

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



Newsletter 121



November - December 2014



When did you last see FOUR Kitten vans together? This picture, taken at this year's Tamworth gathering, Shows, (L-R) Steve Casey, Adam Turpin, Azzy Hemsley and Tony Weise with their respective chariots..... In total there were 8 Kittens in attendance along with two Rebels and four Foxes.

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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.....



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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.

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

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Hello again, and welcome to an unusual seasonal edition of your favorite bedtime reading.

Unusual, because it is October as I type, only a month till this wants to be at the printers, and for the first time this year, indeed possibly in over a year, there are no articles or stories from you already in here! I had forgotten what a blank canvas looked like!!

That said, I do have a number of emails, several with pictures attached, from which I could, and may well do so, harvest sufficient to half fill this shorter than usual edition.

Shorter than usual because, while well below the 100g weight limit for a second class stamp, I have been really concerned with the last few editions now that we always have a supplementary sheet, and this time, a renewal notice, I will once again be having to compress the packed magazines for days before posting them, to be close to confident that we will scrape through the thickness limit for a second class stamp!

Now something I think I forgot to mention before, we had a visit from Jim Spence the other month. Jim has been living abroad for a number of years, but is now back in the U.K. You may remember Jim, he created, the Fiat twin cam powered Kitten, and later the Vauxhall Carlton powered Rebel – I won't say how many years ago that was!

Jim, it was great to see you again and catch up, hopefully it won't be so long till we see you again.

We have only had one response that I am aware of regarding a new batch of Fox windscreens, and fuel tanks are currently only available on special order with a lead time of rather longer than you might wish were you to need one urgently – should we put one, or two into stock? I certainly do not have room to do that (he said having just moved the one good secondhand one (fuel tank) I have had in the lock-up for years, back in September.)

Other things preying on my mind, the matter of electronic magazines. One reader contacted me after reading the last edition, in which I had been expressing my need to delegate more, suggesting that we might offer the mag in electronic form and so reduce my workload at least as regards packing envelopes 6 times a year. Well, that took my breath away. I am well aware of how boring it can be to read the same thing over and over again, perhaps I have erred the other way in this instance? I really felt that I had nagged / coaxed / cajoled you enough last year about the benefits of electronic mailing, but, so far, less than 10% of our readers take the Mews that way. It is however a facility we offer (really good for the pictures, Phil's old Rebel, the one that Goran in Switzerland has now, was the right colour in the electronic version!)

So, if you would like to take the Mews electronically, or indeed even see a sample to evaluate it, just let me know. My thanks to those who already do, it does help reduce my workload as well as helping to keep costs down. Ed.

One thing I ought to say is both “Thank You” and sorry for not pushing it more within these pages, but Malcolm Rush’s efforts on our behalf to again organise a get-to-gether, this time with the focus on the 40th birthday of the Kitten, are much appreciated. This is something I am very much in favour of. Perhaps you will see more on that further on.

There is, still on the Kitten’s 40th front, the London to Brighton run being organised by Geoff Payne in conjunction with the Reliant Owners Club as an 80th anniversary of Reliant occasion, as well as the Kitten’s 40th, leaving from Greenwich (allow spare hours there if you can, the museum there is truly fascinating) next June, Sunday the 28th I believe, ending up with the ROC’s Southern Area Rally should you so wish. Geoff can be contacted, preferably by email at :- Geoff@35reliant.co.uk or, if you must, after 7:00pm, on 07590825730. I understand that you need to book well in advance for this if you want the goodies that are soon to be made to mark the occasion, registration is £10 per car. Commemorative plaques (which I understand, the pattern maker is already working on) and other item(s) will be included in the pack. Please register your interest with Geoff directly for this event.

Right, moving on from my shortcomings, as the year end approaches I feel it is a good time to reflect and re-assess what we are doing and where we are going. Now that I have stepped back a bit on other fronts I actually have – a little – time to think. The lock-up clearing has made visible progress over the summer, though much remains to be done, then of course there is the matter of the loft contents yet to be addressed! (I will perhaps progress a bit with that over the winter months).

On the Kitten Register front I am feeling much more positive than I was a year ago, crunch time is still a year away, (when I have to decide what to do regarding our 5 year subscriptions), watch this space.

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Right, in the absence of any Rebel related articles this time I'm going to use this page to seek guidance on Fox, and come to that, Kitten back dampers. Duncan has been gently trying to coax me in the direction of having some specials made up. To be fair, he is planning having some made, and wondered if we would like to help make up a bigger batch, with the possible cost benefits being shared.

This obviously has both cost and storage implications, which I am confident can be resolved, it's the technical bit that bothers me! So, do you have anything to contribute that might help us to reach an appropriate decision? Please.

Here is a summary of Duncan's thinking :-

Researching rear dampers (Mini front dampers, all seem to be within a centimetre or so of 12".) However, apparently Reliant did 13" ones for the back of the vans. When I took off the Tandy ones [purchased from Partsworld 4 years ago] they actually were 13" ones, but the new springs had them less than 1" from their limit, standing unladen. I rang to see if there were longer ones available, there weren't, but, they said the damper should ideally be about a third of the way down from fully extended when at rest, so they would suggest moving the range upwards by about 2 inches. In the 200 miles I've done since, apart from literally walk-speed over the numerous speed-bumps [otherwise I hear a clunk], I have not had an issue with the little travel left in mine, on country and city roads. 2" sounds fine to me.

I have to say, as the camper rides at least 2" higher on its new springs than it did, this all makes sense to me.

Ride height is taking some getting used to: there is an odd body roll, due to the higher centre of gravity. Before, the springs being so 'bottomy' it just heeled well over on corners, but gradually and predictably. Now it is much more bouncy and seems to roll in a much more lively fashion. Maybe stiffer dampers would be good, though the fitted ones are as new, and compare favourably with others in the stiffness stakes. Adjustables then?

I must assume that all new springs will need longer dampers - the springs don't seem to be 'settling'.

Kittens

Dear Brian,

19th September 2014

I've been meaning to write with an update on the Kitten van for ages, I've just realised it was last December when I last wrote - where does the time go? Anyway, I hope everything is ok with you and yours, at least you now know you'll remain part of the UK so you can enjoy your future trips 'down south' without being stopped at the border!

I was about to write after receiving issue 119 of the wonderful Mewsletter, then 120 suddenly arrived - I know you can never have too much of a good thing but you were certainly quick off the mark there! *(Just selfishly getting the ad for my bits out before I headed south, and because I just knew that with my trip south, and the arrival of grandson Mk. III, there would be little time in October! Ed.)*

Anyway - the Kitten van! WON 580T I'm pleased to say passed the MOT first time back in April, and has done a few miles going to shows, and general running around over the summer. I gave it a full service (yes, I remembered the ball joints!) and it was whilst I was checking the tappets I found the reason why everyone said it was a very quiet runner - they were set at virtually no gap! I've reset them to 6 thou' so it now rattles like all the others when it's warm! After running it for a short while I decided to buy a spare distributor and fit it with a Lumenition electronic ignition setup, but when I stripped it down I found the bob weights in the base were seized solid, not with rust but with grease that'd gone hard! After dosing them with WD40 (other freeing agents are available!) they worked a treat, so I was able to put the 'new' distributor on the car, and rebuild the original one to carry round as a spare, 'just in case'! Having no points I wasn't sure how to do the static timing for the electronic dizzy, so I just put it in roughly the same orientation as the original one, and it fired up straight away! Once it was running I used the Gunson timing light to set it to 10 degrees BTDC, and then tweaked it again after a road test.

I spent quite a bit of time doing the interior, it was OK when I bought it, but there was certainly room for improvement! I think I mentioned previously someone had fitted the wrong speedo at some point in it's life, so it was only showing 80% of the actual speed, not good

with so many traffic cameras around but I managed to find a nice '940 turns' one that I've since checked against a GPS speedometer and it is spot on. I don't know the origin of the gearbox that's fitted to my Kitten. so I don't know the ratio of the speedo drive in it, but it works well now, and that's good enough for me!

Whilst working on the dashboard I also fitted a matching dual instrument (so both have the **R** logo on them now) and a little electronic device that provides a constant 10 volt supply for the fuel and temperature gauges; both are rock steady in use now. I've also fitted a couple of TIM 52mm gauges in the centre of the dash; a rev counter and a capillary thermometer, the sender unit for the latter being plumbed into one of the heater hoses. I fitted an 82 degree thermostat and, in normal use, that's exactly where the needle sits, at 82 degrees, though it does climb to 88 or so in traffic, I'm very happy with that though.

Other work on the dashboard included sourcing and fitting all new switches, except the hazard flasher one, which I couldn't find, but that shouldn't have been used much anyway (!) - working up behind the dash meant getting into some interesting positions, but I did this before final fitting of the new seats so I was able to put my legs in the back of the van and wriggle around in the footwell - I was certainly glad when that bit was finished! Whilst replacing the switches I decided to replace the dual action wash/wipe one with two separate switches so I can now squirt the screen before wiping it - the washer switch (same size as the Kitten switches) was originally fitted to Gilbern Invaders and Austin Maxis. At this stage I decided to leave the ignition switch and wiper stalk until later as they were easy to replace, and as it turned out that was a smart move (a rare occasion for me!) because I found it was difficult to turn the right indicators on with my knees up behind the wheel. Fortunately Adam Turpin (of this parish) came up with a great suggestion which was to fit an indicator stalk from a Land Rover Series III, all the controls are the same but the stalk is cranked upwards so doesn't go below horizontal when indicating right - a perfect solution! The front of the cab was completed by painting the floor and then covering it with adhesive backed neoprene sheet and rubber mats - no carpets to get soggy in this one if it leaks. I then treated it to some goodies; a steering wheel, gear knob and gear lever gaiter - all original and unused.

The rear of the van had lost its wooden floor some time ago but

the front mounting brackets were still in place so a new floor was cut from two pieces of MDF sheet and screwed in place, I also fitted a low height bulkhead to complete the scene (this became useful for mounting the jack, wheelbrace and fire extinguisher on). The state of the wiring was no better than that in the front, at some point in the past the van had been fitted with a towbar and some of the wiring remained - not a pretty sight with wires just wrapped around each other, so that was all put right which just left one electrical job to do - replace the front indicators (a previous owner had fitted round Mini ones). These, as we all know, aren't easy to source, especially in good condition, so after a while I decided to buy 2 new lenses and make my own backing plates from cast black nylon sheet, onto which I screwed a festoon bulb holder, made some reflectors and used screwed fittings for the power and earth to pass through the backing plate so no holes were required for cables to go through. All the screws are stainless so hopefully they'll last a long time.

Since putting the Kitten on the road it's been to a few local shows plus the Classic Van and Pickup Show down at Gaydon and the Tamworth Heritage Weekend last week, where it 'met' 3 of its brothers - 4 Kitten vans in one place was quite a sight!



I'm also pleased to say the van was featured in the August issue of Classic Van and Pickup, which was rather appropriate as it was that magazine that got me interested in Kitten vans in the first place! So, that's it, Kitten finished and on the road, and nothing to do this winter? Errrrmm, not quite! I've heard it said that you can never have enough Reliants, so I've decided to embark on another project - it's another ebay purchase and, like the Kitten, is basically complete but is in need of finishing off. All is revealed in the attached photo! (no, not this one! Ed.)



Many thanks for all the Mewsletters, every issue is a great read which is impossible to put down until I've read it from cover to cover. There is something I've been meaning to ask for a while though, we're all proud members of the Register, but is there actually a physical register of all the vehicles, and if so is it possible to buy a copy? Some of us were talking about van chassis numbers and production dates down at Tamworth, and I just wondered if the Register might shed any light on this?

Thanks again, All the best, Tony (Wiese) No. 967 from Wakefield.

Hello Brian,

19/09/2014

I took my van to its first meet on Sunday. I went to the Tamworth Gathering. The surprise was that there were three other Kitten vans in attendance. I thought you might like to see some pictures. The "Jaffa" was also there and three Kitten estates.

On another tack, I for one would definitely support a Kitten Rally next year as suggested by Malcolm Rush. I think it's a great idea.

Best wishes, Steve Casey, No. 772 from Nuneaton.

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Brian,

October 2014

I have always wanted a Scimitar but never had the wherewithal. However in 2011 I purchased a non-running yellow Mk1 Robin which I restored to a roadworthy condition which I am still thoroughly enjoying driving. I took early retirement in 2013 and am now heavily involved in restoring my new home which was semi-derelict. Then I chanced on a blue Kitten estate parked on the side of the road and after thinking it over for a few seconds put a deposit on it. Two months later I finally got Bluebell (stablemate to Buttercup the Robin) home on the 15th August and found out what I had bought!

Originally the plan was to put it in the garage and rebuild it next summer, then my Honda started misfiring and faced with a hefty bill I decided I would rather get the Kitten on the road asap. I knew the car was rough and had been standing outdoors for some time. The front glasswork was damaged when some idiot winched it on to a transporter by a cable round the drag link... although to be fair the vendor reduced the price to compensate for the cost of the repair. I knew that the tyres were too perished and split to pass an MOT, that the windscreen wipers had been removed and the bits were in the car, the lower steering column u/j was badly worn and that the interior was rough. (There is moss growing in what is left of the carpets.) Unfortunately what was not readily apparent without a test drive and some prodding nearly ended the project there and then. The car has been literally run into the ground... it appears to have been used for shepherding, offroad, and running over the odd straggler from the flock, and there was a huge backlog of repairs.



It was frightening! The differential was worn or damaged, all the brakes were seized and the rear brake backplates were more like lace than steel, one of the bolts holding the steering arm and front brake backplate to the knuckle had been sheared off, the nearside front wheel bearing was water damaged due to there being no seal, and a steering rack gaiter had a hole in it. The alternator was missing, the speedometer didn't work, the brake lights didn't work and neither did any of the warning lights, or the hazard warning flashers. More seriously the drivers side upper wishbone had a rust hole in the web and had cracked across the top flange. The fuel pipe was almost off the pump inlet and there are no clips on the pipe between the pump and the carburettor while there is no overflow pipe from the float chamber vent. Most of the (steel) brake pipes were corroded although the main front to back pipe had been replaced with copper. On the plus side someone has fitted new engine mountings, it started, the clutch works, all the gears are there and there is remarkably little corrosion beyond surface rust mainly along the bottom of the chassis rails. Except of course for the roll over hoop; hopefully what is left of that will pass the MOT and I will repair it before next year.



When I had finished berating myself for being such a fool (!) I wrote a jobs list and a parts list and started hunting on the internet. Fortunately (?) I live near my brother who is a coded welder. I could have bought a good Golf for less than I have spent on the Kitten but he encouraged me not to give up... I know who to blame!

To date (mid-October) an alternator and wiper mechanism have been sourced and fitted and the electrics now all work. An axle has been sourced and fitted and the brakes rebuilt with all new wheel cylinders and a new parking brake cable. The broken bolt was (eventually!!!) removed from the steering arm and replaced. The wishbone was doubled and welded along the edges and also plug welded through holes drilled in the doubler plate. All the weld repairs took a couple of hours including preparation and fabricating the plates. The lower steering column has been replaced which showed that the steering column bushes also needed replacing. I found that the later Rialto instruments were fitted into a sheet of plywood glued to the dashboard with two pack adhesive. When I started to remove the switches the plywood fell apart as the glue holding the laminates had failed

(presumably due to damp) which revealed gaping holes where the later Robin/Rialto dashboard had been hacked away to accept the original, larger, Kitten instruments and switches. I was given a reasonable grey Rialto dash which I am repairing and will paint black before installing it and re-fitting the instruments. I have also discovered that the knurled nuts for Rialto instrument clamps have at least two different threads...

Externally I found a better driver's door which is still to be fitted and decided to fit 12" wheels rather than buy new tyres (2nd hand 10" mini tyres are rarer than rust free Cortinas around here) and then replace the wheels next year. After seeking advice from other owners a set of 12" x 4.5" Minilite wheels were obtained through a well known internet auction and in a separate purchase four part worn tyres at a very reasonable price. (I toyed with the idea of fitting 5-slot Wolfrace wheels, a sort of mini Scimitar, but I could only find 10" ones.) The wheels have been machined to clear the Reliant hubs and fitted with 5mm spacers and new nuts. The car instantly looks brighter, more modern and seems to have more presence: less like a skateboard! The wider tyres and correct ride height make it seem bigger while the wheels now fill the arches. It was at this stage that I discovered that the front dampers were shot. Resisting the urge to cry I started phoning around... again.



A well known Worcestershire parts supplier came up with a set of almost new Munro shocks for half the price of new ones. Now; Mr Haynes says undo the top and bottom bolts and lift out the spring

damper unit. Right. I ended up removing both lower arm bolts and driving the damper out with a big hammer and a lump of wood! At least I had good access for scraping and waxoyling! I now have all the parts needed to get the car up to MOT standard; including a new front indicator (to replace the one where nothing was left but the lens) and tail light lenses (to replace the ones which had faded to clear).

Currently I am still trying to get the driver's seat out, the frame is broken in two places and will need dismantling to be welded and of course, after standing in an inch of water for an indeterminate period of time, the frame is rusted solid to the runners. At least there is no rust in the footwells. Well you HAVE to have a sense of humour!!! The dashboard is still to be installed along with the rebuilt steering column and the steering rack will have new gaiters fitted and be refilled with oil next week. The Frankensteinian monster that is the driver's door can wait until after the MOT (it has been broken off the hinges and bolted back together with steel re-enforcing plates).

If you have read this far you have probably realised that I have spent far more than I anticipated, however I hope to have the car MOT'd soon, and will keep you informed.

My thanks to members of the Reliant Kitten Register and online forums for the help, encouragement, and advice received. I couldn't have got this far without you.

Emma (Keir) - No. 997 from Wigton

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From the Federation... by John Pearce

The AGM on the 15th October was uneventful with the committee being re-elected without changes and no new information to report above that detailed in the last newsletter, available on their website.....

This year the public address system behaved impeccably, no "Norman Collier" (for those old enough to remember this much underrated comedian) moments or interruptions from passing taxi's and similar!!

There are currently 529 clubs affiliated (up 29 on last year), 26 Museums (up 4) and 230 trade supporters represented.

On Line, There's now a Federation Facebook page, also numerous Federation videos up on You Tube. There was some debate about setting up a Federation forum, a possibility to be investigated.....

The "Young Apprentice" scheme is now running and responses thus far are extremely encouraging.

Early feedback concerning the abolition of the tax disc is far from encouraging with more than a few misgivings from committee and members alike as to how this will pan out.

It was reported that theft of Classic Cars is becoming a bit of an epidemic and member clubs are asked to encourage their flocks to take extra care to protect their prized vehicles. The Federation is promoting a "DNA" component and vehicle marking system, not, I suspect, dissimilar to the "Smart Water and Microdot" treatment I've had done to my motorcycle. My only misgiving here is that whilst such systems make parts from stolen vehicles easily identifiable, often leading to arrest and prosecution of the thieves, they likely won't get the vehicle back. Better protection and deterrent from theft appeals to me better.

Off topic for the moment, I'm aware of a number of three-wheelers having been stolen this year, all in East Anglia, including a couple from a dealer's forecourt!!! I know of none being found, hence it's likely all have been stripped for parts (or banger racing).....

A run-out in a vintage double-decker bus was arranged for the interval.....

The afternoon session consisted of a fascinating presentation on the Young Apprentice scheme, which now has government approval and some funding with two colleges fully up and running with the course and more to follow.

This was followed by a joint presentation from the Alvis Owners Club and Snap-On.

Notable classics keeping my “Flying Jaffa” company in the car park were a truly pristine Jensen FF, a Trabant (with “Fandango” wheels and a big-bore exhaust), a Wartburg, a tidy Morris 1000 - plus a couple of others.....

John Pearce

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TEMPESTS ?



I was slightly surprised that this was not hidden under the official secrets act, so I checked, and here we are. I probably ought to ask you what it is? as I am told that that has yet to be finally decided, but is lurks under a general banner of Tempest 3 I am told.

I am curious to discover just how that back wheel is to be driven, no doubt all will be revealed in the fullness of time (unless we are being teased!, but no, it is not close to April the first!!) I await with breath proverbially baited, but I shan't try to hold it!

So, answers on a postcard (or email) to the Editor please, what do you think it (they!) should be called???

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Liege page

Hello Brian at very long last,

2/9/2014

Time does fly and the Liege had been off the road for nearly ten years until June when the engine conversion was completed (not by me I must add). The end result has been very pleasing but although the Swift engine / Jimny gearbox fit very well in the car, the amount of ancillary work needed took me (and more so my pocket) quite by surprise. I think it will be ideal for trials with the fuel-injected and relatively long stroke 993cc 3 cyl engine giving a lot more torque than the old Reliant 850 but I don't feel at all happy to be honest about all the electronic bits involved. Not really progress is it? Anyway I'll find out more on the Edinburgh Trial but other owners of Suzuki powered Lieges appear to be going very well indeed. No excuse then is there? The worst bit is that we got a gold on the Edinburgh in 2000 with the old Reliant engine . . .

I saw Trefor Edwards from Ruthin a few weeks ago. You will probably remember he had a Rebel estate and after that built up a Rebel pickup with a woody body which was very neat. Trefor is suffering a little now with his chest (far too many fags in his 79 years) but keeps plodding on and was still managing to attend the model boat club regularly when I last saw him. I told him about your email and he asked me to send you his best regards.

Take care, best wishes - Gari and Do (Jones)

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Hi Brian,

20th October 2014

Every time I receive your collection of writings I am struck by the snippets of new, to me, information that I gain about Reliants.

In this case it was the fact that with some models the gearbox had a "remote" gear change mechanism. I have long considered that, the long, ex Rialto, gear lever with which our Liege is fitted, places too much load on the selectors when travelling for extended periods in third gear on bumpy roads. I had considered shortening the lever but

reach is then a problem, so maybe a remote? Clearly there is no urgency, but if at some time you could manage to let me have some detail or photos of a dissembled mechanism I may be able to copy it. Or better, maybe you will hear of such available for purchase?

I have a Vincent Club friend visiting OZ in December, so if it can be arranged at your convenience, I would appreciate an alloy rocker cover being sent to him to then accompany him here.

As for the other spares we discussed such as Kitten king-posts , these are clearly not urgent and it would probably be of greater advantage to discuss such items over time and make up a wish list of things you think I should accumulate to accompany my lonely Liege into the future.

That would seem to cover all for this time, our fond regards to yourself and all the family.

Bob and Judith. No. 457 Australia

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*And now for something completely different!*

Mike Cammack has been keeping himself really busy and on a budget, clearly he has innovative skills and great imagination, that grill surround was part of a bathtub in a previous life! He also has a really useful pair of hands, I'll let the pictures tell the story, and if you get time Mike, a few words would be great too. Ed.





I can tell you that Mike is a man of action (as you can see) rather than of words, and so I do not really have high expectations of seeing a story from him in here, we do talk on the phone from time to time, always good to hear from you Mike – feel free to prove me wrong! Ed.

So tell me, who spotted the string covered Rebel steering wheel then? (That had been hanging on my garage wall for years!) Ed.



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## Getting Technical

By Graeme Shaw, interrupted by your Editor

I did think I might head this “Getting controversial”! It all depends...

Time / timing is the thing, along with labour costs of course....

I have become aware of a rather worrying and frustrating number of gearbox failures in recent times, by chance mainly affecting Kittens. Most if not all of these can be attributed to wear, specifically wear of the bearing at the front of the primary shaft.

This has led to the suggestion that, like roll pins, this component should be changed when a clutch change is carried out.

Now, I would say that it all depends on how long you keep the car and what mileage you do.

Different driving styles affect these things dramatically too, so it is difficult to agree on a hard and fast rule, as I found out when I contacted

John to suggest we should incorporate this recommendation in the new workshop manual. He was aware, but the team helping put that together felt that no comment was needed. That said, and I quote from a pre-Kitten days Reliant manual which, when talking about the gearbox input shaft says :- “Renew the bearing if it is noisy or worn, **and it is advisable to renew the bearing if the car has done 60,000 miles since last fitting a new bearing**” These words of wisdom form a 1960’s Regal manual no less – nothing is new!!

One example was Graeme Shaw’s recent experience in September 2014. The gearbox in his daily workhorse failed (after only 270,000 miles!) Now Graeme can make a carbon thrust pad last over 150,000 miles, so he is not exactly sore on clutches, (especially when you consider that he lives in a very hilly area!) however, once he removed the gearbox from the car, what he had hoped was a failure of the needle roller bearing in the flywheel, (why do we not all have Oilite bushes in there by now?) turned out to be a much more serious gearbox failure, resulting in a number of chipped teeth! NHS dentistry not extending to cover Reliant gearboxes, Graeme had to revert to finding and fitting replacements himself, along with a new bearing of course!

Talking of timing, I had left a message telling him that I would ring him on my arrival at Michaels of Selby, and Dennis had just sat on the sill of the (Honda) Jazz while we were discussing the gearbox predicament (I have a good one in the lock-up, but I was south of Scotch Corner by the time I learnt of Graeme’s dilemma – timing) I was telling Dennis that I had left a message promising to ring Graeme about now, and we agreed that we needed an update, (Dennis had located a gearbox, belonging to the very man I was just about to leave a fuel tank with him for!) so I picked up my phone, and just as I was about to open it, it rang, it was Graeme to give me an update! As I said, it’s all in the timing!! (Which in this case saved me a phone call!)

Anyway, Graeme had found two local gearboxes, and was busy taking things to bits to get what he needed, along with a new bearing obviously!

He tells me that the vibration he had been ignoring for months has completely disappeared, clearly he has earned his Boy Scouts gearbox builder badge. (And this was his first gearbox rebuild as well – I’m just envious, I have stripped a number of gearboxes in my life, I have never put one back together!)

Well done Graeme, what I really want to know is this, will you be satisfied with an inspection the next time you are changing the clutch, or will you replace the bearing anyway?

Remember, the Kitten is Graeme's only car, well, o.k., he has two of them, but that is all he has had in over 35 years and fast approaching half a million miles between them, and I know that has no plans to change vehicle, so he will be doing another clutch or two in the next decade or so. Ed.

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### *Other controversial technical advice*

#### **Back axles** this time

I am always interested when two, or more, highly respected individuals have completely different views on a given situation, they can't all be right, surely?!

I came across this a decade or two back when Phil Green, one time Jowett employee involved with research and development, had a very different view of Javelin steering to that held by the late Duncan Laing. Duncan was one of the first three graduate apprentice engineers in the motor trade in the U.K. with Jowett in the very early 1950's. I admired both men, admittedly I knew Duncan pretty well, and only once spent any time (a few hours alone in a Javelin) with Phil. But for two well qualified and highly respected individuals with an engineering background to be unable to agree on a fairly basic technical matter, amused me greatly.

Coming closer to home – he said, diving in where angels fear to tread, (have I learned nothing?!?) the matter of to replace or not to replace the collapsible spacers on the back axle. Two of our renowned and respected Fox experts (not that this only affects Foxes) have opposite views on this, i.e. the need / wisdom in always fitting new one(s), as against just re-using the old one(s).

As one who is not an engineer, I think I can see both sides of this, it does occur to me that I should ask one who knows for a third (or fourth?) opinion, however, as they will read this and are welcome to respond, I have opted to press on – Alan, Bob and Phil please (at least!)

take note, and, if you would be so good, get back to me.

One view, strongly held, is that once the collapsible part has collapsed, as it does when you tighten things during re-assembly, (or indeed on initial assembly) it will have reached a final thickness, and in doing so effectively reduced / removed and possibility of movement in one particular plane, or direction if you prefer.

So far so good, now the tricky bit, the next time you are in there, every 100,000 or 200,000 miles or so I guess, should you fit new collapsible components? Well, one says yes you must, the other that there is no point or need to do so, as, having collapsed, they have done their job, and given that standards and tolerances in the world of bearing manufacture are pretty tight, and given that Reliant axles were, relatively speaking, mass produced, (Beans were pretty good at making these things consistently) those dimensions are not going to have changed, there being no relative movement, and so no opportunity for wear to occur. Hence no need or point in fitting a new collapsible component, as the old one will already be the correct thickness needed to do the job.

Obviously if the old one was damaged during dismantling, that is quite another matter, but hey, I just thought I'd share a controversy that I gather has been on-going on various on-line forums in recent years – he said, having no idea whatever of the timescale involved – just making generalisations and assumptions, living dangerously in other words!

Ed.

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*Ahh, an odd corner to fill! I was made aware, thank you Emma, that the white Kitten estate car BBY 969T was on the move again, for sale on ebay in October this year in Wales. Last time I looked the bidding was sitting at £521, which is,,,, (quite a lot), well, given that the car has been off the road for a year, and was laid up with a suspect head gasket issue before that, when it lived in London, well.... I don't know, is that a bargain?*

*It did remind me that I really ought to be better organised, or delegate more, the harvesting of information about the cars we represent from the internet. We lost touch with that one when it moved, as we now know, to Wales.*



## Epilogue

Seasons greetings to you and yours. Having been in something of a panic early in October about having sufficient material for this edition, suddenly I find myself out of space! To which end my apologies to Alan Osborn, his Resin Rockets ad might be shrunk!

I feel a pressing need to move on **Rear dampers**, but, if I am not mistaken (which I could be!) Duncan's Tandy back springs ride higher to some extent at least because we deliberately chose to use a thicker top leaf, and to extend the second leaf to be the same length as the top one to better support it. In other words, his experience may not be typical – Graeme, how is your Kitten behaving on its new standard 4 leaf springs?

Enough of this thinking out loud. If I am at all organised your membership renewal notice will be enclosed, please complete and return it both for the contact and to help keep the vehicle records as up to date as possible. Oh, and remember, if you would like to sample the digital version of the magazine, just drop me an email, through the website will be fine, and that will be organised.

Right, antifreeze in, brakes checked and adjusted, and do grease those ball joints, oil the Rebel trunnions and generally look after the car(s). Till next year take care. *Brian*

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