

Reliant Kitten Register

Mewsletter 129

March - April 2016



Duncan Bradford's Tandy Fox about which you can read much more inside this issue, portrayed in "rally mode" complete with its rear awning..... This picture was taken at the ROC Southern Area Rally in 2014.

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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.....



The Reliant Kitten Register

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**SALES, SPARES, REPAIRS,
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I N D E X

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Welcome once more. I would never complain about having too many articles, and perhaps I am cheating a bit in this edition, as one of the articles is from over a decade ago. But this is a special anniversary year, and I am keen to both introduce some variety, and keep my life as simple as possible at the moment, so, thanks to Fred Heath and Grant Ford, this edition is more than half way there already, and I have only this week taken the last edition to the printers (he said on the 21st of January!)

So here I am, settling into a new year, still trying to decide how and when to produce our new “membership” cards. Were I not both lazy and lacking in confidence, I would simply create a different version of the database, and exclude all the 5 year folk from one, and everyone else from the other, and produce cards with appropriate expiry dates. But what then of the 30 or so folk who have yet to renew or let me know they are not going to?? Decisions decisions, I used to be so good at making them! What happened?



Here's another shot of Duncan's tidy Tandy Camper, as featured on the front cover of this edition. (We struggled to decide which picture to use, this is the compromise, besides, I needed to fill a page!) You can read his Tandy Tale starting on page 26 of this edition, enjoy, thanks Duncan.

.....

I hope I don't regret this, but the plan is to feature Tempests next time. So, if you have one, now would be a good time to tell us about it, with a picture (or two) if possible. I try to avoid deadlines, but if all goes well, you will be reading this in March, so you can have all of April and May to get something to me, don't say I'm not good to you!

Ed.

.....

Dear Brian,

20th January 2016

After approximately 22 years I have reluctantly decided not to renew my subscription to the Kitten Register. It's not that it is no longer relevant to me, but that I have moved on to my SS1s, only to find myself with no time for some other interests. Unfortunately something had to give, so, after a lot of soul searching, I have made this decision.

Thank you for your efforts to make those wonderful little cars stay in the public's eye, and also to the contributors whose input made the magazine so interesting. I shall miss the news and views no end.

All the best for the future, Fred Heath No. 177 from Hastings.

When that arrived I felt quite sad, I have only met Fred a handful of times over the decades, sometimes we were both in Rebels, sometimes not, but the thought of losing contact with him was not a good feeling. A couple of emails were exchanged, and a compromise reached which I think suits us both very well. As a result you will be hearing from Fred a lot more this year (and I will have less typing to do! Truly a win win situation, thanks Fred.) Ed.

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## **2001 ROC IN IRELAND - A REBELS EYE VIEW**

### **PART 1 - THE ROAD TO IRELAND**

by Fred Heath

Having made all the arrangements I said farewell to Crawley and turned my attention to the journey to the Noggins campsite where I was to meet the other brave souls for the trek to Ireland. By 23.30, under a clear starlit sky, I left Crawley and took the back roads to Leatherhead and the M25 (*and another memory is stirred, I used to commute between Leatherhead and Renfrew, near Glasgow, by Rebel,- PJJ 697L – every other weekend for three months in 1980, a journey which, with a less than efficient radiator, took the better part of 11 hours each way, as cruising much beyond 45mph caused overheating! I wonder if QETC is still there? Ed.*) J9 via Betchworth and Headley. Despite being a Saturday night, and maybe the lateness of the hour, little traffic was

evident on the M25. With good driving conditions I was able to set a good 55 mph pace (good for a 700 cc Rebel that is) intended to get me to the Noggins by 06.00 without having to worry about the car or other traffic.

The M40 had far more traffic, but the greatest surprise was the road surface. The inside lane was marred by two deep and wide ruts, it was as if a very heavy vehicle had squashed the road surface down and left the centre raised. The Rebel's track was too narrow to fit the ruts and would tend to run first up one side then the other causing the car to weave across the lane. A relaxing drive it wasn't, the M40 wasn't like this last year. This unevenness continued for some miles returning at intervals throughout the length of the M40.

Of course the good weather couldn't last, at Oxford a light rain started, but as the screen has been treated with Rainex there was no need to use the wipers.

At 01.30 on Sunday I pulled over at Warwick Services, a Welcome Break establishment. It was a convenient stopping place, but a raised pedestrian walkway across the carpark with a loose curb scraped the chassis on the way in, not a good start. Of course only the teabar was open, so I made my way out. The wild life was abundant, a rat ran across in front of the car as I exited the carpark and rabbits were playing on the grass verges.

On to the M42 and M6, Keele Services beckoned, I missed out the Hilton Park Services (just north of Birmingham) since I was rather early. In the past I've had a very good breakfast there at 04.00. At Keele I thought that I had made a bad mistake, a coachload of students on tour were in, but I was able to find an empty table and order a full breakfast. Together with a pot of coffee it came to less than £6.00. I ate my meal, accompanied by piped music and surrounded by tables covered with the debris of other diners, no one to clear up until later apparently. I thanked the ladies for my meal, and went to spend a penny.

It's worth visiting Keele Services just to see the toilets, stunningly bright, clean and fresh and, of course, music to tinkle to.

Leaving the M6 at J18, I joined the A54 and arrived in the area of the Noggins campsite by 06.00. By now I was ready for a good night's

sleep, but where is the Noggins? Following the instructions to the letter, I ran up and down the road for an hour.

Having had enough of this, I pulled over to wait for some early riser to put in an appearance. About 07.00 a chap turned up, he was putting out signs for the forthcoming superbikes final at Oulton Park. This was an omen of what was to come. Although most sympathetic he could give no leads as to the Noggins, my lonely search continued.

By 08.00 I was desperate to get my head down, not only was I getting tired but the traffic was beginning to become very heavy. I went past one of the campsites I had found while searching the area, I'm sure I spotted the back end of a Robin, if it's good enough for them! Quick, turn in the road and dive into the site entrance. What did I find; not only the Robin but also a dirty yellow Regal as per Only Fools and Horses. My arrival alerted the lady in reception, when I explained about my not being able to find the Noggins all became clear, at least as clear as my by now foggy brain could grasp. Elm Cottage Caravan Park has a barn called the Noggins, and this is what all visitors should be told.

At least the weather was kind, warm and dry, as I pitched the tent near to the others and got my head down. As we were only just off the main road the wash from heavy vehicles sucked the tent one way then blew it back the other. A banshee howl in the distance rapidly became a siren wail as a motorcycle passed within ten feet of my stunned ear, the note and volume the falling away as the distance increased. Having turned over and put my head under the pillow it started again, not just one but dozens, surely they can't be running the superbike final on this bit of road. Not the organisers, but the fans were certainly doing their bit to add to the excitement.

By 10.00 it was quieter but for the heavy lorries rumbling past pushing the tent around, and this is what passes for a Sunday, no sleep today then. Got up to find Paul, Karen and Jamie taking it easy, they had overnighted. Les and Margaret were asleep, theirs was the smart red and white Robin that I'd first noticed. Apparently they had arrived at 06.00, how could I have missed seeing them on my search this morning?

I gratefully accepted a cup of tea from Paul, that cup certainly cheered. In the distance the muted drone of the racing at Oulton Park,

sounding like a disturbed bee hive, made me start to nod off, until the next motorcycle/lorry that is.

Late morning, Les, Pat and Peter Elliot arrived to see how we were doing, what a nice thought, staying to 13.30 just to pass the time of day.

As Les, Pat and Peter left, Malcome and Carole, together with the grandchildren, Daryl and Josh, arrived in their Fox, packed to capacity and roof-rack too. All doors flung wide, boys tumbling out, scooters assembled and off they went. During the afternoon many of the caravans on site were packing up and pulling out, so the boys had a chance to cause mayhem with plenty of moving targets to avoid.

From mid-afternoon the motorcycles were careering past again, Oulton Park was just a distant drone, but on the road outside the scream of the engines at full bore had to be heard to be believed. As I went to the pub that evening one passed at well over the ton.

The Shrewsbury Arms, a few hundred yards along the road, was a real find. A very good meal and a pint of the best for £7 in a quiet restaurant whose decor was all olde-world charm.

At 19.45 Gil and Marian arrived from Southampton in their Rialto van, we were certainly gathering a diverse set of wheels for the trip.

Overnight the traffic quieted but was still enough to give me a disturbed night. Monday dawned bright and clear, I made use of the excellent facilities on the site before putting the tent down, it was dry, miracles, it seems, do happen. Looking forward to a leisurely drive to Holyhead, no need to arrive before 14.00 so plenty of time.

By-passing Chester on the A55, still bright and clear, I found Malcome and Carole in the Fox dawdling along. I had to pass since I couldn't persuade the Rebel to climb the hills in top at 40 mph, I waved as I went by, the boys waved back, at least I think that's what they were doing.

As I was tailgating a lorry, with view to passing on the next hill, I caught sight of Paul and Karen's Regal on the roadside. I couldn't stop, I was past before I saw them as I was unsighted by the lorry, but I knew Malcome, Les and Gil were coming up behind.



A bright white finger beckoned me on as I swooped up the hill towards Boelwddan (try saying that after a few), the tall slender steeple of the village church was positively glowing in the sunlight. Continuing along the A55, only stopping at a roadside cafe at 11.00 for tea and an aspirin. I only said it as a joke to the lady serving, but she was most sympathetic, and produced two aspirins for my aching head. The lack of sleep was beginning to catch up with me.

Malcome and Carole turned up a little later, it seems that Paul's Regal was overheating on the hills, it was towing a trailer, but he was confident that it would make the Journey.

It seems that the roadside cafes are under threat, being hounded out of business by McDonald's and the Little Chef chain. These cafes are no threat to them but they want to deprive them of their living. I put a pound in the fighting fund, everyone has a right to a living, especially those giving a much needed service, and these cafes have been providing this service longer than either McDonald's or the Little Chef.

The A55 joins the coast East of Abergele, running alongside Colwyn Bay. After Conway a succession of road tunnels turn day into night, despite being well lit, because of the brilliance of the sunlight outside.

The A55 had been an excellent dual carriageway since Chester, only becoming a single carriageway at the Britannia Bridge that crosses to Anglesey. It continues as a dual carriageway to Holyhead displacing the old A5 as the main road in.

Of course I was too early when I called into the port, so I turned into the town. Having only gone a few yards I espied a yellow Rialto in a supermarket carpark, and swung in alongside. Steve and Stacy from Halifax had been in town for some time and were just recovering from a run-in with the usual lowlifes who gather simply to make trouble.

We stayed talking for some time, suddenly realising that we were overdue to meet with the rest of the Club at the docks, we drove round to the docks to find everyone waiting for us. Some old familiar faces, some not so well known and a few strangers, I'm sure we'll get to know each other within a few days.

We were called forward quite early and lined up for the ferry, then found we had to wait until nearly last. The tide was well in so the ferry was towering over the quay and the ramp was very steep. Having watched some others having a hard time getting up the ramp I thought that a run up in first would help. As I reached the ramp I realised that the ramp was lodged in a gully, too late to slow, down went the nose, bang went the front. I thought that I'd smashed the suspension, the grip strips on the ramp vibrated the car and created so much noise that it was impossible to tell if any damage had been done. When we were all parked up I dived under the car to discover the worst. All I found was the underseal paint scraped from the offside chassis and a minor dent on the front chassis plate; my fevered imagination causing more trouble than the reality.

Happily the crossing was smooth and uneventful although it became quite cloudy as we approached the Irish coast. The docking seemed to take forever since the ferry had to dock backwards. At 18.30 we disembarked, all the cars were lined up for an inspection by the Irish Ministry of Agriculture.

All our meat and dairy products were confiscated and cars disinfected, I lost my butter and cheese, I couldn't complain after the foot and mouth in England, I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

A police (Garda) motorcycle escort had been arranged to guide us to the Camac Valley Caravan and Camping Park. Don't stop if the lights turn red while crossing a junction was the instruction, with the motorcycles at the front, off we went into the Dublin rush-hour traffic. The first sets of traffic light controlled crossings went very well, the Garda stopping all crossing traffic if the lights changed, and the Garda from the rear (having dealt with the previous crossing) coming to the front for the next crossing.

As we got closer to the town centre the problems for the Garda multiplied since the crossings were becoming closer together. If the lights were already on red the Garda would stop, but if green would wave us on and block the other road in case the lights changed as we crossed. With 15 units rolling this became the norm as we were spreading over two junctions in some places.

The roads often had three lanes, other drivers wishing to turn left



So, Batman (me) instructs Robin, the boy wonder (son) to remove said plug and seal it proper (large wails of unprintable words abounded).

I should mention at this stage that I am no longer able to grovel at the "Reliant alter" as I am useless in a non-vertical position, I think the technical term is "well knackered"?

So I made my lad (a dedicated motorcyclist with the appropriate licence) an offer he couldn't refuse.

Kneecaps or he fixes the "Rat"! No, seriously, if he maintains the beast I will tax and insure it, and pay for all parts and expenses, all I ask in return is that he lets me have a play in it when I'm bored with my Jag, the big fun factor!

The car is his in effect, with me paying all the bills, he accepted the deal. So he removed the tank drain plug while I advised by sitting (vertically) on a beer crate, consuming a bottle of the contents of said seat and making intelligent noises. Of course, as you will know, the sweat around the drain plug then turned into a leak, we removed and resealed the plug again, the leak became a torrent!

We had of course moved the threaded insert in the tank. Now finding a tank repairer in the Manchester area was not easy, but we did, they repaired it for £25, and it of course leaked somewhere else, didn't it!

Back again after three weeks or more and we were forcibly ejected from the radiator repair company we had doing the repairs, being told to "go away", or some such wording I didn't quite catch....

A second hand tank we acquired, you guessed, it leaked too! So did its replacement.... New tank then? Numerous phone calls "Oh, we have a good second hand one here" being the common response. New tanks are not easy to come by (*I think our advertiser from Chester would beg to differ, Ed*)

So, having decided that a new tank is going to be a lot easier than continued self punishment and expense, but where to get one???

Tanks ain't easy to move about the country, are they Brian?

Kitten Newsletter, inside the back page (*Now I know I sometimes struggle to keep the mag under 100 grams, and within the appropriate thickness, and I know that, just sometimes, I can be really clever, but hiding a Kitten fuel tank inside the back cover of the mag, come on.... Ed*). Mr. Walker in Sealand, nice man that he is, was having a batch made, and his man on the spares desk would chase one up for me.

This he duly did, most successfully, and we (son and I) duly invaded his premises near Chester to collect both it, and a new sender unit. The whole lot came to £228, and was worth every penny, never mind the tour of his "Scimitar Museum".

We decided to red lead the tank and give it a coat of black enamel (well, son does) In between trying to purchase red lead (not red oxide) it seems the old stuff is verboten these days!?!

You can buy the lead powder on-line, but NOT the paint ready mixed!?! At this stage, bearing in mind the beer consumption, our minds were truly boggled! So we set about the necessary chemistry to get where we wanted.

This I can explain by the fact that "Dad" was a painter and decorator, and a fiddler of all things mechanical in the immediate post war years I grew up in my pram, watching him perform, whilst sucking old paint brushes clean (hence the brain rot?)

Tank got painted, but the job ground to a halt due to a major illness in the family, and in the meantime the weather went westwards, and afore mentioned son was doing the work outside on my drive. All covered areas and dry storage are full of motorbikes!

So, that is as far as it got, the new tank is shining brightly in the shed, awaiting time and weather to be re-fitted and the wee beastie can then be taken for a new MoT, which in the interim had of course expired.

So, she is on a SORN for now, and while we wait for some decent weather and the necessary time, we hope that we do not find a new big job in the way of seized brakes etc.

We remain living in hope just outside Manchester.

Bill Starkey No. 386 from Hyde.

# Stevens Sienna - Prototype Resto 1

## A series in “n” parts by Grant Ford

For many years I have endured a hankering for a little ‘Special’ the type made popular by the minimal machines such as the Austin Seven. The post war idea of building a racing special became very popular and I received further inspiration after meeting the master of the Austin special, Chris Gould. From his house near Worthing, Chris made fibre glass Ulster bodies over many years but, like everything, it came down to price.

Buying one completed was out of my range for sure, whilst building my own version didn’t really appeal, and would still exceed my budget.

Several years ago I met up with Tony Stevens at his home in Kent, and we visited the unit where many of the sports cars he designed and built during the 1970s and 80s were still kept.



It started with a sketch in 1976 but the yellow finish didn’t survive.

At the back of his workshop, untouched for years, was a very small two seater sports car, called the Stevens Sienna. After many years designing cars for Rootes Group, Tony decided to produce his own cars, which culminated in the Stevens Cipher range displayed at the Earls Court Motor show in 1980; the Sienna was his first prototype. In his own words Tony describes the Sienna as a car that 'neither he nor the public wanted at that time', but forty years on times have changed, and so will the car.



The red paint job adds little kerb appeal, this image taken in Steven's unit.

So, what is it exactly you may ask? Well there were close ties between the Reliant factory and Tony Stevens during the period, so, when considering the basis for his creation, a chassis from the

Tamworth based company was sourced. Heavily modified for both minimal flex and to accept the bespoke body, a Kitten chassis was prepared, which meant the excellent Reliant 850cc in line four cylinder engine could be used without much alteration. This very engine is now a popular alternative as a replacement into original Austin 7s, the reason being they share the same distant gene pool; let me explain.

When Reliant needed a four cylinder unit prior to WW2 it was the Austin 747cc side valve power plant they bought in, but when Austin decided to cease production, Reliant assembled their own version. This engine was developed over the decades and offered reliability with ease of maintenance. The 850cc version arrived in the 70's, and the combination with the Kitten chassis seemed ideal for the Stevens prototype, which would become known as the Sienna. First registered in April 1977, with the help of Simon Fitch of the Stevens-Cipher Enthusiasts Group and The Reliant Kitten Register, we established that the engine was dated to May 76; our aim is to have that unit up and running for its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Re-store and Re-age?

The seventies was no doubt a dire time for car design, the individualism of marques began to disappear and any flair or character was penned out on the drawing boards. Mass produced square boxes left the plants of Ford and Vauxhall; worst still, for a decade very few BL cars could be described as attractive. The Sienna was certainly not going to win any beauty contests and, unlike the Cipher that followed, it didn't fall into either the modern age or a bygone era. 'A squashed Morgan' were my thoughts when first viewing Stevens prototype, but minus the charm of the Malvern produced machines.

Nevertheless it intrigued me, and therefore ended up in my garage in 2014, but this time I wouldn't be chasing the 'originality' that has come with previous rebuilds I have undertaken. This time I am looking at what I feel the car could have been, whilst satisfying my desire for a light, fun, and unusual 'special'.





Interior needs a re think especially after decades of neglect

The fabric roof was not a great design, I think Tony would acknowledge that, it served a purpose, luckily one I don't require, so that can go. The windscreen then becomes somewhat redundant and everyone knows any 'special' benefits from a pair of early aero screens. The Sienna Special in my 'mind's eye' may not please the purist, but it needs to be something I can enjoy, whilst ensuring the project can always be returned to its original design; should a future owner look at that route. Many months of contemplation have passed and it is time to get started. I am sure most folk would agree that before taking the Sienna apart it would be sensible to check the health of its 850cc power plant; that would turn out to be anything but straight forward.

### Back from the Brink?

We had oil and water, but were minus two other key ingredients; a spark and fuel. The fuel tank had a drain bolt and I was treated to a face full of brown foul smelling gunge. Fresh fuel and still nothing, the

single SU was not seeing anything so we decided the pump was not working and plumped for a more direct route; syphon into tube onto carb. Plug replacement was another straight forward task until I tried to move No.1, which was seized solid; oh dear, 'Don't panic, just get a bigger bar' advised my long suffering mentor Alan, and with the biggest breaker bar and much straining it moved. Fighting all the way, it took 30 minutes to extract and whilst fully expecting the threads and maybe half the cylinder head to come out with it, the worst failed to materialise; the thread on the plug was in very poor condition but intact. Alan was now bored and wandered off to play with another plug; removing the electrode he then got me to hack saw straight down the middle.



Alan shows me the hacksaw, a spark plug trick, and it worked!

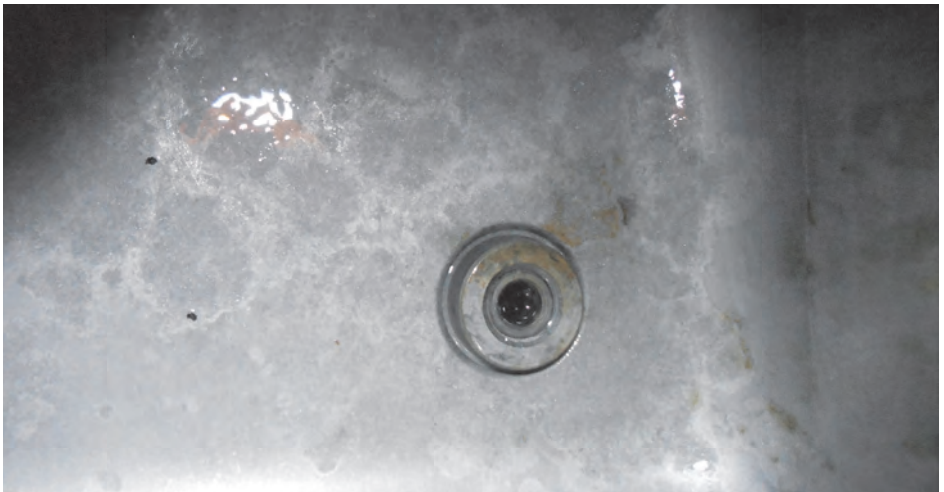
'An old boy's trick' he advised whilst cleaning the threads on the wire wheel, 'this will clear out whatever is there and a new plug should fit nicely'. The trick is slowly wind in and out, surprisingly it worked, and the tiny 850cc beast roared into life. Blocked fuel lines were traced back to the tank and once removed a look inside can only be described as

horrific.



Not the surface of Mars; leave a tank full of fuel for 20 years this happens!

We cleared the lines with earth wire from a large capacity electric cable, the tank itself would need 8 large bottles of ASDA white vinegar and a box of baking soda; one clean tank for £4.68.



Yes witchcraft! 'Rust, do you want vinegar with that?'



Alan pours in 8 bottles of white vinegar, baking soda to neutralise later.

Another method from the minds of men that always have dirty fingernails and are happiest in the garden shed; there is even a tutorial from 'Chuck' on 'You Tube'.

So, the engine ran for a few minutes before we noted the temperature gauge was climbing quicker than the rev. counter, due to a failed water pump. Switched off the motor ticked itself cool having not been run for many years (maybe decades), we are certainly on our way.

Next Instalment :- A taste of things to come.....

We undress the Sienna,



The engine is cooled by a classy classic radiator.



Time to remove the body and see just what we have,

The answer? Could be better!



and we get down to some rather rusting metal.

Cut and weld, we've been here before!!!

Grant Ford No. 1023 from Aldwick.

~~~~~

Right, an odd corner, following on with my lazy plan to delegate more, and, just ahead of the Liege page. I did, finally, get round to making one of the many long overdue phone calls the other day, and rang John Dillon.

John lives in what you might call the north of Scotland, up at Skinnerton (I am sure on a clear day he can probably see Dornoch across the water), he is well north of Inverness anyway.

John is one of just 2 Scottish resident Liege owners that I am aware of. The reason he warrants a mention here is to ask any of our Liege owning readers if they can come anywhere close to John's record of 4 broken windscreens? and his is a low mileage Liege!

Ed.

Liege Page

Hi Brian,

15th February 2016

I read the recent note about what type of grease should be used to lubricate steering and ball joints etc.

As my Liege is sometimes used off-road in very wet (and sometimes even submerged conditions) I prefer to use a grease gun to flush out the dirt but then to ensure the innards are really swimming in lubricant I top them up using axle oil, applied via a hypodermic needle stuck through the top of the rubber boot. So far the original ball-joints and track rod ends on my car remain in perfect condition after 50,000 miles plus over almost 14 years, whereas some other Liege owners have found them to have a fairly short life. The oil via a hypodermic needle trick can be used to re-lube most "sealed for (a short) life" ball joints.

Aye, there is no substitute for a good maintenance regime, Ed.

The Liege Suzuki engine conversion is still not finished, I'm sad to say. Other things have taken recent priority (too many vehicular projects here now) but we have had it running with the blower fitted, and it's been on the rolling road. The power was up almost 40% over the standard Suzuki at only 5,000 rpm and the torque increased by about 60%. However, the fueling is very uneven across the three cylinders and to progress any further I need to completely redesign the fuel injection setup. The engine was also suffering from a very high inlet air temperature and has therefore been artificially limited to 4,800 rpm. I now need to dismantle the supercharger with a view to modifying it, or change to a totally different type. I have some free time coming up over the next few weeks and I hope to get cracking to get it all running properly in time for the Liege 21st Anniversary Meet, which is at the very beginning of May.

Hope you are all keeping OK.

Best regards, Paul. (Wheatley) No. 422 from Shireoaks.

~~~~~

## Twelve Years with a Tandy.

“Hallo-oo, Duncan”. That’s how it started, this long love-affair with the Tandy Camper.

It was Brian, of course, on the phone: “See now, there’s this chap down near you in Saint Albans” [that’s only a hundred-odd miles away, but I grant you it is at least in England] “He has a Tandy Camper that he needs to pass on because he’s lost his parking place, and he needs it gone” or words to that effect, with a Scots accent.

Well, I’d never got around to considering a Tandy, but I already had a Fox Pick-up, and an Estate/Convertible, so I quite fancied the full pack.

Long story short, I contacted the guy, and arranged to meet him at the weekend where the camper was parked, behind a combined Fire and Ambulance Station.

I got there first and saw a sorry sight, covered in green algae, sitting forlorn on four flat tyres.

When the owner arrived and opened it up, I began to see the potential, and by the time he’d done, and looked at me enquiringly, I was totally hooked, and wondering if I could afford it. I knew Foxes inside out, and the camper part just seemed to need some TLC – and fumigation, and damp-proofing, oh well... “Er, how much were you thinking of?” I asked, tentatively.

“Oh I don’t want anything for it.” he said “Since I lost my job as a paramedic, and the Fire boys just use it for hose practice, I can’t really house it anywhere, and... it just needs a good home, really”

Well, after sweet-talking my boss into lending me a truck and trailer I collected it the following weekend [and no, it really wasn’t quite that simple]. I gave it a new battery, four tyres and a few brake cylinders, and it was MOT’d and on the road. There was a bit of a hiccup as I drove it off my boss’s yard towards the MOT garage; in fact I turned around and went back to check all the wheel nuts were tight. Surely it wasn’t meant to feel like driving a hovercraft?!? Nevertheless, it passed, and I kind of got used to it.



In the twelve years since, I have [mainly] enjoyed adding around 50,000 miles to its clock. I've made a few improvements to the interior, and got away without needing any major financial outlays or surgical investigations.

After ten years I fitted stiffer front and rear springs and dampers, and nowadays it doesn't pitch and yaw like a boat so much – as long as the wind is right. Wind is a bit of a bugbear to the Tandy [as are hills too, to be frank]. If the Fox is said to have the aerodynamics of a brick, then the Tandy is a big breeze-block. A moderate head wind knocks ten m.p.h. off the cruising speed, and a wind on any quarter produces unexpected effects on the steering. It's all good fun though, and it usually means cars following soon drop back to a safe distance. A happy cruising speed is generally around 50 – 55 m.p.h. Any more sees the fuel consumption drop below 35 to the gallon.

This speed gives passing cars time to study, wave, and take videos as they pass too. Everyone seems to love the Tandy. One of the first things passengers notice is the way so many people give it a grin of appreciation. It cheers people up, and always draws a crowd at shows. I go to about half a dozen Reliant Club camping weekends a year, and other shows, but everyday use includes commuting, and lending it to neighbours to pick up DIY stuff and so on. It is amazing what will fit in a Tandy, from fence panels to worktops, it certainly earns its keep.

All in all, the 'Tandy Fox RV' is an extremely unusual vehicle. Together with its integral but 'stand-alone' awning, it is probably the only fully grp campervan with a galvanised chassis that will enable two people to travel the world for a lifetime, pitching camp almost anywhere, yet it will easily fit an average parking space at a supermarket or on a driveway.

Any mobile holiday vehicle is bound to be a compromise between living space and parking space. For me the Tandy Fox strikes a good balance. It's a bit like camping in a tent, but with an proper bedroom and kitchen. OK, so it does take a few minutes to pack the bed away when you want to drive off somewhere, but that's all. There is bags of storage space in the seats-cum-lockers and in the Luton area over the cab.

David Tandy designed and built a 'demountable' campervan unit

called 'The Pony' to fit several different models of pick-up in the 1980s, in an industrial unit on the Isle of Wight, as well as fitting out the interiors of such as the Maestro van and indeed the Transit, to become camper conversions.

When Reliant launched the UK version of the Fox Pick-up, Mr. Tandy quickly saw the benefit of designing a hybrid style of camper: a permanently mounted camper section but independent of the pickup's cab. There is a clever twist to this, though, in that for most of the Tandy Fox RVs, the feet-end half of the full-width double bed is accommodated by a baseboard resting on the cab seat-backs, in their forward-tilted position. This way, with the bed made up, there is space to stand at the rear, with the cooker on one side and the sink on the other, and wash, dress, or prepare a meal. [My favourite feature though has to be the fact that I can fill the kettle, put it on, and make a cup of tea, all without getting up.]

With a prototype designed and built within a year of the Fox's debut, David Tandy and his wife completed a proving trip to Gibraltar and back, without mishap. He went on to build about fifty more, about half of which still seem to survive, and many of which are known within the Register and the ROC, and regulars at rallies.

Over the years, various owners have been quite ingenious in re-designing many of the interiors to suit their needs, from stripping it out completely to use as a big van, to building-in bunks. Weight can be an issue in such matters. The Fox itself is not as lightweight as other Reliant vehicles. It was originally commissioned, years before Reliant themselves produced it, by a Greek company, MEBEA, from John Crosthwaite. A designer who had proven experience working with the small Reliant rolling chassis. [More of him on Wikipedia.] He came at car design from the viewpoint of structural rigidity and strength more than restricted weight, and the camper adds another 200kg or so to the 600kg-plus of the Fox. Nevertheless, using lightweight materials in the construction, mainly cleverly-disguised 3-ply, I believe David Tandy succeeded in producing a practical, enduring and entertaining camper. I for one, am very glad he did. I shouldn't like to think of life without it.

Duncan (Bradford) No. 046 from Norwich.



# Getting Technical

On page 22 of the last edition, (Mews 128) Al Osborn was asking, not for the first time, in regards to the machining away of the material between the pairs of inlet ports on the inlet manifold, "Why?"

Well, I have to put my hand up here and accept at least some of the responsibility for this confusing and poorly / partially thought through modification.

I had completely misunderstood the subtlety of Dick Harvey's drilling a small hole through the wall between these ports in order to balance the – I was going to say pressure (perhaps I should, just to find out who actually reads this, and of those who do, who understands these things), but of course it is very low, indeed negative pressure, otherwise known as vacuum, that is in there when the engine is running. A difficult thing to do, creating such a small hole at nigh on right angles to the holes facing the head, a dentist's drill might be a good tool to use for that operation.

Obviously doing it my way saves weight, which must improve acceleration if not fuel economy, though I grant you not in a way you are likely to notice!

Ed.

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It must be close to a year ago that I listed all the Kitten / Fox front suspension nuts and bolts here, in an effort to both stir interest, and jog my memory. Well, things have moved on, slightly, since then.

I was buying some bits from Partsworld recently, a long time since we have done that, and it gave me an opportunity to discuss things as I suspected they had some, no doubt slow moving, bolts in stock. However I was wary, as this was no doubt very old stock, I was concerned about condition as well as price. Anyway, long story short, I bought 5 car sets of the ones they had. All were in good condition, but only some are zinc plated and they do not have nuts, so I need to move onward and organise other things before we will be in a position to be able to offer a full set of these to go with the poly bushes we stock. Something I am asked for from time to time.

Hi Brian,

14<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Whilst I fully agree that unleaded petrol is unlikely to damage the valve seat insets in the Reliant alloy head (Mewsletter 128, pages 19 to 21) it is not the full story.

When reconditioning my 700cc Rebel, which had done many miles on unleaded petrol, the valve seats were pretty good, however the valves themselves, particularly the exhaust valves, were severely pitted. I suspect that Reliant did not use the best quality material for the valves in these early engines, and at whatever stage the quality improved (*if it ever did? Ed.*) I do not know.

Personally I would still use an additive in 700cc and 750cc engines, just to protect the valves, after all the 'new' valves I fitted to the engine were probably old stock.

On another front entirely, don't be afraid to inform your insurance company of all the modifications you have carried out to your car – it could save you money! My son has an extensively modified Audi A4, and when he informed the insurance company, his premiums went down!

In the insurance companies eyes anyone who spends serious money on an old car is unlikely to drive it in a manner that risks serious damage to their car, nor are they likely to park it where others can easily damage it!

Phil (Hallam) No. 164 from Stevenston

~~~~~

Thanks for keeping us right Phil, what I really want now is to ask Alan and Graeme Shaw if they use a fuel additive? and if not, would they be prepared to take the head off a perfectly functioning (850) engine, and remove the valves to give us a report!

A big ask, and I am not seriously suggesting or recommending it. The years, and tens of thousands of miles, and remarkable engine emissions at each MoT, must tell a story.

Ed.

Epilogue

Where to begin? When Duncan sent me the Tandy tale, he was apologising, like me he has a bit of a blind spot when it comes to proof reading one's own work.

It was on one of my early morning starts that I was getting back to him, and for some unaccountable reason things seemed to rhyme a bit, let me share with you part of my reply –

I rather hate to disappoint, but sadly can't agree. It really seems just wonderful, and rather fine to me!

Oh no, rhyming replies, it must be time that flies!! (of day, I meant to say)

It was clearly much too early!

Moving swiftly on then, you will see that I have chosen to include in this edition an article that Fred Heath wrote at the time of one of his Rebel adventures. Rather sadly Fred does not use a camera. This is a more person orientated article than we normally see within these pages, and there are more sections to it. Personally I thought a new flavor would do no harm, feel free to let me know if you agree (or not!)

I am, all being well, being allowed away for longer than usual (hopefully not for a last hurra!) next month – he said in the middle of this extra long February. So I must press on, while I could live with just getting this to the printers before I head south, I would much prefer that you had it as I was leaving (so please don't phone, as I won't be back till the 25th or even 26th!)

What are you going to do now - G....

Brian

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