitted on those already listed. If you haven't sent the details of your car yet, please spare a few minutes to do so.

John Box has advised that 2013 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the production of the first Tempest. We can't let that pass without some sort of celebration. The suggestion is that as many cars as possible come to the National Kit Car Show at Stoneleigh Park on the bank holiday 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> May. We can use the club space that will be booked for the Shropshire Alternative Car Club and perhaps have a barbecue on the Sunday evening. Put the dates in your diary.

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# Tandy Camping

**An article in which Dunc (Duncan Bradford) draws heavily on several years of sharing life with the Fox RV.**

Tandy were a company on the Isle of Wight producing camper versions of various vehicles, notably the Maestro and Transit, but their 'demountable'-style camper that slotted onto the Fox pick-up truck is the most unusual. Though it's a scurrilous rumour that it was the result of a drunken bet, I think. Based on the form of the Citroen Romahome, ie door at the back with opposed bench seats forming the bed, it makes for a very compact [some say bijou, others say cramped] base for holidaying. David Tandy and his wife had the confidence in their product to take one down to Spain on a proving trip, and they made it back with smiles on their faces.

In most layouts the bed intrudes into the front cab, resting on the seats, so must be disassembled before you can use the vehicle for anything other than lazing about. Having said that, the bijou element means that you can fill and boil a kettle and make a cuppa all without getting up, something I have often benefited from. An alternative layout, used in the prototype and the last example, and adopted by others, is to put sink and cooker on the same side so the foot of the bed, although narrower than the standard double, goes to the back door, with the [full width] head just behind the truck cab. In this way the cab seats remain available, and one of you could stay in bed while being driven to the toilet block on cold or rainy days.



***Is there a collective adjective for five Tandys sitting in a row? Ed.***



A couple of companies made drive-away awnings for the Romahome which fit the Tandy, and with use of an awning the camper really comes into its own, because then it's more a case of having the freedom of tenting but with the add-on of a proper kitchen, cupboards, and a warm insulated bedroom. These awnings fit snugly around the rear of the camper. They are also known as 'Stand Alones', which is possibly safer, as 'drive-away' implies you don't need to unhitch the awning bungees before you go off for the day. If you do forget, you'll only forget once: people keep reminding you of that day every time they see you about to leave. [As an aside: it is truly amazing just how far a bungee will stretch, and how strong those little hooks are under the camper.] Fridge and heater were among the options for the Tandy, and some have had mains sockets fitted, better lighting, and so on. As they say: The only limit is your ingenuity. Not quite true as it happens, because with only 848cc under the bonnet weight is also a pretty critical consideration. Every gramme you add has to be heaved up every incline, and adds to the pressure on the brakes down the other side.

Last year we went up the Buttertubs pass at the head of Wensleydale [lightly loaded I might add] which was fine. Only had to change down to first gear navigating the sharpest 1 in 4 bend on the way up. I'd forgotten about the down bit on the other side though, tackling a prolonged 1 in 4 with shale strewn heavily across the track by the previous day's deluge. By the time the [also-forgotten but never again] T-junction came into view at the bottom of the hill there was no chance of actually stopping. It was a fleeting choice of hit the opposing stone wall or swerve violently out into any passing innocent. Fortunately there was no-one coming, and the sheep seem to know where to avoid 'when it comes down to it', as it were.

Now it has to be said I'd realised over nearly 30 years acquaintance that in normal guise the Reliant Fox has the aerodynamics of a brick. The resistance of the accelerator pedal to producing anything more than increased noise becomes steadily more apparent over about 55 mph. Much over 70 is only gained with prolonged proximity to the floor. Cutting a slot in the carpet helps.

70 in a Fox Tandy is but a dream, I fear, unless on the downhill side of Buttertubs; but then it's more of a nightmare. Forget brick, think breezeblock. Somehow though, when you're out on a jaunt in a Tandy, you feel O.K. tootling along at a much more relaxed rate than you'd normally be happy with. Other road users tend not to get these good vibes though. Lorries especially, geared to eating up the miles at a steady 50 to fulfil their stats, don't take kindly to being slowed to 40 up an incline until they can heave past you, only to be passed with a gay wave as you make the most of

your onboard luggage weight to squeeze out 60mph down the other side. I'm sure they're really very nice understanding people though, and just have an odd way of showing it.

Overall: Know the Fox, know the Tandy. There is nothing different in principle that sets the Tandy aside as a vehicle, apart from the second battery, if it has one. This is used to run the lighting, water pump etc inside. It is simply wired in parallel with the main battery with the positive lead running through a relay, so current will only pass into the leisure battery from the other when it is charging. I've probably worded that wrongly but I think it's something involvingimps at a certain level of irateness, and it works. Look it up in a Terry Pratchett book maybe.



The camper body itself is a double-skin grp construction with foam in between, though the gap between the skins varies in different places. I don't mean that in some sort of magical geography way, but for example the roof is about 25mm thick, but the side wall much less, narrowing to about 10mm around the windows. It is strong enough to stand on the roof to take photos, though best not in socks if you polished it for the day. The Fox wings, too, are strong enough to land on when gravity dictates, unlike the

smaller Reliants. You won't scratch the paint on the camper body – it isn't paint, but gel colour. The gel-coat does go chalky, like the bloom on old paint, but it cleans up really well with scouring cream and a pair of Granny's old tights. If you have a granny, otherwise anything with a bit of texture to it. No, I shan't explain further.

The whole structure is kept in place by I think it is 8 rivets, 18 screws and quite a lot of glue on top of the cab roof. It is not difficult to transfer the camper to another Fox. OK, it's not exactly easy, but no nailbiting is involved, just hard work. Apart from removal of the tailgate and hinges the upstand around the top of the pickup tub needs grinding away to allow for seating the cubby locker lids which form the daytime seats or nighttime bed base.

The interior is lined with vinyl-faced 3-ply which seems to be held in by will-power. Nearly every other fitting is fixed to this. Fixing things to the wall skins is feasible, if you're sure you won't go through to the outside. If you chicken out and use glue, bear in mind you may need to remove or resite it. The original cupboards are held together with glue-gun 'Hot Glue'. The one over the cooker can become hot enough for the glue to return to the liquid state, with possibly hazardous consequences as the assembly, or disassembly, falls onto the flame below. Note this has to do with the heat from the cooker, and nothing to do with alcohol consumption or falling asleep. Further note: although it is a good idea to swiftly slide the window open and hurl burning items out, always try to avoid the next tent, as well as any awning your camper may be attached to!

One of the fascinating things about inheriting a pre-loved camper, or exploring someone else's, is the way peoples different ingenuities shine through as we all discover ways of fixing, holding, hanging all the little adjuncts and must-haves that make our camping lives more enjoyable. I have learnt never to remove something before I've thoroughly researched any possible use it might have, because someone obviously found it indispensable enough to take the trouble to fit it just there. Or is it in fact "Just There because that's the only position strong enough to hold it"? This of course isn't enough to stop me sticking all sorts of strange attachments all over, should I ever have to pass mine on!

Make no mistake: we are only the curators of these curios. They were passed on to us and we shall pass them on to others, hopefully in a state in which we would be happy to receive them. Whether your ownership is brief or lasting, it will be memorable.

~~~~~.

# Life with a Fox

By Duncan Bradford

No, that's not as in a Life Sentence, but more like a lifetime – 28 years and counting.

It was November 1983, and my Dad had sent me an article from the Sunday Telegraph about a new multipurpose vehicle from Reliant.

Now ever since I tried cutting the roof off my first car, a Ford Pop 100E, and constructing a plywood slot-on estate car section, I had always had a penchant for a utility / estate / open-top vehicle. Add that to years of battling with rust, and the GRP Fox seemed like my dream vehicle. Dad guessed this and offered to lend me the money to buy one!

No matter how bad the test drive would have been, I probably still would have bought it. I had already looked at a Kitten, but it seemed too cramped and flimsy. The Fox was far more spacious and adaptable, as well as being much more solidly constructed. OK it was still very noisy and the ride was definitely choppy, but it had the same first-rate chassis design – galvanised even – and the iconic Reliant engine. The decision was a cinch, so I went ahead. Up 'til then all the Foxes seemed to be painted in Champagne [the first 100 in fact were] and had hard-tops. I wanted my own built, rather than one out of the pound, so I ordered a pickup with rear cab panels and a soft tilt, in bright Bajan Blue.

That became my daily driver [I also had a Scimitar SE6a and a Herald estate which was used as a 'pool' spare car for the street and was in rapid decline] for about 15 years. And it still is, though life is now shared with a Fox estate and a Fox Tandy camper too. The Herald went the way of all rusty metal, and the Scimitar left home a couple of years ago – it just wasn't as much fun as a Fox.

The blue truck has been a good learning tool – just about every typical Reliant problem has reared its head several times over the years. Learning can be fun though. I sometimes lose sight of the fact that every marque has its flaws and weak spots, and it has to be accepted that so many of a Reliant's are as much owner-induced as built in. I'm not sure if aged 30 I'd have believed that I'd still be learning from mistakes – mine and other people's – at nearly twice that age.

It wouldn't have been half the fun though if ownership hadn't led to me meeting and swapping ideas with so many other enthusiastic people,

many, and some of the more eccentric, becoming firm friends. We are lucky in the Reliant world, in having a fund of knowledge experience and help so freely shared. The caveat to this though is to not follow blindly the first advice you hear, but to explore the logic behind it. Myths are many and memorable, so they get oft repeated. The Fox has some of its own in fact, a few of which I shall explode...

Foxes were never made by Fiat [or Renault] although Joe Public seems to think so. Foxes cannot (and never could) legally be driven on a B1 licence.

They are well over 600kg in every production variant, and it is the published MAM which counts, or GVW in the days of the Fox, so no point cutting chunks off to lower the weight!

They *do* sell rubber bands at my local filling station – but the Fox has a normal engine that uses normal lead-free.

They did not come tumbling out of a cornflake packet, though there are rumours of a brief appearance in the Tupperware catalogue of Christmas 1985.

They were not originally designed as a beach buggy. (See reference to the Cub below).

The Fox was designed for Greek company Mebea by John Crossthwaite [who *had* already designed the Caribbean Cub, a slightly beach buggy-ish holiday vehicle]. Prepared by Reliant to be assembled in Greece, it used all-Kitten parts with an open soft-top body.

When the tax-system favouring such a vehicle was changed Mebea dropped the Fox, having sold in the region of a couple of thousand, and Reliant were persuaded to beef it up a bit and launch it in the UK.

I was told that because Reliant were experiencing peaks and troughs in demand for the SS1 at the time, Fox production was a useful labour sink: “Oi! You two... Go and get a Fox chassis off the pile outside and build one up. You can use that corner over there” someone I spoke to at Tamworth remembered.

For UK production the bonnet was strengthened with flutes, the front received a spoiler, the cab roof was of GRP as were the BC posts, with roll over bars glassed in like the Scimitar. The front wishbones were tied in to an extended front cross-member. This gave a much stronger set-up than the

Kitten's and so it would cope with the stresses induced by planned use of the chassis for the Vantique and Tempest applications. Many minor changes eg seats and lamps were also augmented by the use of the new HT-E version of the 850 engine.

This engine brings its own myths in profusion. It was used in the Rialto but its different characteristics were not appreciated by the public and it gained a reputation for being poor. This was undeserved because it was misunderstood even more than Reliant engines normally were. Basically the HT-E, or yellow-top, engine has a different camshaft profile. This is designed to give more torque at a lower rpm, the trade-off being slightly less power in terms of brake horsepower. To gain greater economy too, the compression ratio was raised slightly by skimming the head [These heads are stamped with 'E'].

The more grunty engine was seen as an opportunity to raise the axle ratio of the Rialto giving quieter cruising and greater economy. Unfortunately owners expected to be able to change gears at the same speeds and the over-laboured engines suffered – especially as changes in fuel specs around this time caused pinking at the high compression. Reliant thickened the head gasket to ameliorate this but by then the engine's use in the Rialto had the thumbs down.

The HT-E continued very successfully in the Fox though, to which it is admirably matched. Having larger 12-inch wheels meant lowering the axle ratio, but the setup suits the Fox. The throttle can be floored in top at 20mph, yet it will cruise happily at 70mph. This assumes that someone hasn't fitted a different gear set in the axle – several will fit, and the 4.1:1 Fox one is popular with specials builders. It also assumes you are running the full profile tyres, as many people fit lower profiles. However the original setup yields a pretty perfect 15.8 mph per 1000 rpm in top gear. Peak overall power from the yellow-top being at about 4500 rpm, around 70mph, whereas peak power in the 'normal' [black / red top] needs another 500 rpm.

It is an unfortunate fact that the whole Fox subject seems to be swathed in reluctance on behalf of Reliant: in spite of fairly significant investment it was never advertised or much promoted and suffers from lack of development. I believe it was never a production-line candidate, being built piecemeal. Once stock had built up in Autumn of 1983, Reliant identified 100 of their larger dealers as 'Fox' dealers, sent them a champagne hard-top demonstrator and kind of waited to see if any orders came in.

Around 600 chassis were produced in the next few years. Of these about 60 became campers, thanks to Mr.Tandy. Around 25 went to Sweden to be fitted with electric power units, and quite a few became Tempests, Vantiques and Asquith Shetlands. Most were sold by the mid-eighties and production tailed off. They probably were not a profitable vehicle, and in the event of greater popularity it is doubtful if by then Reliant were in a position to expand production much. The small commercial market was rapidly moving to the unitary designs from Japan and the likes of the Bedford Rascal. Looming emissions legislation and the expectation of the public of greater degrees of sophistication, such as we are now well-used to sounded the death knell. Although when Beans took over Reliant they did a feasibility study on a modernised Fox derivative. From pictures it would quite likely have looked reminiscent of a poorly-moulded Metrocab, so it's probably fortunate that the cost put them off.

I don't need to say this to most people who know me, but quite simply I think the Fox is not only the best-kept secret of Reliant, but in so many ways the best vehicle they ever produced. Running one today is still relatively simple. There are quite a few parts specific to the Fox, but the vast majority are shared among other models and while numbers stay in use it is still economical for parts to be kept in production. The steel doorframes are a weakpoint as they succumb to rust and are tricky to repair or reproduce. Headlamps, shared with Kitten and Rialto1 models, are like hen's teeth, though I am trying to obtain supplies from India, and brake drums are unobtainable, though adaptor plates enabling Mini ones to be used are at the 'fingers crossed' stage of availability. Best of all, for a prospective purchaser, they are cheap as chips to buy and run compared with almost any other vehicle. I would say 'compared with similar vehicles' but of course there is nothing around like a Fox, apart from a second, or maybe a third...

Duncan Bradford - from Norfolk, No. 046 hidunc@ntlworld.com

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***Duncan, the two words that are seldom enough spring to mind, though I really feel that I must add another couple – Thank you very much. Ed.***

***Just knowing that there are folk like Duncan out there who, when asked, can be relied upon to come up with the goods, or in this case a couple of articles. makes an Editor's job very easy, and I do not take it for granted, a very grateful Ed.***

## Liege page or - MORE PROPER MOTORING

Last Summer you may remember Ann and I joined other members of the Liege Car Club in a 2,000 mile return trip from Land's End to John O'Groats. It was decided this year that we would invade the Isle of Man. I have always wanted to do this trip in Julia, my Liege, so I had to convince Ann that this was an ideal holiday opportunity. It took a little doing! The 9<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> July were the dates chosen for the Island with eight Liege meeting up on the Liverpool/Douglas ferry, a ninth joining us later and all of us staying in the same hotel.

Julia is not happy on motorways, dual carriageways and larger main roads, so a lot of planning went into the route to and fro. The direct route is just over 300 miles from Modbury to Liverpool so an early decision was to take two days each way. The target for the first day up and back was South Wales and the second days were Liverpool and home. The old A38 is a very viable alternative to the M5 from Exeter right up to Highbridge and can be continued past Bristol airport and through the Avon Gorge, but we decided on 20 miles of M5 to the exit at Avonmouth and across to the Severn View Services on the M48 and thence to bypass Chepstow on to Usk and the Heads of the Valleys road to our first night at Merthyr Tydfil.

Planning was only the first stage. The weather gods then took a hand -- The day before our start it rained all day and all night with RED Met. office warnings for heavy rainfall and floods, which were still in force as we set off. That morning we had heard that the A379 towards Plymouth was flooded but not that the town of Modbury was under water (we only learned this on our return). We got out over the hills with little problem except a lot of surface water and debris washed off the fields. We decided to stick to the plan to use the more minor roads but if the conditions got worse we would return to the motorway. The hood was on all day – even I raised no objections, but we were lucky as conditions slowly improved as we got towards Wales. Unfortunately the old Severn bridge was closed (due to the weather we supposed) so we had to use the M49 and M4 and another closed road meant continuing on the M4 as far as Newport, then back to some proper motoring with unclassified and B roads before getting our first glimpse of the mountains near Abergavenny and the Heads of the Valleys road. By the time we reached Merthyr the sun was shining!

Wales provides some superb motoring and there are a variety of routes to travel north/south or vice versa. The least desirable, to us, was the M5 (which obviously is not in Wales), the route up the Welsh border is a great favourite and is suitable for a caravan i.e. Wye Valley, Monmouth,



Hereford and Shrewsbury. Last year on Le Jog we went a little further west up through Builth Wells and Welshpool to Queensferry. This year I decided to go even further West via Brecon, the outskirts of Aberystwyth and Queensferry via the Brecon Beacons, the Cambrian mountains and Snowdonia National Park. This included over 50 miles of unclassified and B roads, but the entire journey from Merthyr to Queensferry was quiet roads, sunshine and mountains. We crossed the Mersey via the Birkenhead tunnel and fairly easily found our Travel Lodge on the Liverpool ring road.

The journey back was on a different route, a little further to the East – again mountains and sunshine and very little traffic. We were staying just outside Monmouth so decided to go via Hay on Wye (an old favourite of ours with all its book shops) and then the lovely minor road over the Gospel Pass, by Hay Bluff and Llanthony Abbey to Abergavenny and the old A40 to Raglan.

The next morning started with a tour of Monmouth to get some petrol and say hello to Charles Rolls, of Rolls Royce fame who was born nearby, whose statue is in the main square and then down the lovely Wye Valley. The river was still quite high and the water very muddy. Unfortunately the Severn Bridge was still closed so a detour westwards, to cross the New Severn Bridge, was necessary and then on to the A38 home.

But what about the Isle of Man? I would recommend this as a holiday destination for those who have not been before and I believe it is even better with a proper motor car or maybe a motor bike, but if this is not possible they still provide various forms of vintage public transport – horse drawn trams, electric railway, mountain railway and steam trains. We met our fellow Liege owners on the catamaran ferry. The weather started wet that morning but gradually improved during the crossing and the sun was shining when we docked. After booking into the Hotel, we all met up to explore the coast near Douglas and its Marine Parade – wonderful scenery and some great photo opportunities. Then back to our hotel via the Crosby Arms (the attraction was the pre-war Manx Norton which was exhibited in the bar!) and then a short section off-road to get us in the right mood.

Our arrangements were very informal. The next morning which was overcast I wanted to drive the T.T. course. It is all signed and so is easy to follow. It is just ordinary main road with few concessions to racing, a bit of padding on some of the trees and walls, and some of the curbs on the corners painted black and white, the distances are marked with mile posts and the bends etc. are marked with Aral racing signs. The fog warning lights were lit in Ramsey and sure enough we went over the mountain section

barely able to see the headlights on the front of the car. How they race bikes round that 37 mile circuit at the speed they do is incredible – even without the fog...

There was general agreement to meet up for lunch at the Laxey Wheel – reputed to be the tallest working waterwheel in Europe. The Isle of Man continued using water wheels well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a source of power for mining as they have no coal and so kept the steam engines in reserve. Ann and I spent the afternoon looking round and I was impressed by the working flat rod system for transmitting power. I had read about it but never seen it up and working before..



The late afternoon was beautifully sunny so four of us decided to do the TT circuit again. Ann, fortunately, elected to stay at the hotel! I was tail end Charlie and the others having more powerful engines, I had my work cut out to keep up! It was a great contrast from the morning and we even stopped for some photos on the mountain where the view had previously been non-existent.



The Isle of Man is well endowed with green lanes, which can legally be used by motor vehicles, but there is a weight limit that precludes most 4x4s. We hired a guide on a motor cycle to show us some of these. At 450 kg we were under the weight limit and actually drove them legally, with a licence. The guide had never taken cars before, so it was a learning experience all round, and for us quite a 'team building' exercise in the modern jargon.



During the day most of us got stuck at some time, so there was lots of pushing, shoving and towing and it was very fortunate that one member

had a folding shovel. I have carried a tow rope in Julia for 12 years and this was the first occasion it has been used 'in anger' There were some amazing tracks and mountain roads in fabulous scenery and a lot of good-hearted rivalry. At the end of the day our guide was quite impressed by the ability and agility of our little cars. I think we all had a few repairs to do that evening – the odd loose exhaust and number plate.



Those who were gluttons for punishment went out off-roading again next morning. The rest of us visited some of the beauty spots and enjoyed the scenery. We went to see the Calf of Man and watched the seals; we saw Peel and its castle and the northern-most point - The Point of Ayre (so an end-to-end again). The last morning was spent in Douglas having a ride on a horse-drawn tram and visiting the museum before a scamper to the docks to catch the ferry. The glorious weather stayed behind on the island and Liverpool greeted us with torrential rain. With the weather and rush hour traffic we failed to locate the Birkenhead Tunnel and ended up going through the Wallasey Tunnel and extended our journey with a stretch of motorway before finding our Travel Lodge near Mold – when the sun decided to reappear!!

In summary – nine days of proper (mostly open top) motoring, which considering the weather this summer was amazingly lucky. We covered almost 800 miles to and from Liverpool and something over 300 on the

Island, with relatively little on major roads and minimal traffic hold-ups. A very enjoyable trip, I think even Ann has to agree, proof that there are still proper motoring roads out there and once again all the cars survived the use (abuse) with only a few bruises. So, what next?

Mike Oakins - No. 292 from Modbury

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## **THE NAVIGATOR'S TALE** by Ann

Well I suppose I should have known. When we did the End to End in 2011 I thought I had agreed to go as navigator on the basis that this was a 'one-off'; a sort of I've always wanted to do this and you will come and map-read won't you sort of trip. So I did. All those miles in a small sports car whose hood for some reason the owner/builder only sees fit to put on for the Arctic blizzards or Tropical monsoons. But, of course, the LEJOG was a great success and overpowered by withdrawal symptoms the boys wanted more Liege miles. So the far distant Isle of Man was next on the motoring horizon, with the full assurance that off-roading (how seriously off-road please?) could be possible, legal, and a two day guided pleasure. My cup was over-flowing.

But it will be a hotel. Also we won't be driving all day every day this time (to one who views driving as a means of getting from point A to point B not a joy in itself). And you haven't been to the island before and I believe it's beautiful. Yes but what about the TT circuit - and there is a race meeting on while we are on the island, something called the Southern 100, I've looked on the internet! Then came the Machiavellian manoeuvre, but I'll need a good navigator, when he knows full well how pathetically proud I am of being one of the (relatively) small percentage of females who are competent with an O.S. map. As with most discussions of this kind a compromise was reached and we booked to join the group.

The first concession was the leisurely journey up through Wales, which I love, and the homeward one which took in Hay-on Wye with its bookshops. On the island I made the decision to opt out of a days green-laneing on the basis that Mike had enough company with the rest of the Liege group. The alternative option was my first ever wonderful massage, strolling round the grounds of the hotel, a snack lunch in the bar, and the company of a good book. What more could you ask for? I also managed to avoid one of Mike's two runs around the TT course and I think it was the faster of the two I missed – great!

The second concession was the time for some sight-seeing, and he was right, Mann is beautiful. Seals, Loaghtan sheep, horse-drawn trams, an interesting museum on the island's history and culture (Vikings but no Anglo-Saxon presence) and a stunning coast-line, plus a widely varied countryside in a delightful small island. The other delights were the good company and the lovely weather, made all the more precious because it was still dreadful on the mainland, including the downpour which greeted us when we disembarked back in Liverpool.



Was I glad I was persuaded?  
Absolutely – but just don't tell Mike!

Ann Oakins

~~~~~  
**Getting Technical**

Dear Brian,

12/12/12

Ref. Mewsletter 109. John Pearce's very useful notes don't mention that green top covers should denote an unleaded head. Heads marked "Barton" have poorly unmatched porting and need plenty of nibbling to align them with the manifolds. The last engines, with the black tops, are the best as they have the improved exhaust manifolds. If you want the very best, get one from an Angus fire pump!

In answer to Neale Shepherd's query. the Reliant fabricated exhaust manifold gave 1 bhp more than the improved iron one.

John Box. No. 044 - Burton-in-Kendal

~~~~~

## Exhausts and Tuning Things.

I write in reply to Neale Shepherd who admits he is a newby, but dear oh dear I do get amazed at the continuation of applying strange ideas that are not proved. In his item in Mews 109 he asks for some answers and poses some ideas. So some answers if I may be so bold.

First the RR mod to the inlet port in the head!! Many times I have reported in these pages that **this does nothing** to the performance with comparison to a standard manifold. So why do people continue with it?? I have done back to back tests with a standard one - no difference. Nobody can tell me how it works nor which way the mixture goes when you fit it. The mixture must change if you are increasing the efficiency/power of the engine. But which way does it change please tell me. It's a shame Keith Gittus advocated this mod in Mews 106 along with our Brian. I have shown you a mod to the inlet manifold that does work but as mine doesn't have Rebel Racing stamped about it I tend to be ignored, so be it.

Now the grinding out of the casting flash in the 'nasty' cast exhaust manifold, this is essential. I have seen up to 1/3 of the area of the aperture blocked here. But oh dear Neal you have made the gasket BIGGER than the exhaust port. You really want a smooth transition here, the same as the inlet. Having the gasket hole bigger than head/manifold hole could very well create some unwanted turbulence/hot spot. I suspect in time there will be a coke build up here and we will hopefully be back to a smooth flow.

A small follow on point here is that every time I have rebuilt an engine - head department, the initial first few miles, taking into account running in or whatever have always proved to be a disappointment. One needs to let everything settle down, get the mixture right and then let a few hundred miles pass while a degree of coke builds up and gas passages smooth out. (At least that is my theory) Then the plot starts to fly. I well remember the rebuilt engine that included my first Piper cam, we went round the block with no real change in performance except that the engine ran a lot cooler. We then found the greater efficiency of engine power was pulling so much harder on the carb. it had gone excessively rich - which was correct for increased efficiency. Back the mixture off do another 100 miles and she was starting to fly.

Further to Neale - All the headwork re threads and gaskets looks fine.

Valve springs being 'rated' they should be fitted with the closer coils to the bottom, this reduces the power to open the valve as it reduces the unsprung weight. As far as I can see, unless anyone else knows better? But I very much expect in our case it is so piffing that it's not worth the worry.

What is worth the worry is the exhaust manifold. Yes 4;2;1 is best for road torque. The 4;1 if designed with the correct lengths does give its best at whatever revs you design it for. The 750 racers when they used this engine tuned for a power boost for rushing about at 7000 revs when the factory figure for this engine is 5.500!! They then had 4 primary pipes that became one in about the area of the engine plate/gearbox. If you want your power boost at lower revs (say 6000) then it needs to be longer! Never seen one yet! In fact the final pipe needs to be only a modest 1½ inches (still in old money). So any 4;1 with a 2" final must be 'good fun' (that is technical for waste of time) I have investigated finding a 4;2;1-there isn't one to my knowledge. But there was and I have the dimensions. It was fitted to the Quaser, Reliant engined bikes some years ago. I even have pictures of it. My 'round 2 it' box for the last year has had one of these 'to be built' in it, does anyone feel they must have one? Could we get some made??

Back to tuning the Reliant 'lump' Can we please get away from this silly RR inlet manifold mod. Unless of course anyone can prove to me how it works. We must ignore the Rebel Racing story as well.

Another area of waste of money modification is unleaded heads, having run old Red top engines for over 30 years there is no issue with the heads although after 50K miles there is an exhaust valve issue.

IF we are going to the extent and work that Neale seems to be committed to, then before he rebuilt the lump he should have had the bottom end balanced, crank shaft, conrods and check piston balance (they are usually quite good) The crank needs to be done with the flywheel and the clutch in place, and done professionally (unless you really are clever and have a spare week or so.) The conrods you can do yourself with a little understanding, a Black and Decker and a loan of 'her in doors' cooking scales!

Full details of how? Please ask. This will allow 6K on occasions and staying at 5K+ with less struggle and worry.

Next modification, chuck away the mechanical fan-fit electric. Fit electronic ignition (bear in mind John P's advice in issue109).



Now some real improvements can be got by sorting out the flair into the carb from the standard air box. Another waste of time is the pancake air box, lots of noise no improvement. While you are there you can get the carb to flow up to 1 ½ size. But of course it is still 1 ¼ Mr Insurance man! Again please ask if you want to go down this route.

Finally, just to frighten a few (and perhaps show off!) I run a Standard block, well put together by the previous owner of my Kitty car, alleged with a little headwork, although the compression isn't as high as it could be. The cam is standard and it doesn't seem to need balancing i.e. top end is quite smooth. We have no mechanical fan, LUCAS RITA electronic ignition, a gas flowed carb (done well over 100K miles) Exhaust is the Reliant 4;1 with a std 1¼" pipe. I often top 75mph in third gear. I suppose the 12" wheel help a tad. One day I want to put my Piper cam in. But at the moment the lump uses hardly any oil or water, nor does it rattle, so I am loathe to fiddle.

Any one for a real 4;2;1?

Thetford Ramblings again, ALAN O. No. 295

~~~~~

## Parts Update

It has been a while since we have added any new parts to our stock of difficult to source bits. This in not because we have everything you might need to keep the car on the road, but rather because I have not been confident enough to make decisions or delegate. Feel free to help me out here.

Rubber parts, window seals in particular, is something we are asked for from time to time, and we do not have any. There are a number of reasons for that, but they may not all stand up to much scrutiny, however they have caused me to hesitate. We will talk about this in more detail another time, or feel free to talk to me about the situation.

Kitten headlights and tail lights are becoming difficult, if you know of a source please share the information. Ed.

~~~~~

## Epilogue

As you may have noticed I can just occasionally get distracted and even confused. Life's little coincidences never fail to amuse me.

I have the privilege of knowing some very interesting people, and I am well aware of how small the world is when you specialise, but the overlaps, well. I know two Bobs (actually I know several Bobs) but the two I am thinking of at the moment have some things in common. They have both been about for about a quarter of a century longer than I have, they both married young and are still with the same spouses, they have both owned Austin Sevens for over five decades, and I only put them in touch with each other last year! Well, they do live about 12,000 miles apart!

I have been a passenger in both of their cars, though in neither case an Austin – one a Riley the other a Liege.

Speaking of Liege, Mike Oakins had his at the Reliant stand at the NEC in November 2012, and he has kindly given me a write up on that, but we have devoted enough pages to the Liege in this edition, so you will need to contain yourself till next time!

Oh enough already, but can you just imagine the statisticians, Bob, a man married to the same woman for over half a century, driving an Austin seven for over half a century, does not matter which continent they live on, hmm, must prove something either about Bobs, Austin Sevens, or women who like both!

Moving on, I am once again indebted to those who have made it so easy for me to fill this edition. Not so many pictures this time, as much to make room for the text as a lack of pictures. The cost implications of as much colour as we enjoyed last time still terrify me!

I did make it over the river (Clyde) yesterday to see Bob and Gisele Flockhart, one of the Austin Seven couples I was talking about (Don't worry Bob and Judith, you are quite safe!).

Well, it will be Christmas next week, I am getting on with this whilst waiting for some crucial magazines arriving to let me get on with another job, so, the possibility of tying this edition up before the New Year has arisen, would I be so brave? (my beloved proof reader will not return to these shores till the 28<sup>th</sup>, (of December) and we have our two grandchildren overnight to welcome in the New Year, so if I do go without her casting an eye over it, please forgive all the mistakes!)

As you will have read in Roger's Tempestuous page, 2013 will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Tempest Cars, I do have a suitable potential cover picture (with three Tempests in it, can you beat that? If so, please get in touch quickly).

I resisted the temptation at the time to comment on and thank the numerous individuals whose comments were printed near the beginning of this edition. Mainly from renewal notices, but some, as you may have gathered from the way they seemed to be part of an on-going conversation, from emails. At the time of writing only about 35% of those who are due to renew their subscriptions have done so, so obviously those comments from renewal notices are not as comprehensive as they would be had I not been so well ahead – more next time I am sure.

My thanks to those concerned for both the promptness of your reply and the kind comments. As ever your attitude, kind words and continued support spurs me on.

Well, I have, again, moved the feature on Jim Lambert's Kitten pick-up to the next edition, sorry Jim.

With hindsight I could have wittered on a bit less and squeezed it in, but, one can only change one's mind so often before it starts to get a bit muddled – what do you mean it's muddled already!?!)

I just realised when making up the 2013 spreadsheet, that November 2012 is the first month I can remember when we did not have any new subscribers! Is this the beginning of the end?!?)

I had a quick look back over the past decade, and no, there has never been a month in which we did not sign up someone new - oh well, watch this space! There were five in September, and two in October and two in December, and if I spent less time gathering statistics and more time doing useful things we might be better served!

That said Les and Moyra Cruickshank are leaving us. Moyra is membership number 096, which will leave just ten of the first 100 subscribers from over two decades ago still with us. Les still has the Kitten, and does still plan to put it back on the road, one of those days, but he has retired now, (*no more public holidays for you then Les!*) and is cutting down on clubs and similar commitments, he is very involved in the Triumph club and has a very clean Triumph 2000, but we don't want to talk about that! Thanks for letting us know the situation Les, and I hope that Moyra's health improves.

I realise that it has been a while since I "burst into song" so to speak. I did spend some time during Moira's absence in December, catching up on some T.V. viewing, in particular the BBC Prom Concerts. (Moira is not a huge fan). The Ivor Novello one I particularly enjoyed, it was, as most of those BBC organised programmes are, very well presented. I have always had a fondness for songs, with lyrics, which start and end with the band or orchestra playing on their own, "Chattanooga Choo Choo" and "My Dearest Dear" from "The Dancing Years" being two of the best examples that spring to mind, quite different styles of music, but both excellent examples of the type of arrangement of which I am so fond.

Right, relax, end of page fast approaching, till next time take care. In the hope of saving space on the supplementary sheet, I will take this opportunity to tell you that this will be the last edition you will be getting until you renew your subscription, and, if I am organised, your 2013 membership card will be enclosed if I am aware that you have done so already.

Please do not forget to lubricate things moveable, particularly in this weather, they could be doing with a bit if help. Ed.

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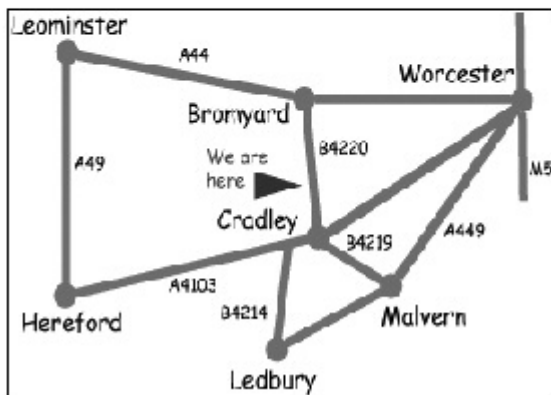
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