

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER

MEWSLETTER Number 13



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Welcome to edition number 13, I was emotionally torn apart the other day when a letter arrived from Geoff Eldridge, the man who runs the Sabre and Scimitar owners Club. He is so impressed with the Mewsletter (very flattering indeed, given the high quality of their magazine "Slice") that he is going to make the Kitten Korner or Pussy Page in that magazine a thing of the past, after recommending that all his Kitten owning members join our ranks. Now it was never my intention, or desire, to prevent others from publishing stories about our fine little cars - is this a reward for success, or some kind of punishment? I am really not sure how to react at all. Slice has something like 30 or 40 times as many readers as this publication has. Is this the feeling of success, I hope not, because it is a very mixed emotion if it is, I can tell you.

Slice brings me neatly onto another long outstanding matter - that is the name of this magazine - someone, was it Sandy Riddoch? suggested that since we are always running rings round the Scimitars at Doune, we should consider something like "The Blade", or "The Cutting Edge", or perhaps just "The Edge", I don't know, what do you think?

After what I was saying in the last edition about the problems of using the inside of the front cover to print on, I was forced to try it, owing to having a page too many in the magazine. The heavier paper used for the cover, to try and get round the problem of the ink showing through, helped to put the weight over the limit for a first class stamp. If you had any problems with the Post Office wanting extra money to deliver it, please let me know, and I will be more cautious in future.

The other problem was that with the picture being quite dark, the heat involved dried the paper out so much that some of the printing on the back of the cover was not good quality - compromise again.

So in future I will try to keep it down to 6 A4 sheets, and then, even with a heavier cover, we should be O.K. with the first class stamp. Yes I realise that it would be possible to use lighter envelopes, but one has standards to maintain. Besides, without a couple of pages of index and or drawings of some sort, not to mention the odd advert, trying to fill 12 A4 pages can be a bit much, lest of course you write to me!

Speaking of those who write to me, a couple of you will, I trust, appreciate all the time and effort I have put into making the print a little larger, and the line spacing a little greater. and modifying the borders so that you can remove the staple, punch holes, and keep the whole thing in a neat ring binder without losing any information. No I don't have suitable ring binders on offer. but that could be an option (Now who's getting above himself?) You know, the more I think about this name thing, the better I like "The Edge". I can see it now, special binders with "The Edge" neatly printed in gold lettering down the edge (well spine then). Seriously though, let me know what you think about calling the Mewsletter something.

As I suggested in the last edition. funds have been stretched by the production and distribution of an extra edition this year. so this really will be the last one before your renewal cheque falls through my letter box, mind you. should you decide to do that early - who knows what I might get up to!

One suggestion was that I stop using first class stamps, save money even. I don't know how you feel about that - they are first class little cars. and I like to think that this is a first class organisation (I hope that more people agree with that, than disagree!) - no matter, any views or opinions will be listened to and considered.

What I can tell you, and you will see on the renewal notice, is that there seems to be general support for making this a more regular thing. so it will be bi-monthly for 1997, at least till we see how it goes.

One thing which I will try to do in future is to have a better defined layout, that is to say, a specific bit on Rebels, general interest, technical part, oh, might as well have an index No. seriously, I realise that some folk are very technically inclined, while others always take the car to a garage for any work or servicing that needs done, and I value all your support, and can appreciate the comment that many of the articles are too technical for some of our readers. Equally the odd one has complained that we are not technical enough - fine, we can accommodate all needs, and make the magazine easier to find what you want in it, if I regiment myself a bit. To begin with the editorial always seems to be at the front. so I can build on that. Obviously to call part of the magazine "Reader's Letters" will include stories as well as technical topics, but I guess I could sort them into one of three categories, i.e. technical, non-technical, and mixed. What a bother, having to decide where to put an article rather than just add it on to the end. The things I do for you. I don't know, well seen it's almost Christmas - See that's the great thing about writing this, imagination, I have just sent the masters for edition 12 away to the printer, and it is the 16th of August, and here I am talking as though it is the middle of December ! Still, it probably will be by the time you read this! No wonder I get confused sometimes, when you think that I can spend over 3 months working on the one edition - Aye. whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword. Hadn't heard of word processors!

One of the many suggestions which I have not made any recent mention of, is the idea of a badge for subscribers to this organisation to flaunt, either on their cars or the mantelpiece at home, and, once again, that dreaded word compromise rears its ugly head. Really there are not enough of us wanting one to make it cost effective, (besides. I have yet to finalise the logo - perhaps we should run a competition?) So, how about this for an idea, I have managed to do a deal with a local number plate supplier to provide pairs of those wipe clean smooth plastic things, to the new European standard no less (about an eighth of an inch - 3mm - deeper than we are used to) complete with a three coloured border, black, red and blue, and THE KITTEN REGISTER, and possibly my 'phone number along the bottom edge. Complete with the shaded digits which make them look three dimensional, yours for just £15 the pair plus p&p. Let me know if you are interested, better yet just send a cheque, call it £17 delivered. and I'll even include fixings. Cheques payable to "Reliant Kitten Register" please, and I'll have them off to you within a week. Oh, wait a minute. why should I make all the decisions, the wording at the bottom of the plate can be in black, blue or red - you decide, just let me know which you want, the closest to the colour of your car perhaps? Then you will know if a Kitten is known to the Register or not when you meet it in the street. (Assuming that we all get them of course!)

Oh, yes. by the way, I didn't really mention the Doune Classic Weekend last time did I? Well we won the driving competition - again, well done John Blagburn, Peter Linfield, and myself of course - more blooming silverware to polish. Moira says that we really should try coming second in future, as the second prizes are often made of slate,

hardwood or pewter, and so need a lot less looking after! What I want to know is why first does not qualify for gold?

It was a trio of Morgans we were up against in the final this time, that last Morgan driver was really good. I had, as last car in our team, started a good 5 or 6 seconds ahead of him thanks to John and Peter's efforts, and so thought that I would be very careful not to clip any cones. I would just take my time, and what happens, by the time I was half way round, at the top of the course, he had caught up with me! Now don't get me wrong, Morgans are wonderful cars, but to gain 5 seconds on a Kitten on grass. and in less than 30 seconds, he must have been flying, so I had to throw caution to the wind and belt down the last half of the course to win, but what a drive by that chap, and I don't even know his name. we'd better watch out for him next year, perhaps Moira will get her slate or hardwood award yet!

One thing that I should ask is does any one else want an alloy rocker cover? We only have one left, and, as I am sure you know, we own the pattern, and so can have more made anytime. Let me know if you want one, and whether it wants to say RELIANT, or KITTEN, or REBEL. or ROBIN on top, perhaps we could even arrange a FOX one if you like. (indeed we can arrange almost anything as a special. but there will be a surcharge if it is a one off) I understand that our foundry man seems to think aluminum has gone up in price since we had them made last year. and the new batch, should we go ahead, will cost £40 each delivered.

On the subject of things we can supply, I was asked for an up to date price list, well here we go :- rear springs £68 a pair (the 4 leaf ones) parts book £10 (Kitten or Fox) Workshop manual £10.

These prices are delivered, U.K. mainland only, other destinations quoted on request.

Phil Hallam can arrange front dampers in a variety of adjustable options, though delivery times are a couple of months or so. Now that Thoroughbred Projects has standard units in stock that is no longer a problem. £65 each plus v.a.t. and postage I believe.

Given that the Register is not intended to be a spare parts business, and that John Box is currently having new parts made, the steering link rod from the column to the rack for example, and lower ball joints reconditioned, I am happy to sit back and encourage him, as far too much of my time has been taken up in the past, making up parcels and arranging carriers etc. I am not running a business, just trying to help keep the cars on the road. While I will continue to do all I can to help, it really was becoming too much - not really a lot, but even to have a van calling twice a month is too much I am told.

Having said that, don't be kept off the road for the want of a part, talk to me if you have any difficulty. Rex Angell was on the 'phone last night complaining that his mechanic could only get 3 back plates for his Fox, and not the 4th one. Did that get sorted out O.K. Rex?

While I have every sympathy with those wanting new carpets and headlinings etc. there really is a limit to what I can do, and there are specialist firms who deal in such things - o.k., I'll consider publishing a list, but it won't be a recommended list, unless of

course you care to use their services and recommend them afterwards. Which does beg the question, are there any suppliers who you have found particularly helpful that I should be recommending ? Here I should mention the long suffering folk at Michaels of Selby, and indeed John Box, for answering numerous telephone questions without any hope of making a sale. All the advice and information is appreciated whether it be how to remove the oil pressure relief valve seat from an engine in situ, without removing the sump, to whether a Kitten gearbox will fit a Fox (yes, provided it is an early Fox. and not the later one with the pre-engaged starter motor), though your speedo will not read at all accurately due to the different gearing of the drive gear - but we even anticipated that, didn't we John?

Dear Brian, August '96

Our Kitten is temporarily off the road (only for about a week - we hope) as the clutch cable has snapped, and more seriously, there is a strong smell of petrol, and what looks like a mixture of oil and petrol on top of the rocker cover around the clip through which the fuel pipe runs. Also the car won't idle. The chap we go to locally is on holiday in Koss at present (You obviously pay him far too much money to look after the car! Ed) hence the delay. Perhaps the Kitten sensed an imminent fireball and snapped the cable on purpose, you never know. Driving home 4 miles in second gear hoping I did not have to stop was fun; I got home! Bit annoying that it should break down now as we've just had to fit a new pair of headlamps (well, as you know. they were very badly rusted) and a new steering rack to satisfy the M.O.T. man, and the car was going really well.

You needn't worry, there's no chance of our enthusiasm for the tandem (on which we now both commute to work) ending our involvement with Kittens, true the Kitten isn't the ideal vehicle for transporting a tandem, the trailer option is almost certainly the solution we'll go for, either adapting Fiona's dad's dingy trailer, or buying an even lighter one; they're quite expensive though. The tandem only weighs 40 lbs, so towing it shouldn't prove too much of a strain for a Kitten's chassis or transmission, should it ? Indeed not, Ed. Whatever, we both want to take Kitten and tandem to Yorkshire at the end of the month. so we'll have to sort something out.

Must close now, there's always so much to do, and so little time in which to do it. Looking forward to the next Mewsletter.

Rob & Fiona Wilkes. Oxon

Dear Brian, August '96

Thank you for the latest "Mewsletter". I enclose a copy of the drawing for the Kitten rear spring which may be of use to you, it was supplied by a pal of mine who recently retired from the manufacturer. Yes thanks Brian, it is Woodhead from whom we buy them.

My rebuild of the Kitten chassis into a two seater MG TD ish Replica is going well with the body nearing the finish and then the fabric covering to do. It uses Tempest wings and rear valence with the John Box extended gear lever mod and engine repositioned 8" further back as a basis. With its MG Midget wire wheels it looks very classic trialish. The rewiring is complete, and works The windscreen design together with the location of wipers is a bit of a current problem, but will be solved - must be solved ! The hood irons etc are to follow with upholstery, carpets etc to complete to taste. Should be completed by Autumn '96 given no catastrophes.

Kind regards.
Brian Midgley - Sheffield

Brian, I apologise for the severe editing, and many thanks Jim your complimentary comments (not printed above because I am too embarrassed !) and the manual copies - the degree to which I am grateful will be appreciated by many I am sure. I must say though, that putting such intentions in print regarding the completion date of a project, is normally a dangerous thing to do - lest it be cast up in a few years time when the job finally gets on the road! Go on, prove me quite wrong Ed.!

Dear Brian. Sept.'96

Many thanks for your letter etc. I enclose my application form and cheque for the back numbers, and a cast alloy rocker cover, as well as the subscription to the Register.

The mods on my Kitten cover a stainless steel larger diameter sports exhaust and a K & N filter. I don't want to upset the insurance side of things. but these have certainly transformed the Kitten into a bit of a Tiger! Many are the larger vehicles that have attempted to overtake, but have had to drop back again.

I fitted a multi-LED high level brake light last week, which has noticeably increased the distance between followers and myself. I have another still to fit to the Scimitar. I have also fitted a door to the glove-box which makes a perfect match to the dash-board.

I've got a couple of instruments to fit (oil and volts) and may possibly get a new radio for the Scimitar and fit the old one to the Kitten. As I said what I'd really like to do next is fit new carpets and re-upholster the Kitten. I have long wanted to make a two seater like RGG 945R

(That was one of John Box's Tempests, - the prototype of which is currently for sale by the way, ring 01524 781841 if you are interested and have a spare four or five grand - the one on the front cover last time, is currently owned by Guy Stanley, thanks Guy for the picture Ed)

The Scimitar is in almost showroom condition. I am sentimentally attached to Reliant as Dad was a friend of the founder of the company, and I count some of the past directors as personal acquaintances. In any case I still think that a chassis plus a choice of GRP bodies is a good commercial formula.

Had a few Kitten problems during the summer: couldn't get the tick-over right, leading to cutting out at halt signs and roundabouts. I traced it to a faulty alternator regulator, plus a blocked breather pipe and a split advance & retard vacuum line! It cost me £ 30 to get the alternator fixed. You can imagine that this bunch of faults occurring concurrently taxed my diagnostic ability rather more than usual.

Not knowing the interpretation of model numbers I was puzzled by the back page TP ad. showing one engine for sale at £225 and the other at only £75.
Peter Heming - Newquay

'phone however - if you can get him in! anyway his number is 0113 266 5863, feel free to try your luck.

If it wasn't for the fact that saying so in print would make me look almost as, now wait till I consider the adjective to use here very carefully, lest I cause offence - you would not believe how many of our foreign resident friends think that Scotland is in England, and I really am not about to make the same mistake about Holland and Belgium, it is just that I can't remember which of those two countries had 40 Kittens exported to them. No matter, I avoided finding an adjective neatly, by changing the subject, don't you think? At any rate, assuming for a moment that it was the Netherlands (and I have to tell you that I find Holland calling itself the Netherlands even more confusing than I would hope Europeans, and I do include some of my English friends under that banner, find differentiating Scotland from England!) Right, back to the subject, Kittens, remember, well to have 25 or 30 survive out of a total of 40 ever sold there, has to be a better survival rate than we seem to have managed over here!

Does this mean that your average Dutchman takes better care of his car than your average Western European owner, whether Scots, English Welsh or Irish, Don't worry Harry, John and Geoff and all the others, I haven't forgotten you! or is it just the different climate being kinder to cars?

On the subject of our European subscribers, I must apologise officially to Walter Van Opplo, who I dropped into the trap of failing to send his magazine, number 11, because I held it back to await a response to the supply of several parts which he had asked about Walter, I am truly sorry, the old saying that the road to hell is paved with good intentions springs to mind. I did send your parts list to a number of Reliant dealers. Michaels of Selby being the only one to respond, and then only to say that half of the parts were still listed - quite whether that means currently available I do not know, and which half I don't know either. I will write separately with their details.

My mitigating excuse is that none of the parts you were asking about would keep a car off the road.

When I claim that there is nothing that we can't get for a Kitten, what I actually mean is nothing that will keep the car off the road, things like mud flaps, coach trims, hub caps or knave plates (that's what the Rebel parts list calls them you know!) etc. don't really come into the realm of essential parts as far as I am concerned. Though it is obviously wonderful that some owners like to keep their cars in genuine original condition. My aim, which time and resources do restrict, is to help to keep the vehicles on the road where possible, and while one man in the London branch of the R.O.C. would disagree, and I won't bother apologising this time as he is a Robin owner who does not subscribe to this organisation, but did buy an alloy rocker cover, and somehow managed to damage the gasket, and I have kept him waiting for a replacement due to circumstances in the main out with my immediate control. Most of those who have asked for a part, whether it be a set of springs, to a gearbox or a stainless exhaust, have had to wait less than a week, which I think is quite acceptable. By the way, I don't have any more good gearboxes, but I do have 9 unknown quantity ones, if anyone would like a spare to play with, yours for £30 each delivered. (£10 each if you collect) I will remove the top first and check that there are no obvious broken teeth. Right, advert over. (how did I ever think that I could index this, when I go off at a tangent so often?) on with the mag,

Brian

While on the subject of Kittens abroad, I did meet the man, and his wife and daughter briefly at Mellerstain (one of the many car shows to which the Kitten takes me each year) way back in June this year, who are in at number 4 on the Register, and so have been in pretty much from the start, though I almost lost touch when the family moved from Belgium to England.

Dear Brian, 7/9/96

It was nice to meet you at last at the Mellerstain car show, having read your words ever since the first Mewsletter, here as promised is a little information about :

Reliant Kittens in Belgium

Three wheelers are unknown in Belgium, so when Reliant Import Belgium started to import Kittens there was no reputation of other 'Reliant' products to build on. At least 8 dealers were appointed but only 34 cars were sold. Nobody would buy the last two, so they were auctioned for next to nothing. The importer kept a Kitten for himself, and switched to selling Jaguars. Ironic is it not, that we now have an ex-Jaguar man in charge of running the company! Ed. His Kitten is said to be still there, hardly used, hiding behind the Jaguars at the back of the showroom. The network of dealers soon collapsed.

We bought our mustard yellow Kitten DL estate in October 1991. It was first registered in April 1978, chassis number 703/15102113. Like most other Belgian Reliants it had become almost worthless as soon as the engine started to give trouble, and of course there is not a steady supply of overturned Robins ready to give up their engines - sounds a bit unsteady to me Ed. - From the documents it seemed that our car had been used for about 8 years and 60,000 kilometres when a big end bolt snapped, and a big hole appeared in the side of the block. A couple of would be restorers dismantled various bits, got discouraged. and sold it.

About half of the original Kittens are still in existence, but only 4 or 5 are still on the road -sounds a similar story in proportion to their homeland! Ed. - Nearly all are estate versions. I only heard of one saloon. I met two Belgian Kitten enthusiasts, and they both

- 1) Could not resist buying more Kittens.
- 2) Had more Kittens than they knew what to do with.
- 3) Made trips to England looking for parts.
- 4) Regretted the lack of interest in Kittens in Belgium.
- 5) Advised me not to spend more than £ 500 on my project, or I would be wasting my money.

(Replace Belgium with Scotland, and you are talking about me - Ed!!)

One of those enthusiasts spoke Dutch as well as French, and was in contact with Reliant owners in the Netherlands. He told me of a Dutchman who had collected 20 Kittens, and was desperate to sell some, but nobody was interested.

The other Belgian Kitten enthusiast had tried to visit all the ex-dealers in Belgium, but they had either disappeared without trace, or switched to selling other products. One of them still had a pile of Kitten brochures and a workshop manual which he happily handed over. The dealer in Brussels now sells Wurlitzer organs instead!! *Ah, music to my ears - oops sorry, Ed.*

I joined the Reliant Owners Club as an overseas member of the Gravesend and Medway branch. I found all the parts I needed through club members, by mail order, and in English and Belgian scrap yards. The Three Wheeler Dealer between Derby and Nottingham, is very helpful, charges reasonable prices, sends anything by mail order and has a breakers yard full of Reliants, including a couple of Kittens.

We thought that it would take only a few months to get our Kitten hack on the road, but we spent more than three years before it was all bolted together again, and then we had to sell it. A young man drove it away just before we returned to England in July '95.

I thought I had finished with Kittens, but before long I might need a cheap second car for getting to work. A Kitten perhaps, or should I fall for the attractions of a cheap MG Metro and end up cursing the rust? I must make up my mind.

David Heywood - Berwick-upon-Tweed

Dear Brian, August '96

Just received the latest Mewsletter, full of good stuff! Yes please, lets have a hi-monthly edition, and £ 8 seems very modest to me. Anyway, I thought I'd pen a few lines about some Reliant experiences over the last 27 years.

All the best, Dave Richmond.

Our first Reliant was an Aztec blue Rebel Saloon, one of the very first 700 versions. This little car was an absolute gem. It covered over 100,000 miles with us. Legend has it that the first batch of 700 engines was blueprinted and very carefully put together. This resulted in a motor which used hardly any oil and kept its tune very well. Yes Dave, I don't know the facts as to why. though the legend sounds good to me, but both of my 700 Rebels ran more economically, and were faster than any of the 750 ones that I have run over the years, Ed. Replacements, other than routine service parts, were confined to one exhaust valve - a waterpump and a clutch. The gearbox was rebuilt by me at 70,000. (Yes, funny that, that's another thing that Reliants have in common with post war Jowetts, the gearbox is the weakest link in the chain! Ed.)

Chassis wise a cracked upper damper mount had to be welded. An annual filling up with half a gallon of old engine oil preserved the main chassis members very well! (yes Dave, but where do you park it for the next week while all the excess oil drips out - not on your drive? Ed).

This Rebel, having been made before the master cylinder fibreglass cover became available. did have the need on more than one occasion to have attention. Eventually I fitted a Hillman Imp one with the separate reservoir under the bonnet.

Another under bonnet mod was to convert the cooling system to a sealed one using a B.M.C. expansion tank, this works very well and has been fitted to all our

subsequent Reliants. Yes, hear hear, I do the same, and really don't understand why they don't do it in the factory, O.K there probably isn't the weight capacity on the three wheelers, they are pared to the bone to get under the weight limit for such vehicles, but the 4 wheelers have no such restrictions, perhaps it was just to save money ? Ed. Stop press !! they do now - Reliant that is, all current production vehicles now come complete with a radiator expansion tank. I wonder what other of our good idea mods they will adopt next?

The paint and trim lasted very well on this car which still exists and is in safe hands, but not on the road at the moment.

Round about 1974 we kept hearing rumours about a Rebel replacement from Two Gates, and on a visit to the works we saw a prototype with 12" wheels and a multi-link steering and suspension system - sounds interesting any one else got any information ? Ed. You know of course that the factory did build a Rebel 1600GT prototype, Ford powered, and more than a few folk believe that the reason it did not go into production was the fact that it would leave a Scimitar standing and they did not want to embarrass the owners of their more expensive tourer. Bill Dick is the only person I know who saw it in the flesh while on a visit to the factory, can anyone else shed any light? This seemed to go indecently fast, and with hindsight I wonder if it had one of the twin o.h.c. engines that Reliant made about that time, and which, legend has it. were all destroyed at the factory. Yes, I believe that they produced 10 such engines, and seem to remember an involvement with B.R.M., though I may be mistaken, can anyone shed any light ? Ed. Thanks J.B. for the information that one such engine does survive, but my useless memory can't remember who has it, help please John.

The Kitten finally being announced, we decided to have one. Our local dealer, Thrift Motors of Southall (The Bilbes, father and son, ran a marvellous service) supplied LLW 132P, a turquoise saloon, early in 1976.

Once again this proved to be a very satisfactory purchase. The extra performance from 40 b.h.p. was very welcome, and the high gearing made for relaxed motorway cruising.

Problems were few, what was thought to be overheating, was finally traced to a duff gauge in the dash. Rear wheel bearings both went noisy, and the door hinges needed occasional re-setting (I believe that later Kittens had beefed up hinges). Although the introduction of the Kitten saw a change to lockheed brakes these proved to be trouble free, unlike those fitted to our next Reliant.

A Fox hardtop replaced the Kitten in 1984. We were attracted to the increased inside space and the versatility of the twin tailgates.

Thrift Motors had to attend to the brakes under warranty, and subsequently the brakes have been an on-going saga. Not a season passes without wheel cylinder trouble, leaking seals the main problem. I've even sent a faulty cylinder away to A.P. for examination, but not had much joy from them. Does anyone know of a source of better quality components than the O.E. types? perhaps one of the pattern parts and specialist suppliers can help. I'm, fed up with bleeding brakes, both physically and metaphorically!

The Fox is still with us, but at 70,000 miles the engine is nearly finished, oil consumption has never been very good and now compressions are down with very little in number 3. The second gear synchro is very weak and the box doesn't keep its oil very well. It's not all bad news however, the rear tyres did 70,000 miles, and the battery lasted 12 years. The paint and trim have lasted reasonably well.

The Fox was joined about 5 years ago by a Greenstone Rebel saloon. This was found for me by Terry Scott, and came with 18 years service history and plenty of spares. Total mileage is about 120,000, and the trim has lasted quite well. Not so the paint, the pigment has shrunk giving rise to a certain crocodile skin effect. The gel coat is still good, and if I win the lottery I'll have the little car repainted.

In our ownership some work has been done. The gearbox is now a hybrid all synchro type with the remote change. This requires some alterations to the prop shaft length and rear gearbox cross member, also a new selector finger and mods to the reverse interlock. Combined with a cable operated clutch the car is very sweet to drive. I've just fitted another 700 motor with strapped main bearings, this is a worthwhile mod. as it keeps the mains round at all times, and stops the vibration generated in the crankshaft which often manifests itself in noise chatter from the gearlever at higher rpm.

Perhaps if our editor can find the space, I'll go into detail on the mods I have outlined –

Yes please, Ed. I have suffered chattering gearbox levers in Rebels for years –

Finally dear reader, has anyone any ideas for making the Rebel rear suspension a bit more resilient. Compared to our first car, our present one seems very hard at the back. Could it have estate or van rear springs? is there a difference? Maybe our bottoms are not as resilient as they used to be!! over to you.

Dave Richmond, Hayes, Middx.

Thank you Dave for taking the time to put that down on paper for us. As you will see, my recently adopted line spacing and font size reduced your six A4 sides of story to not much more than a couple of pages in the mag, now you will realise (I realise!) just what I've let myself in for as far as making this bi-monthly goes!!

I have never done the gearbox mod to the Rebel that you speak of, though I did help a friend start it once, and another chap I know did some more work on it - yes the cable seems to be a good idea, because the clutch operating lever has to be moved in the opposite direction on the current gearbox because the pivot is on the other side of the centre line of the shaft. You want to see the cantilever thing which my friend devised to do it with the original rod operation method. The two piece Marina propshaft fits, if you use a couple of old Rebel propshaft flanges, and fit an extra cross member to support the middle bearing- yes, it was a lot of work - so much in fact, that no one has ever benefited from it, as the car has never been on the road since! Then the matter which you so lightly pass over of lengthening the selector operating finger, we reckon it needs about another 11 or 12mm added to it, and have not yet reached the reverse situation. We decided to use a Kitten gear lever and stretch our arms a bit! Besides those early Rebel gearboxes with the extension are pretty rare, who said John Box had a mod for this? - John, are you listening? Talk to me - no there isn't a huge market for them, just

curious as to the best / easiest / most viable way of using the current Reliant gearbox in a Rebel, and being able to reach the gear lever without a four or five foot long left arm.

Sadly that Rebel estate, OAG 35L has never been on the road since the mod was started about 6 years and 5 owners ago, and is currently lying in a shed in Greenock, asking price I believe about £50, worth it for the mods alone I should think ! But I don't have the time, space, money, or energy to get involved - even though I owned the car about 10 years ago - before the mods were carried out. Besides, I don't really want a new wife, and this one has made it quite clear that any more cars = divorce! (what an easy way out!!)

Oddly enough I first found the car, well it found me, when its owner needed a replacement gearbox for it, way back in the early 1980's -strange world, isn't it

Dear Brian, Sept.'96

Thank you for your letter and for adding my Kitten to your Register, it is a saloon by the way –

Yes, alright Pat, and many others, the form design does leave something to be desired, but no matter how long I seem to spend on things like form design, I always find the faults after I have had hundreds produced, it is close mind you and I have just produced a new version which, I think is an improvement. There comes a time when you just have to go with what you have, or nothing ever gets done! What does fascinate me is how many people send the whole thing back instead of retaining the part with the picture and the information about the Register What I will do in future is draw a dotted line down the middle if it and see if that helps! Ed. –

We bought the Kitten in March 1978 with 9,000 miles on the clock, since then it has been my general, almost daily, runabout and has now topped over 113,000 miles, still with the original engine. A great deal has been replaced over the years, there's only about the rear axle, propshaft and gearbox left, plus all the wiring which is safest left in its coating of oil! All the replacements have been gradual, so there have been no really huge bills at once.

The car has only let me down once in the 18 years. and that proved to be a blocked breather pipe on the petrol tank, the cap must fit extremely well. I was so convinced that it was a fuel pump. it didn't occur to me to remove the cap - very grateful for a mobile 'phone.

Our local garage services it every six months, and with luck I hope to have more trouble free years of motoring ahead. The paintwork is getting a bit shabby and the inside not as pristine as I would like. It lives outside, and leaks around the doors, but it has been my friend for so long. I would really hate to have to change it.

I now only do less than 5,000 miles a year. and the chassis is waxoiled every year.

Pat Allatson - Northants

Thanks Pat for that story, sorry about the interruptions. I hope that you have the car for many years to come. Ed

Cars and things for Sale or Wanted

Due to personal circumstances and house sale

1. Reliant Fox hard top. Professional interior, stainless steel exhaust, 3 owners from new, side windows. M.O.T. Jan '97, Tax Jan.'97, used every day £750.00

2. Reliant Fox hard top, small side windows, runs well, needs brake pipe etc, no tax or M.O.T.

£350.00

3. Large quantity s/h spares Robin / Kitten, Doors body panels, wheels, glass, seats steering etc etc. £300.00

Will consider offers on the lot

Contact John Metcalfe on 01430 431685 Howden, East Yorkshire

Reliant Rebel estate, yellow, off the road. garaged. for 4 years, looking for a good home. contact Brian on 01926 429543 - Warwickshire

Kitten Estate DL. red, 143,000 miles (same engine) Taxed till Feb.'97 M.O.T. July '97, Slight damage over off-side headlamp. Chassis has been oiled inside and out for the last 5 years. Entire brake system renewed (dual circuit) New front dampers. uprated rear springs, fuel tank, Steering rack and exhaust all renewed. Together with the following list of spares -: Engine and gearbox, drivers door including glass. carb, water pump, rear springs, some glass and various other parts. £200 in all contact Alan Kavanagh at Valley View, High Hutton, Huttons Ambo, York, YO6 7HW

Bond bug F reg tel 01592 882801 or mobile 0836 761895

Reliant 750 cylinder head, decoked and ready to run, partially tuned. £25.00

2 off 850 cylinder heads as they came off £25.00

Ring Alan on 01895 449336

Also the two Kittens in Norfolk are still available.

Free to a good home, Alan also has a saloon rear hatch glass, black plastic headlamp surround, rubber bumpers and a Robin steering box.

Alan has copies of the book "750 Racer" by Herber & Harvey, The what happens and how to do it book on 750 racing, includes lots of tips on tuning the Reliant engine. £ 19.00 md p&p.

1978 5 reg Yellow Kitten estate. year's M.O.T. new exhaust, bucket seats fitted, good body. Contact Mr. Radley on 01462 451213. Some spares. Offers in the region of £400 to - 11 Stormont Rd. Hitching, Herts, SG5 1SJ

A tidy brown Saloon, lying in Glossop in Derbyshire, is looking for a new home contact Graeme Shaw in the first instance :- 01457 867991

1977 DL Estate, fair condition. (too good to scrap) Laid up for 8 months. reasonable offers considered. Tel 01255 508921 (Harwich)

YHK 410S is a white Kitten estate car which is in need of T.L.C. (just like me!) and is available, for full details contact Brian on 0141 886 6117

TOE, the car featured on the cover of the application form for this organisation is for sale. no M.O.T. or engine, gearbox radiator or propshaft or exhaust - but an above average chassis and an excellent body and tidy interior, ring Brian on 0141 886 6117.

Jim Spence's Fiat 1600 powered beast is looking for a new custodian, as Jim is about to embark on a new project - talk to the man if you are interested 01506 855879.

Adam Greive has a Kitten red estate for sale with an excellent chassis, tow bar, electric fan, rev counter. M.O.T. till December £250, ring 01389 751840.

Charlie Cross has a Fox for sale - £ 800. ring 01603 664720 for full details.

A set of cords piston rings, believed to be for an early Reliant engine, ring Mark Wilson for details on 01535 630404.

Wanted Tow bar for Reliant Kitten, also Jimp handbook, pads list drivers handbook or any other technical information, also source of spares such as windscreen rubber surrounds and windscreen wiper arms and blades. Tel. Mike on 01603 881338

Wanted two Cosmic alloy wheels, contact Bob Britton at the Waverly Hotel. (above!)

NOTES

This page will, I expect, become a regular feature of the Mewsletter, as you probably know, I have a very bad memory, and so in future the plan is to note down in here any points of interest that I learn. So - if you are talking to me on the device of Mr. Bell's, (Alexander Graham) remind me to boot up Arleen's P.C. and stick your hints and tips, comments or questions in here at the time, then they won't get forgotten or lost. Well, it sounded like a good idea at the time!

John Pearce, our underground man, tells me that Suzuki Swift seats fit straight into the Kitten.

Graham Shaw from Glossop tells me, disaster of disasters, that his Kitten's p.p.m. of unburnt hydrocarbons are now up to 167!! Wish I could come close Graeme.

As regards pinking, dirt on the weights of the distributor can be a cause here, the remedy is of course to clean them, so get stripping those distributors - better yet fit one someone reliable has already stripped and cleaned, and preferably fitted new bearings to - got any left Alan?

Getting more technical

How to make your Kitten go round corners (quickly)--- The saga continues.

Regular readers of this hallowed organ will know that NNL 437R recently received his new A.V.O. front dampers and springs, so far so good but, thought I, those anti roll bar bushes (the bits fastening the vertical links to your wishbones)

are so soft that the car has reached an alarming degree (or twenty!) of roll before the bar actually does anything.

The bushes on the nearside of the car had already disintegrated, the small, thin washers intended to support them having been bent out of shape by regular poundings over the grass at Doune and by occasional on-road use on what the relevant department of Northumberland County Council has the audacity to describe as 'Highways". So, prompted by the impending need to have NNL handling as if on rails (Doune 96, at which we took yet another first, by the way!) I set to designing a modification which would increase the roll stiffness at the front and work with my negative camber front suspension to eliminate understeer, hence avoiding the danger of ploughing on into a cone or even a spectator, more importantly, the wee bucket would have to remain just as predictable as ever on tarmac. Well, not having access to advanced knowledge of next week's lottery numbers, fully rose-jointed suspension components were not an option, and besides, the Reliant front dampers which I had removed earlier in the year would supply all the necessary gubbins, at no additional cost! The included sketches show the very basic tasks involved in the operation, the Kitten now corners neutrally and with a greatly reduced amount of body roll One bit of advice though, I had thought of going the rear anti roll bar route too, but increasing the roll stiffness at the back end makes it virtually impossible to predict the point at which the car will start to slide, that may just be a little tricky in the wet. (Thank you Jim Spence for that tip, based on his experience with the Fiat engined beast.)

The end.

Well I really don't know what to say this time - yes I know that would be a first, but the man who sat at Arleen's computer and typed that article for us on the last day of August, had just been observing that his name seemed to appear in every magazine, if not on almost every page of every magazine, and I was not sure whether with his shy and quiet nature he was wishing more anonymity, when he said something about perhaps introducing himself to you all through these pages - then he goes and writes that article on anti roll bar bushing with no mention of his name in sight, and no details about himself other than the fact that he was involved in helping us to retain the Doune Classic Challenge trophy for another year, and that he is not impressed with Northumberland County Council's roads department's technical abilities.

Anyway, thank you J.B. for the information and sketches which I will try hard to reproduce effectively.

By the way, his last sentence brings me neatly to another subject, (technical abilities) Jim Spence - never mind who, the Fiat 1600cc powered Kitten - might be looking for a new home - if you are interested in becoming its custodian, complete with a years M.O.T. talk to that chap. now what was his name again? 01506 855879, and just ask for the fellow with the interesting car, and don't let him fob you off with the Triumph estate. Oh, by the way John, it

might have been the end of your article, but how did you know it was going to be the end of the magazine?!?

Our youngest subscriber, Shona Thomas, concludes from reading a few back issues that we "look to be a funny lot" - now where could she have got that idea I wonder? - We (Scots) once had a national bard (poet) who wished that we could, just now and then, see ourselves as others see us, perhaps Shona can help us here? Shona is considering selling her Seat Ibiza 1.5 GLX and replacing it with a Kitten, or even a Rebel (Get the pies o.k. Shona?)

Shona also seems to think that Kitten enthusiasts go clunk in the night. Seriously though, and I was quoting out of context, thanks for the letter Shona, yes, we'll find you a nice wee car, sorry I ran out of space -again. Problem is that it is only the middle of September, and this is not due out for a couple of months yet. And here I am up to over 12 A4 sides already, no more or we are overweight. Besides I don't want to get into the habit of giving you all too much to read at once, never mind the minor fact of my having to do so much typing every couple of months - do you realise that this edition is almost 10,000 words long ! Sounds more like a serious punishment exercise than an enjoyable pastime to me!

Right, that's it, please use the renewal notice enclosed, the two of you who were so late renewing last time, don't worry, I won't publish your names, and so paid two years subs at once to get ahead, have saved a couple of pounds

Due both to my own inability to shut up, and the fact that the renewal notices are included with this edition (though you will see that I have made them smaller this year. both to save paper and weight!) the envelope this comes to you in will again be overweight for the stamp. I constantly hope that by using first class stamps they might just treat it as second class post. rather than charge you the difference - I seem to have got away with it in the past, at least no one has let me know otherwise - do let me know if they try to charge you extra postage.

Please keep the stories coming. and 'phone calls, do please remind me to include any 'phoned information in the "NOTES" page in future. (Unless of course it is an advert) then it won't get lost or forgotten

Oh, just in case I have not resolved the situation before you get this, who was it wanted a stainless exhaust ? It has been sitting here since September, and I really can't remember who asked for it ! I think you were doing a rebuild. Have a healthy and safe time over the festive season, the next edition will be out as soon as enough of you send in your 1997 subscription. and of course, articles. All the best for '97, just think all Rebels will soon be road tax exempt. and the early Kittens will be getting there by the start of the new millennium

Brian

Thornleigh Stables
Thornleigh Drive
Burton in Kendal
Carnforth
Lancashire LA6 1NQ
Tel : 01524 781841

WINTER SPECIAL

Send us your old Water pump with **£37.50**, and We will rebuild it with a new body, bearings, seals and impeller, and return it to you with a free thermostat and radiator cap.

We now have a batch of Kitten / Fox handbrake cables in stock at £14.00 each including V.A.T.

24854, Lower Steering Column now in stock, a limited number only at £42.00 - better put one into your own stock now while stocks last - the next batch will be much more expensive.

One rebuilt gearbox available, at £195.00 including V.A.T.

I have two only 'Tamworth Castle'^t badges for the Kitten grill at £8.50 for the concours men.

Also, for continental residents or tourists, a pair of R/H dip light units with yellow bulbs, just **£25.00** the pair.

Comprehensive price list available on request.

Seasons greetings & a Happy New Year