

Reliant Kitten Register



Mewsletter 132
September - October 2016



This cover picture is Emma Keir's Kitten Estate, which she bought needing work back in 2014. Alas the works were found to be more extensive than at first thought, including terminal chassis corrosion in the front suspension area. Nonetheless she has persevered with the rebuild and it's presently being rebuilt on to a good used Fox platform.... As all Emma's cars do, it has a name, which is "Bluebell" and she also has a Robin called "Buttercup"!!!



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 small 4-wheeled specials including the Liege.....



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The Reliant Kitten Register

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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>

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Right, I have decided to cheat, and force upon you the remaining two thirds of the story of my March adventure. Normal service will be resumed in the Autumn, if not sooner!?!

Meantime, in my haste to get the last edition to you before the end of July, I omitted several comments about various articles in it.

I am often conflicted as to when and if to pass comment on any particular article – I know, I can hear you thinking “well, it hasn't stopped him in the past” but I really am becoming, perhaps too indecisive, or just in too much of a rush to take the time?

So, looking back to the last edition, several points came up when I was proof reading it in the early hours of July the 7th as follows :-

First up is Sam Bridgeland, GUS's new custodian. I meant to say that I believe if it is not identical, it is certainly very similar to the one used on many Land Rovers, the heater cut off valve, having said that, the flexibility of being able to enable the flow of coolant to continue round the back of the head, probably the worst cooled part of the engine, regardless of whether the heater is being fed or not, has to be a good plan.

Sam, I hope that GUS is serving you well, and that you continue to make progress a lot faster than new situations develop.

Next up I suppose is JGR 11L, Blossom to his (her?) friends, was with John Blagburn from 2006 till late 2008, but let us start at the beginning, or as near it as we can muster. The car was bought from its original owner by Dave and Sue Brown, who joined us in 2000. They used the car as much as a mobile dog kennel as anything, but eventually decided to move on to something larger, and John (Blagburn) bought it from them. Then, like me, the day came when John needed an automatic, and so Blossom was sold to Alan Greenhill from Dursley in late 2008. Sadly to be involved in a bump shortly after. Alan, I see that you acquired a Kitten last year, but we have no details of it yet, please remind me which one it is.

.....

Then, on the 14th of July, Simon Fitch's article on phase one of his Cipher rebuild story arrived in my in-box. Many thanks for that Simon, and all of a sudden, on the very day that I mailed you edition 131, this one has only 3 pages to be filled and it will be complete! (about 10 weeks before it needs to be out, truly a first!) So, you will have to wait till next time to find out how our 25th anniversary gathering at Llagollen went, unless you were among the 50 folk we were expecting to see there of course!

All this on the same day that the DVLA asked Moira for money before sending her new driving licence, (our understanding of "the rules" was that licences issued on medical grounds were free, their interpretation seems to be different!), not a bad day really.

I have just realised that it has in fact been the 15th of July for almost half an hour, so I'll call it a night methinks. Of course had I waited a day it would be 16/7/16!

One thing attentive readers who are better at spelling than I, might have noticed last time, is just how clever Honda are, using a washing up powder to receive radio waves - I need a proof reader!!!

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*Next up is a story from one of our newer subscribers, Derek Lilley. Derek joined us after recently acquiring a Rebel. He was always a three wheeler man, (I feel prepared to allow the distraction as much of it blends well with 4 wheeled experience), till his last one caused just too many problems, and he splashed out on a Smart car. To be fair he persevered with it for a while, but then common sense prevailed, and he changed it for a Rebel. In his own words :-*

My old Rialto had a Yellow Top engine. I bought it for £600 when I had to give up the MZ 250cc motorbike. The dashboard was cracked and a split had started, so I braced it with aluminium strips, but the crack gradually got bigger I used to go almost everywhere with it. It had only done about 30,000 miles.

Had the head gasket blow, and my nephew helped to get the top off. It took almost two weeks of easing the head up from the studs using an idea from a member of the 'Plastic Pigs' website.

When we finally got the head off, John Copestake recommenced a slightly thicker gasket, which was duly fitted. The bores were perfect, and it didn't even need a decoke. Then the driver's side door hinge started to play up, and the dash was a lot worse. It wanted patching and a re-make. I was unable then to manage without it for a couple of weeks, so I passed it on to a man from London, and bought the Smart4two to replace it, (which it did not really).

The only thing now that I miss about the Smart is the auto change. I am getting used to a manual stick again though.

## And all for the want of a Horseshoe Nail



Not in my case; but a little spring that had become aged.

The villain of the day. I had remarked to my passenger neighbour

"I found I had £13 + change in my purse yesterday" when we parked outside of the Co-op shop in Old Street. Hubris as the Ancient Greeks would have put it.

When we came out I had the normal contortionist problem getting my feet inside. (Oh how I wish I had been born to a frame of 5' 9".) Shoving the gear lever into reverse, I started to back out.

Something was odd with the gear stick. It was loose and wobbled all over. I managed to manually shove the Rebel back and then I realised that I had not got a screwdriver in the car. Over the road was Proper Job. £3.99 for a screwdriver set with various bits.

Took off the rubber cover and found that the stick would just remove completely from the top of the box.

First Re-action "Oh my God; I had the same thing happen in Bristol when I had the Rialto."

This was different though. To fix it required a new spring. The old one over the years had weakened, and on my rather robust tug to lift the stick into reverse, had let the fitting go.

Glory Be, I could get home without calling the Britannia Rescue because, although sloppy, I could access the forward gears.

Back home I went. An Email to Joe Mason up in Cradley Worcs. Meantime I was marooned at home. It arrived on Tuesday and I tried, but didn't have three hands. Wednesday a neighbour helped me as I held the spring fitting down that controlled the stick, he manipulated the new spring into place.

Victory, except that I had looked for jubilee clips because at the worst, I had an idea to use one on the old spring. £5.99p at Proper Job for a set of about 30. I only wanted one, but there you are.

Now :--- Was it Hubris that caused the whole outcome? Or was it just the old age of the original?.

Derek Lilley, No. 1031 from Clevedon

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*The following letter from Dale Spears was bound to go into print as a follow up to my own email problems mentioned last time if nothing else!*

*Further evidence that we really ought not to be so dependent on this technology that we seem to be blissfully taking for granted – Lemmings be warned!*

*Quite apart from that, Dale, it is great to know, and so soon after the event, where UCN 63S ended up, please keep us posted with progress.*

Dear Brian,

06/07/2016

I trust that you are well. I just thought I'd send you a typed letter rather than an email. Why? You may well ask. It's just that my email software is playing up, and I had to send you a cheque for the long awaited Mews subscription, which I believe is way, way overdue. It's just that I keep forgetting about it, I do apologise.

You may have been speaking to Brian Beattie (Member 777) who has sold me his rather delightful Kitten UCN 63S. I saw the car appear on eBay (or evil Buy as I call it) which he has completely refurbished over a nine year period. It's 99% complete and just needs finishing and putting through for an MOT.

I normally scan eBay for about an hour every evening (looking for parts mainly) and came across his Kitten which at the time (3 days 'till auction end) wasn't really generating a lot of interest. I only decided to bid at the very last moment, almost on a coin toss!

I'm really glad that I decided to do so. It's a great car and even better whence on the road, which I aim to have completed by the end of the Summer / early Autumn, all being well.

My Reliant Fox has just completed a 700 mile tour of the west country without too much hassle. The accelerator pedal gave out as I happened to be at Bude Road garage in Holsworthy. The cable had unraveled itself causing the cable to jam. As a result neither had full throttle, or nothing at all. So I ended up using the choke cable as the accelerator, which was fun, not!

The newly acquired Kitten is garaged over at Basingstoke, so it's a 13 mile trip before I even get to it. But at least it's safe with new Armadillo locks being fitted by the council only on Monday. I also bought a lot of spares that Brian had accumulated over the years, although he still has masses of spares to sell, along with lower ball joints to refurbish. The actual transfer date was the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month. So that's Reliant number three.

B594 BOA — Red & White Reliant Fox 850, UCN 63S — Blue Kitten 850, and SGN 239L — Bond Bug 850.

Kind regards, Dale Spiers No. 1000 from Alton



## *Brian's diary March 2016* - Part two

Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup>, continued....

The low fuel warning light came on a few miles short of Scarborough, and so I filled up at Sainsbury's, there being no Shell option in the vicinity. The truth was then revealed, the 62mpg plus, that the computer in the car reckoned I had achieved, was indeed a bit optimistic, the real figure being a shade over 58, something of a disappointment, as I had expected (hoped for) well over 60, perhaps keeping the snow tyres on for this trip had not been such a good idea after all, as, so far, there, there had been not the slightest need for them.

Adrian's then, and I was ushered into the vacant parking space in his impressive garage, where the Jazz was to spend the night in the company of 2 1950's Lanchesters, a Rebel estate, one of the oldest running Daimlers in the land, (1909), and the back half of a Kitten, illustrious company indeed. Oh to have a 6 car garage adjoining the house, I am very jealous, and this in the middle of Scarborough as well!

It was not long before Adrian's two colleagues Howard and Steve arrived, both, like Adrian, are retired engineers from Ford, well, I say like Adrian, I had done something that I always criticise others for doing, I had made an assumption!

Because Adrian is a mechanical engineer, I assumed that colleagues of his, who were also engineers, and also worked for Ford, were also both mechanical engineers, and so likely to be particularly knowledgeable about cars. Not so, they were civil engineers! Their jobs had been to design and oversee the construction of Ford's huge factories all over the planet, or as they conceded, in their latter years with the company, the decommissioning and demolition of such things, which must say something about where the company is going! Or were the new plants they designed just a lot bigger than the old ones they ended up decommissioning perhaps?

Anyway, they shared an interest in steam locomotives, being here for a couple of days to see the Flying Scotsman, which was running this week on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway (where "Heartbeat" is filmed).

Lots could be said about that, and some things perhaps will later, but I digress.

We were dining at Adrian's that evening, the 4 of us being joined by Adrian's neighbour Anna, and her friend Linda, who was up in Scarborough for a couple of days. They brought the food (Paella, a dish I had never experienced before) and wine, I of course had brought a pie for pud, and a truly wonderful evening's eating and banter followed.

Sadly the girls had dogs to walk, and left us at the back of eleven, whereupon Adrian invited us to tour his fabulous Victorian three storey town house (well, 4 really, if you count the basement!). It was late when I got to bed well, early actually!

On the Thursday morning the guys had talked me into going with them to see the Flying Scotsman, assuring me that it had not been too busy the previous day. The less said about the following couple of hours the better, we burnt a lot of fuel, saw a lot of people, and a lot of traffic, and then had to abandon the attempt. That said I had expected nothing else, and was delighted that it was proving to be so popular.

I spent the afternoon in the National Railway Museum, before going to my cousin John's outside York for the night. Denise always lays on an excellent spread, though I fear that my excessive consumption of her delicious home-made crumble has done nothing to help my weight maintenance quest! Poor fuel consumption today, with all the traffic and slow running, so I refilled the tank to separate that day from the rest of the trip, 38mpg was the figure if you must know, abysmal!

It was great to catch up with John and Denise again, John is self-employed, and his latest customer is based in Oban, a place on the West coast of Scotland that Moira and I are particularly fond of.

I left a few things with them (I would be passing their road end on my way to his brother's later, and thought) as I might need the space for the new batch of back springs I was going to Rotherham to collect.

That was a revelation, the guys at the spring manufacturers were asking how my trip was going, disappointed that I was not in a Reliant. When they heard of my frustration with the Flying Scotsman, they said I should have spoken to them, because they had spare complimentary

tickets they had not used! Curious, I asked how that came about. It turns out that the 4 million pound refit the locomotive has enjoyed over the past decade, was in fact done, if not on the cheap, certainly with an eye on costs, and they had used the cheapest quote for the leaf springs – a bad idea as it happened, as they turned out not to be less than satisfactory, so my guys got a weekend's overtime at the end of February to urgently produce a set of good quality springs that were up to the job, and were given a number of complimentary tickets, more than they could use, as a thank you for the extra quick turnaround. No poor quality spring steel in Rotherham! So, if you have had back springs from the Kitten Register in the past few years, they have something in common with the Flying Scotsman, and I sure ain't talking about myself!

Then I had a delay and a hiccup. The delay was not so long, about fifteen minutes, but long enough that I was thinking there must have been an accident. In fact, it was "just" roadworks on the A616, which I was using to get from the M1 to the A638.

It was while stuck in the traffic on my way to Glossop, that I suddenly realised that I had not noticed the bushes in the springs, having only checked that the numbers were correct. From what I could see the big bushes were certainly in o.k., but I could not see the other end of the springs from the driving seat. By the time I stopped to check, and discovered that there were no small bushes fitted! I had no phone signal, nor did I have time to go back through the roadworks. Long story short, Graeme kindly agreed to fit the bushes for me, and the supplier sent me replacement bushes (by chance I had bought some of those bushes from them for stock, so happened to have a supply of them on board, which I left enough of with Graeme!)

On then after a bite to eat with Graeme and Jane, thank you both, back across country to Skirpenbeck, east of York, where I was spending the Friday night with my other cousin, John's brother Gavin. Then, just after arriving there, I remembered that I had intended to meet up with Carl this evening, but I had completely forgotten to arrange that! He lives in Pocklington, just a few miles south of Skirpenbeck. A "real" phone call was duly made, (no mobile signal in Skirpenbeck!) and I found out that he was on his way home from work, but would come over later. Sadly, the lovely Yvonne, his Scottish wife, was just back from London where she had been helping her sister move house, and would not be able to join us.

We caught up over a coffee and then, joined by my cousin Gavin, we watched a documentary about the Flying Scotsman that he had recorded earlier in the week. I had told Gavin and Carl about the leaf springs, but that had happened so recently, and being a bit negative, I doubted that any mention would be made about that in the programme. Indeed, unless the programme had been made very recently, and broadcast shortly after production, they would not have known, but it had been, and they did mention it, though of course not in any detail, merely that it had broken a spring during testing, but wow, great to hear what we knew to be the truth broadcast, and so soon after the event.

Carl did come over in a Reliant, but not his Kitten, yet to be completed and put back on the road, but in his Mk I Robin saloon, the second of them I had seen, on the road, this week!

One disappointment there was that Gavin had just got a new car a week ago, and I was very much looking forward to experiencing the latest in Mercedes hybrid technology, having seen how well it works for Lewis Hamilton. However Gavin's work ethic had caused him to come home in a van that he needed to use tomorrow – next time....

Off then on Saturday morning to have elevenses with Tony Wiese at Alverthorpe near Wakefield, just off the M1 at junction 41. I had never met Tony before, and so it was great to finally be able to put a face to the name, and afforded me the opportunity to see his lovely maroon Kitten van. (one of the 4 we featured at Tamworth on the cover of edition 121)

Great to finally meet you Tony, it was good to be able to put a face to the name, and to be reminded / made aware of your technical expertise. We must talk again.

See the first picture on the next page – sometimes I just can't get things exactly where I would like them to be!

On south then on the M1 to junction 28 where I met Fred Rimmer in his Asquith van. I had misunderstood things here, as I thought I was to follow Fred to his storage shed, where the fire pump engine frames he had were kept, but in fact he already had them in the back of the van, well done Fred, and he was only leading me (Fred has an interesting and very rare three wheeler, but more on that another time perhaps) to a Brewers Fare type of establishment to buy me lunch! Thank you Fred.



Tony Wiese above, and Fred Rimmer's Asquith below





Duly fed and watered, we squeezed 2 engine frames into the Jazz, and I was off south again on the M1 on my way to see Simon Fitch. It was wonderful to see his new house, I often struggle to see house numbers, I had not been to Simon's house before, always meeting him at someone else's place on my travels, but I did not need to see house numbers, (sadly I did not realise that at first!) in this fairly modern housing scheme in Wellesbourne, with all its modern cars in the drives, the sight of a Kitten beside an SS1 Scimitar and a Fox, ever so slightly gave the game away, and was truly wonderful to see. (The Ciper was of course in the garage!)

After a coffee and a catch up with Simon and the girls, and dropping off some bits and collecting others, I was on my way to Thurlaston, where I was staying the night. It was great to catch up with Tom and Sam, though Patience was still in Ireland, I'll catch her next time. Sam and I always end up making jig saws When I am there, in anticipation of my arrival she had kindly left the Morris Minor van in this particular village scene, just for me. What a relief that she did not expect me to do the sky or the thatched roof of the quaint cottage! Clearly a woman who appreciates my limitations!

Having read about John Whitfield's Fox axle predicament, Tom asked if I would like to borrow his, to allow John to overhaul his without doing it in a rush, and at the same time keeping the Fox on the road,

which was very good of him. So a Fox axle, one of the few that Hanns has not had the crown wheel and pinion out of, was duly brought down, a moment I ought to have recorded on film. Watching Tom, very carefully, coming down the external barn wooden staircase, carrying the axle was, oh dear, that elusive adjective again! Anyway, he made it safely, and loaded it in the back of the Jazz, after removing the drums and shoes. Thank goodness I had dropped one of the Angus fire pump engine frames with Simon yesterday, or we really would have been struggling for space!

There has long been a plan, well, a thought at any rate, to try and get into the position of having an overhauled Fox axle in stock to be able, like we do with steering racks, to offer them on an exchange basis, something we probably should consider for Kittens too, but there are many more of them “out there” than Fox ones. On top of that, the thought of having to pack and post one is daunting, to me at any rate, more delegation would be needed methinks – should we make a wooden box for it like we once did for steering racks?

Off then on the Sunday morning to Birmingham and the ROC National Committee Meeting, which went well.

Then I was off south to Beaconsfield to my mum's cousin's. The low fuel warning light had come on on the M40 just before High Wycombe, and a quick glance on the sat nav told me there was a Shell garage just off the motorway, so a brief detour was made to top up. This was a series of firsts, the first time I have managed to cover over 500 miles on a tank of fuel, the first time I have been approached by a garage attendant and asked if I would like help filling the car up, and, shortly after leaving, having reset the trip recorder, on the long downhill stretch of the M40 between High Wycombe and Beaconsfield, the first time I had seen over 80 mpg on the car's computer! (I did do better than that at one point on the following Wednesday, but more on that later).

For those keeping a check, that tankful took 34.27 litres, and having covered 511 miles since the last top-up, I reckoned that was 67.79mpg, the car's computer however was telling me it was just 61.9. so, sometimes, it is out the other way!

It only then dawned on me that perhaps the reason it is called High Wycombe, is because of its altitude? Is there a Low Wycombe I wonder....

There was a mixed blessing there, Pamela, mum's cousin, is getting on, and sadly not in the best of health these days, her mobility is even worse than mine, but from my point of view this sad situation had one benefit, her new stair lift was a blessing to me, with all the bedrooms being upstairs.

Alan, her husband, or poor Alan, as all Pamela's friends call him these days, much to her annoyance (because he can't leave her on her own for long enough to get even 9 holes in on the golf course these days!) not only cooked a wonderful evening meal, always a candle lit dining table there, but a full English breakfast too, which we both enjoyed. He said he was so glad I had come, as Pamela does not have much of an appetite these days, and he wouldn't bother for just himself – see, I do still have my uses!

The old saying “many a true word spoken in jest” rings rather too true here, the sad fact is that were it not for Alan, she would be in a care home, not a thought she relishes, nor would any of us I should think.

My old fascination with song titles / words (from which I have spared you recently) springs to mind now, “Twas on the Monday morning that...” but there was no gas man to be seen, however my communication skills had been somewhat lacking, and confusion had arisen, Martin, with whom I was planning having elevenses at Caversham near Reading today, was not expecting me till tomorrow, and so he was not at home when I called!

Then I found that Grant, my next port of call at Aldwick near Portsmouth, had been unexpectedly called away for the day, but Sally, his wife, was expecting my call, and said to come anyway and see the car, the unique Steven's Sienna, and have lunch, which was very good of her, and much appreciated.

So, having been stood up twice in the one day (my fault the first time mind you!) I was apprehensive about the Tuesday, however it all came good in the end.

Finchampstead was my next port of call, where I was spending the night with Moira's cousin Paul, and his wife Christine and their 2 sons, both at uni, but they were at home this week.

I had never been to their house before, another first on this trip, and we only see each other about twice a decade if the past 40 years



are anything to go by, so there was much catching up to do.

I had an early rise, Christine works in the city, and has to catch the 06:10 train into London, that involves getting up just after 5 in the morning, I think she was surprised to find me at the dining room table, typing away on my laptop, when she came through from breakfast to see why the light was on!

I had intended to keep a diary of the trip as I went along, but my hopes of doing daily updates had been scuppered by so many late nights, not to say fatigue on my part in the evenings when we called it a night the right side of midnight (I was going to say a more truthful 11:00pm, but midnight sounds so much better!), and indeed it had been the following morning on a couple of occasions already on this trip.

It took me a couple of hours or so to roughly catch up, and there will no doubt be gaps to fill, however an outline would be a lot better than trying to rely entirely on my memory later!

Paul had arranged to work from home today, so there was no mad rush for me to be on my way. Given that I had not seen him for over a decade, barring one family funeral, it was really good to have a chance to catch up, and the bright morning sunlight made a tour of the garden, albeit from the wooden walkway above it, a delight. Like us they live at number 16, and, also like us (for now at any rate) they live at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac. Unlike us they have a fairly large garden running round 2 sides of the house, and a small front garden that is twice the size of our entire garden. The back and side bits are about a fifth of an acre, plenty of room for cricket and football. Oh, and I didn't mention the double garage did I?

On my way then to have elevenses with Martin, who I had managed to confuse about my plans yesterday. The funny thing was that his wife, Sarah, had in fact been about when I was there yesterday, but she was not expecting visitors, and their doorbell does not connect to her studio, which is under the house beside the garage, but it does not have a window. I was within ten feet of her yesterday, without either of us realising it!

Martin it was great to see you again, what a great collection of motorbikes, but I have digressed quite enough already!

I have not forgotten about the stiffness in your Kitten's steering, but nor have I had time to even think about how to address it, has it eased off at all?

Off then too see Joe at Reliant Spares, however my navigation was not up to the job, and my enjoyment (not a word I usually associate with driving the Jazz) of driving round the Malvern Hills, conspired to make me late getting there, even with Joe's guidance on the phone to help.

It was really great to see him waiting for me at the top of the lane in the Vantique that Michael Bentley used to own, yes, that is the same Michael who I had stayed with exactly a week ago. You have seen it on the front cover before in its Wensleydale Railway livery. John Box had allowed me, back about 1999 I think, put a few hundred miles on it before Michael bought it back then.

I was impressed with Joe's range of parts, and no less than 4 Tempests present in the workshop in various stages of build / re-build. He also had a Tandy camper that was bound for Belgium.

I was feeling tired today, and being late arriving, only had the one coffee, though I did succumb to one (or was it two?) of Joe's rather nice biscuits.

Off then to head to Keith & Glen's at Burntwood, but I ran into some quite unexpected heavy traffic, after covering a couple of hundred yards in the best part of ten minutes, I thought I had best 'phone ahead and advise my impending late arrival for the second time today!

Five minutes later I was on the motorway (I had had no idea I was that close to it when I made the call) and though the traffic was still heavy, it was moving well enough.

I was given my usual warm welcome and a hearty meal (no pies left by this time, as I felt they would have been past their best by now, a week into my travels). Keith had his new TANDY alloy rocker cover photographed and on "the 'net" within minutes, much to my surprise.

We had a good evening catching up before an early night, for once, my early start, and previous late nights, were catching up with me.

I had my second bath of the year on the Wednesday morning, but, like the one last Tuesday however, the effort in getting out of it, even though this one had low sides, undid much of the good of the steep, I fear that my days of enjoying a bath are numbered, if not a thing of the past. Showers are great, but just not the same as a good soak in a bath in my opinion. Perhaps a sunken bath with steps and handrails, one can dream.... Yes I know you can get walk in baths, but I can't imaging waiting in the bath with the door closed while it fills up.

Keith is progressing well with the renovation of his SS1 Scimitar, but we won't talk about that here! Both his Foxes are running well.

After unloading the Fox axle that Tom had kindly loaned to me to help resolve John Whitfield's problem, we loaded up the Jazz after breakfast, Glen is always generous with her home-made jams and pickles.

On then to call in on Graham Walker at Chester, for a long overdue meeting, before heading to Malcom and Jan Rush's where I was staying tonight, near Whitchurch. A stop at a passing Shell garage for a tank top up revealed 54.78 mpg for the last 409 miles rather than the optimistic 59.37 the computer in the car claimed! I need to visit Graham more often, he hardly had any time to chat, thanks to the biggest parts order he had had for many months – clearly my arrival prompted this good fortune, well, that's my story.

What I did manage do on this occasion was to venture up the staircase to his mezzanine museum, a display, more of Lotuses (or should that be Lotii?) than Reliants, but a lovely chesterfield to relax on with my coffee. And a good Scottish flavour in the pictures.

Thanks for the hospitality Graham, hopefully we will have more time to chat next time.

Then I made what turned out to be a bad decision. Because I was ahead of schedule, I opted to visit Glossop again, something I had not intended to do till tomorrow, but it was only 35 miles away, and I had a couple of hours or so in hand.

I had however reckoned without the traffic. The first 28 miles went just fine, then I spent half an hour covering 3 miles, I did consider

turning round, but by then I was only 4 miles away. It would have been a lot less stressful just to have abandoned the attempt, but I persevered, and ruined the otherwise good fuel consumption figures for the day (if not the entire trip!)

I had filled the tank this morning, and, seeing a Shell garage on my way back to the motorway, I was very tempted to stop again and top up, just to separate that bit of the trip, as I had done in Yorkshire, but I was already over an hour late, and so I just reset the trip at the start of the motorway, which also just happens to be at the top of a long hill.

The average MPG figure by the time I had to open the throttle after my initial acceleration was 147.5, yes, that's right, one hundred and forty seven and a half miles to the gallon! very impressive, (though, as you know the computer is rather optimistic most of the time, but hey, why spoil a good story with facts?) it was by far the best ever recorded by me, but it was quite distressing to watch it fall back to 75 over the next 15 miles, I guess I need to pump the tires up even harder in future!

As on the way over, the first 20 miles went just fine, till I came to a "Road ahead closed" sign, and a less than clearly signed diversion. This is the kind of situation that a sat nav is absolutely no use in dealing with, and my eyesight in the fading light is simply not up to map reading by interior light these days, so a frustrating 20 minutes or so followed, until I found myself close enough to work things out, phew! Malcolm and Jan, my apologies once again for my late arrival.

After a lovely meal, thanks Jan, we spent a relaxing evening catching up before a much needed early night.

Thursday morning now, and after breakfast I was off in search of someplace that Moira might find interesting, with an eye to our trip back to this neck of the woods at the end of July.

Tarporely comes very close, but I could not find any suitable accommodation, so I widened my search area, but to no avail.

It is amazing how quickly time passes, admittedly the time it takes me these days just to get out of the car and cover a few yards to talk to people, dramatically affected how many I could fit into the few hours I had available.

So, by mid-afternoon I abandoned the attempt, and headed for the sanctuary of the Box residence (the old Tempest factory) at Burton, where John had the fire going in short time, and another evening of most enjoyable catching up followed one of Jackie's excellent dinners. Thank you both as ever.

Friday then, and after breaking the fast with John, it was off and onto the M6 at the service area just west of John & Jackie's, I find it saves a few minutes to do that, rather than plod through the village.

I had, on this occasion, remembered John Graham, having missed him on the way down, and on my last trip. It was great to catch up with him at Tesco's on the A69 just outside Carlisle an hour later, where we enjoyed a coffee and chat, which was the icing on the cake. Actually I had a Kit-kat with my coffee, too late now to make much difference to my weight!

Off then through almost the first rain of the trip, for the last 100 miles of what had been an 1,800 plus mile adventure. I even took the time to treat the car to yet another a much needed wash in Renfrew before I got home.

The overall fuel consumption worked out at a not at all shabby 57.33, (not the 60 plus I had hoped for, and actually expected, but you have read of the extenuating circumstances on the preceding pages). Of course the weather was good, the tyres rather on the hard side, (2 of them snow tyres) and the top speed only exceeded than your average HGV on a very few occasions. Mind you, for a petrol powered car that only has 2 pedals, nae bad at all really, though a way off what old Sammy Citroen used to manage, but then he was diesel!

One point I probably ought to make, is that the Honda has both the most accurate speedometer and mileometer that I have ever had in a car. Distances are almost 5% shorter in it compared to my Reliants, and 2% less that old Sammy Citroen used to tell me. Sammy's speedo was very accurate at high speed, though I must confess that I have never felt inclined to drive the Jazz as briskly as I was happy to make progress with the BX, perhaps that is as much a lifestyle or age thing mind you, and it does have the added bonus of helping to avoid incurring the wrath of Mr. Plod!

Will I ever have such a great time again? Watch this space....

## Cipher update, July 2016

So to start the story of this mechanical refurbishment. For the past couple of years the Cipher has been running around with a little 850 engine putting out over 60BHP, and as the car is not a trailer queen, it has been clocking up the miles, and even did the daily commute whilst one of the family cars was having to have serious repairs. Towards the end of last year (2015) though, the Cipher developed a bad cough, and was sent to rest in the garage whilst we worked out the problem. A family illness and death intervened, and frankly not much got done... With it turning the mid part of 2016, and with things getting back to some form of normality, it was time to haul the Cipher out of storage and to the new house for a lot of mechanical TLC.

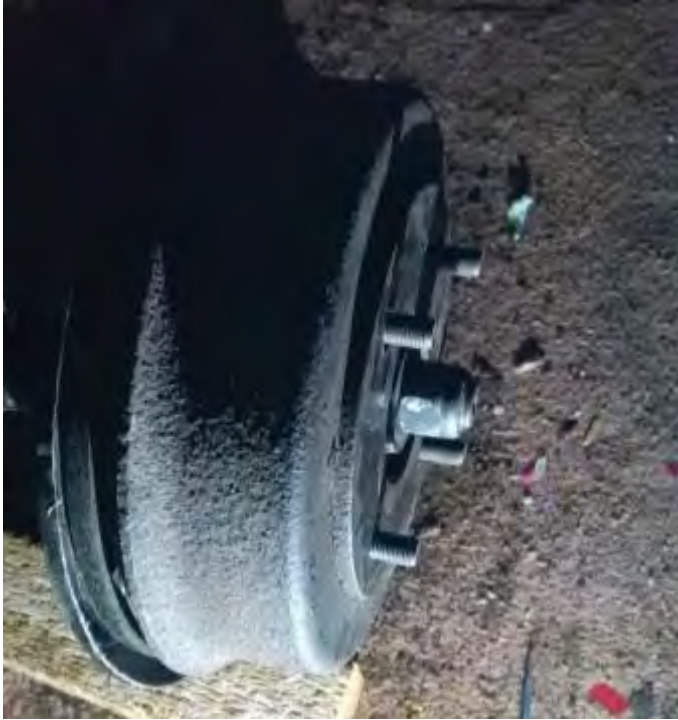


Whilst the Cipher had been away, a new set of 13" wheels had arrived - to allow for the disk brake upgrade that will go on the Cipher. Unfortunately, it was impossible to save the 12" wheels at the front – but after discovering they were a replacement for the original wheels when Tony sold the car to its first owner, I didn't feel so bad swapping them, as the original 5 spoke alloys had now long gone.



Now the 13" wheels on a Ciper work fine on the front - just simply add new wheel studs, a 10mm spacer, and a couple of plastic shims on the rack. But the back axle is a different story - it requires 15mm spacing to clear the rear springs. For the Ciper that could mean using 2 spacers together (5+10mm) or get a custom spacer made. But with the thickness of the alloy wheel, that would need wheel studs longer than the 55mm ones used at the front (standard are 35mm) - probably 65mm. This got me thinking there must be a better way to do the whole thing.

So one thing that could be done is to use a Reliant Fox drum and 10mm Spacers, Fox drums are not only sturdier than the Kitten drum, but also have a 5mm spacer built in (see photo below) - so change the studs to 55mm add a 10mm Mini wheel spacer and Bing! You're done.



But then, after thinking about the Fox drum, I realised that if I swapped the Kitten van axle (which Ciphers use), for a Fox Axle - as the axle is a fair bit longer in the axle tubes than the Kitten one, I could do away with the spacers altogether, and thus achieve a proper engineered solution. I would have thought it is probably a solution Reliant itself would have followed if it had built the Cipher. Now, Fox axles are rare, and not only that, they have a gear ratio of 1:4 (rather than the 1:3.5 Kitten Van which the Cipher uses). Fortunately, I had a Fox axle to hand, and with a lot of help from Keith, (thanks again Keith) the new internals were fitted to give a gear ratio of 1:3.23 (standard Kitten). There is a good reason for upping the axle ratio. Whilst this will slightly reduce the Cipher's acceleration, it will fortunately make it cruise at motorway and 'A' road speeds a lot better. Certainly it will be a lot quieter, so it won't make my ears bleed anymore!

So the old axle was dropped from the chassis, and the nicely cleaned upgraded Fox axle presented to it.





Just before I fitted it, I realised that it was the ideal opportunity to repaint/reproof the back chassis - there wasn't any rust, but the paint was looking tired and access was now fantastic - too good to miss. This delayed things by a couple of weeks, as painting the chassis, and work, got in the way of progress - but by the end of it we had a beautifully painted back of the chassis to match the axle! The front of the chassis got done when the engine was sorted – although this story will be for another time. So on with the braided Kitten brake hose....



And I added a new pair of adjustable rear shocks to the axle.



Once this was all done it was put back together and attached back onto the Cipher – and the back wheels were then put on.





I then checked the back wheels' clearance from the springs - which were a healthy 8mm per side - which is what Dave (Green Cipher) has achieved with spacers - so all good and on the money. Additionally, the wheels are well within the arches - which is a good thing - I won't bore you with the carefully prepared vertical photo which just shows the body work and my feet that I took to check it though!!



So, all done and back on the ground with an upgraded and refurbished rear axle - and no spacers on the back - even with 13" wheels - a big success, although it did take some time.

What's to come next? - well there is a refurb. prop shaft to match the axle to go on - and of course and engine and gearbox to remove, and a few other minor things to sort before we can head off for the MOT - but that will all have to wait till next time!

Simon Fitch, No. 939 from Wellesbourne.

*I am just back from 6 days south of the border, yes, again! Moira and I went to Llangollen, tied the trip to Wales in with a long overdue visit to see Jeff and Sue Sharrock in Threapwood near Wrexham, and then on via Glossop for a couple of nights in Scarborough with Adrian Hanwell, of course you know Adrian, just look inside the front cover near the top.*

*We had a wonderful time, and I am expecting a lot of feedback and many pictures were taken, so perhaps, just this once, since it is our Silver Anniversary, we just might treat you to an extra edition. I am not promising, a lot will depend on the input I receive from those who were there, but, as they say, watch this space!*

.....

Hi Brian,

16/7/16

I'm advised by David Roots that he has made a standard collectors' scale 1/43 model of the Mk1 CIPHER. The master model was hand made, and the model is made from a set of solid resin castings. Models are available from [www.theessenceofthecar.co.uk](http://www.theessenceofthecar.co.uk) priced at £48 incl. postage, you can find it under the GT and Sports car section.

Regards, Dave (Corby) No. 980 from Colchester

.....

*My thanks to Simon and Dave. Oh, I can tell you that Simon made it in the CIPHER, and the new axle ratio is a great success. Ed.*

## Epilogue.

Here we are once again, though I have to confess that I am typing this in July, a week before we plan to head south to Llangollen, and there are less than 2 blank pages in here, and I just know that there will be more input before this goes to print in about 7 weeks' time - or, then again.... I never ever imagined being this far ahead, and I had a long chat yesterday about the Liege Car Club's 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary do that took place earlier this year, and I have been promised articles and pictures. Alan Shaw kindly sent me some details on an alternator support bracket that he has designed, which will be much less prone to failure than the original, thank you Alan.

**No, I am not making this monthly!!!** But....

Right, the goodie bags for Llangollen arrived last week, I have still to pack them, and generally get organised before we head off.

Sue (Sharrock), thanks for the call, we do hope to see (have seen by now!) you and Jeff a week on Saturday, all being well. (he said on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July)

I've told you before about how Jeff's Jensen took exactly the same time to reach peak revs in first and second gears as my Rebel, the slight difference being the speed the vehicles were doing after that time, just under 30 in the Rebel, and something very illegal (about three times that) in the Jensen's case, and it weighed a lot more than the Rebel! Indeed I suspect its 7 litre engine weighed more than the Rebel! (It had a 3 speed auto box). Happy memories indeed, thanks again Jeff.

O.K., I'll detain you no longer, you have ball joints to grease and or trunnions to oil, don't you?!? Till next time, which just might be quite soon, take care.

*Brian*

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