

# RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



## Mewsletter 134

January - February 2017



*As this is an Asquith themed edition, here's a picture of an Asquith.... Problem is we know nothing about this vehicle, not even where this picture came from!!! I've tried to trace the van to no avail... Does it still exist?? Help appreciated please!!!!*

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*The Register caters for all the under 1 litre Reliant 4-wheeled vehicles plus all of their derivatives: Foxes, Rebels, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, Jimps, Asquiths, Vantiques and all other specials including the Liege.....*



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The Register is a member of the FBHVC, which monitors UK & EU legislation and lobbies on our behalf to protect our freedom to use vehicles of all ages on the roads. Readers are invited to show their own support of this worthy cause by becoming members in their own right. Contact the editor for details.

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# **Dinky Cars**

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E & o e

A (perhaps now a little belated) Happy New Year to you and yours.

I don't know if it is an age, or a condition related thing, or just my imagination, but I have become aware of a trend of bad communications.

Several instances over the past year or so have left me thinking, wow, that is not what I understood the position to be! Now I have no problem with most surprises, but misunderstandings frustrate me, and they seem to be increasing in frequency of late.

So, let me try to address a couple of potential mis-understandings - if nothing else it will make me feel better, and, purely from a selfish point of view, that has to be a good thing to do!

**Alloy rocker covers**, for which Phil Hallam deserves much credit, these are available to you for £70 delivered. I do advertise them on ebay at £88 plus £15 for insured delivery, with the observation that Register subscribers should contact me directly, but I don't think I have actually said anything within these pages for a while about them. I assume that you know these things, but, as you probably know, I am the first to advise anyone who will listen, that one ought never to make assumptions about anything!

Always keen to delegate, I was impressed with the quality of Keith and Clive's latest batch of big bore Kitten exhausts, (they do Fox ones too) there is a picture somewhere, page 28? Oh, and I must remember to update you on progress with the Mk II Kitten. (P. 26/27)

On a personal front, my daily task list has now (at the end of December) grown to be over a page long, with more than 40 things to do, today! The result is that most of those small, or in some cases not so small, jobs, get carried forward to tomorrow's list, and, for some weeks now, the list has been growing, instead of shrinking – or at worst remaining constant!

I am not sure if I need to just work harder, cut corners, get a secretary or what? Not getting sidetracked and or distracted would help. But I need to do something, or I fear I am going to get really badly bogged down. My mother's dementia is not going to improve, and I finally bit the bullet, and composed an appropriate, well, as appropriate as I could make it, letter, to send to the 74 souls who used to be on her Christmas Card list – she has not sent cards for a couple of years or so (and had declined our offers to do so for her). To date I am only about a third of the way through that task, but already replies, both letters and 'phone calls (no e-mails so far!) are coming in. It has been wonderful to catch up with people, some of who I have not seen since I was a child – and no, that was not yesterday! but it all conspires to keep me back from doing other things!!

This time of year (he said, the week before Christmas!) has extra demands, and Moira, having just had a much needed break in the sun, afforded me opportunities of which I took full advantage. Perhaps I was a little too ambitious there, but I had great fun, and made some serious progress on a number of fronts, which while very energy and fund sapping, was really good, great even.

In that regard I must thank John Box, Phil Callies, Alan Shaw, Yoland and Roger Brown, Gari and Do Jones, Andrew Norman, Keith and Glen Gittus, and Michael and Janet Bentley in particular, not to mention one time Formula one racing driver, now a Sky T.V. F1 sports commentator, Johnny Herbert, (my dilemma now is, should I tell (Sir) Jackie Stewart what he was saying about him in public!?!) for helping make the end of November and beginning of December both memorable and thoroughly enjoyable. (Yes, I sneaked in three days away south of the border after Moira headed for the sun!)

Anyway, that is more than enough from me.

Talk later. Ed.

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## New Year message from the Oval Office

I hope all our members and their families will have a happy and peaceful New Year and, perhaps, get that project in the workshop completed. I think our cars need a boost to their profile; early Kittens now qualify for 'historic' taxation status, so make sure your 75/76 Kitten's registration document is revised so that it qualifies for zero road tax. I have in mind a comprehensive article in Practical Classics, so if one of you out there is completing a full Kitten rebuild, with photographic coverage, please let us know so that we can share the fun they give with the world outside. Do not forget that all Brian's very hard work on the Mewsletter and parts distribution comes at a cost, so please send in your 2017 subscriptions as soon as possible.

My kind regards to all of you. John

Dear Brian,

I just wanted to say a **big** thank you for putting together the 'anniversary special', it's a great magazine and a fitting tribute to a great weekend we all had in Llangollen. Also, thank you for the special plaque, I've not decided where to stick it yet but it'll certainly be worn proudly on the van. I'd fully intended sending some photos for the Mewsletter but the time has simply flown by this year, and the ones sent in by other members of 'the family' are a great record of the event.

However, I wanted to send the attached photo to you, as without these people it simply wouldn't have happened, so a big '**thank you**' to you all. (I know you saw this last time, this is just a reminder / acknowledgement) Responses on Page 7.



Since Llangollen I'm pleased to say the Kitten van won a trophy for the 'Best Commercial Vehicle' at a local show run by the Yorkshire Thoroughbred Car Club, admittedly there wasn't a big turnout of vans but it was still nice for a little Reliant to win a prize. I normally go to the Tamworth Heritage Weekend Gathering but Steve Casey and myself thought we'd have a change of scenery this year so we went to the National Microcar Rally which was held in Wem, Shropshire. Being just down the road from Malcolm I asked if he fancied coming along too but he was making the most of the really good weather and having a

weekend on Anglesey in his Commer camper van (which is the subject of a 6 page feature in the December issue of Classic Van & Pickup magazine - there's a good "plug" for the RKR too - nice one, Malcolm). There was a bigger turnout of Reliants at Wem than I'd expected; in addition to the two Kitten vans there was Keith and Katrina Mellors' Fox camper, a yellow Tempest from Manchester and a very nice Regal 21E, plus a line of Bond Bugs! It's funny how the Kittens look so tiny when you see them parked alongside other cars, especially the modern so-called small cars, but when they're in a field full of microcars they look so 'grown up' and, dare I say it, 'normal'!

With best wishes to Moira and yourself.

Take care, Tony (Wiese) No. 967 from Wakefield

.....

**Responses to the picture caption question were varied :-**

Hi Brian :-" Four wheels, under 1000 cc, tax and mot exempt, agreed put in for Historic class." Sorry, Keith.

The picture did remind me of the concourse tent, thought I had better steer away from comments about the bodywork showing its age. Keith.

.....

John Graham, our man in Carlisle (well, to be fair, one of them!) No.158, tells me he is too much of a gentleman to make any comments about the gazebo or its occupants.

He also tells me that he had looked on the internet for an inexpensive Kitten, only to discover that there is no such thing now!

.....

Charles (Braid, No. 1016 from Prestwich near Manchester), who I quote slightly out of context here, the following was part of his letter which you will read a page or so on from here –

“Gee” !!! “That’s the fastest four wheeled Reliant I have ever seen – I didn’t even get its number plate written down!”

## *Replace or refurbish?*

Perhaps the heading should read Renew or Refurbish? An old chestnut which was aired recently by James Holland, who asked the question :- So, when it comes to restoration, what is your idea of it? I mean, do you replace everything? Or clean, repair and paint everything?

Mine is the latter. If you replace everything it's a new motor. Not a restored one, in theory!

So, Restore or Replace? James Holland January 2017

*I guess a lot depends on your interpretation of the word **repair**? Ed.*

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## *Liege Page*

*One happy result of my circulating the last edition to all known Liege owners is that Colin Marshall (no relation) decided to join us, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December wrote thus :-*

Liege No. 31 (Swampy) has been in continuous use for 14 years now, covering around 45,000 milers, and has never failed to arrive at its destination.

The first 12 years included three MCC Classic long distance trials each year, and earning the coveted Peter Davis Gold Badge for achieving MCC Gold as well as doing the Le/Liege/Jog, while Reliant powered.

More recently Suzuki powered, we've been to the west coast of Ireland, the Isle of Man, France, Switzerland and Italy, this year driving the Great Glen, Skye and Mull.

I don't know if you can play mp4 video on your computer, but in case you can I enclose a copy of our drive over the St. Bernard pass into Switzerland. It's quite long, but it is interesting to see how the scenery changes with elevation, and how different the Italian road safety standards are.

Kind regards. Colin Marshall No. 1042 from Ellwood





Colin Marshall in "Swampy", with the late Geoff Hughes navigating.

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## *Asquith*

A convoluted history

(With some interesting connections!)

I have to thank Bob Neal, one time Historian of the Reliant Owners' Club, (a post now ably held by our very own John Pearce) and his wife Barbara, a long-standing subscriber to this Register (having been with us since 1992 no less) for being good enough to remind me that I had not shone the light on the Reliant aspect (never mind any other aspect!) Of the Asquith vans for a while – if ever (see this memory....)

Anyway, as I understand it, thank you Bob... Crispin Reed and Bruce West ran a furniture business, well, to be specific a reproduction furniture business. And during a quiet time they were going through in the early 1980's, they decided to set up the Asquith Motor Company in Braintree in Essex - I'll give you one guess where Bob and Barbara live... Oh no I won't - (it begins with an E and ends with a x) sorry, pantomime season will have ended by the time you are reading this, but it is at its peak just now, he said between Christmas and the New Year!

As I was saying Messers Reed and West, AKA Crispin and Bruce decided that it would be a good diversification, not to say potential money making scheme, if they were to produce some 1930's style replica vans to sell as mobile adverts for businesses, including their own. These could of course also serve as every day delivery vehicles, never mind giving some work to their own business during any other quiet times they might experience.

They began using the popular Tranny as a platform from which to work, Dagenham being just along the road (did Ford build the Transit at Dagenham? oh well, call it editorial licence if they didn't!) Somebody once said that one ought never to spoil a good story with facts, I seem to recall!

In 1984 Hunnable Holdings, you guessed, still in Essex, though at Yeldham this time, acquired the rights and moulds for the Asquith vehicles.

At its peak I believe that Asquith employed about twice as many people as HRG ever did, I really must sit down with Dick Watson and a tape recorder sometime, and help him write his autobiography, I am sure that "The Dick Watson Story" would sell well in motoring circles, (HRG, at their peak, I believe employed twelve people, they existed for a – oh my, I don't know how long, a decade or so perhaps in the 1950' & '60s And Dick, one of those twelve, was their apprentice, before going on to be a Formula one mechanic, moving on to AC no less, when he decided to calm down a bit and stop globe-trotting, but I am digressing too far now) doing the same thing (sitting down with a recording device and helping write an interesting book of life experiences) with the likes of John Box, Alan Shaw, Adrian Hanwell, and goodness knows how many others, is on my list too, and I really struggle with priorities these days, sorry, as I was saying.... Oh yes, thanks Bob.

The Shire, oh no, how did we get onto horses?.. No, really, the Shire and the Mascot were a 3 ton van, and a wee bus, a dozen or dozen and a half seater, which Asquith first produced. However, now we get to it.... The Shetland, was a somewhat lighter van that Asquith produced in small number, built on Reliant running gear.

I believe that they did also succeed in getting approval for a retro style Asquith Taxi for use in London in the mid 1990's. I do not know how many of these were produced, they did get into double figures I

believe, just (nothing like the relatively vast numbers of Reliant produced Metro Taxis though, but I am digressing again..). I gather that someone must have had great influence or cunning, and or skill here, as the story goes, I am told, that the first of those Asquith Taxis was allocated Taxi plate number 1. A number that had not been seen on a London Taxi for decades!

At the risk of digressing yet again, well, it is still Christmas, almost... I remember being well impressed when John Sawle first appeared with his Liege bearing the registration number L1 EGE. Some people do think ahead and execute plans so well, don't they? And to think that some so and so of a spoilsport in a certain licensing office decided that it would be a bad idea to issue ROB 1N I don't know.... Really..... some people.... There was a time when you could walk into a licensing office and ask to reserve a number that you knew would be coming up, aahhh, those were the days.. More recently, it really is strange, well, it seems so to me, just how many Kittens and Rebels were first registered with numbers containing multiple identical digits, a study for another day methinks!

Back to our story, the firm, Asquith, was out of business by 1998. One Mike Edgar buying the assets from the liquidator, hoping to re-start production. Costs were just too high here however, and so he looked overseas.. Germany, Dresden no less, being where he finally settled on for a news production facility, or should that be assemble facility – I honestly do not know which! Now, yes, digressing yet again.. I have a wee red booklet of pictures, each page separated with a sort of greaseproof / tissue paper, of postcard like pictures of Dresden, taken in the days of paddle steamers, before there were many, if any motor cars, decades before we burned it to the ground towards the end of the second world war, (was that in retaliation for Coventry? my history is not that good sadly) Dresden had truly been a most beautiful city.

Anyway, it was now the turn of the century, you know, the one that began a decade and a half ago, but a bad flood of the Elbe, *or should that be Elba? **Able was I ere I saw Elba**, is I think the longest palindrome I know, but no, that was in a different part of the world, and a place rather than a river - I think, oh my, I'm really losing it now!!!* in 2001, sadly put paid to those plans.

Asquith was then acquired in 2003 by one Simon Rhodes, he re-branded it as the Asquith Motor Company Limited, subsequently

acquiring, from Doncaster no less, it's o.k., relax, I won't tell you about "our" pattern maker there! He in fact is the other side of the A1 from Doncaster at New Edlington, and what, or perhaps more to the point who I will tell you about at New Edlington quite by chance, are our very own George and Emma Rees who live there, and they run – yes, you guessed, an Asquith van! (In fear of spoiling a good story with facts, I must in fairness tell you that George and Emma did live in New Edlington when I met them, but they have since moved a few miles south to Braithwell, oh well....)

You have to admit, that was a long way for a shortcut!  
Sometimes I just can't help myself!!

Back to facts, well, or as close to them as I can get these days, I think I am correct in saying that in total, though all its re-incarnations, Asquith were responsible for the construction of about a thousand or so vehicles over a couple of decades. Not all were Ford or Reliant based, the later ones used an Iveco chassis and running gear I am told.

Of the Fox based ones that are known to this Register, just 7 of them, personalised plates excepted, they go from being "A" registered to "H" registered, with chassis numbers (including the personalised plate ones) ranging from the high 400's to just over 600 (looking at the last 3 digits of their SCD chassis numbers).

My thanks as I mentioned at the beginning, to Bob Neal, for being the catalyst that motivated me to fill the last few pages. Our current Asquith owning folk, George and Emma Rees, Neil Kenneally, Rafal and Jola Bogan and others, who continue to fly the Reliant based Asquith flag.

Right, so, January / February was **A**, what can I use beginning with **B** for March / April....?? Did I hear you cry – "Mercy"....??? The solution is simple, **write to me!!**

And I am out of space at the end of this page to share a couple of Asquith pictures, see over – like the one of the front cover, we do not know much at all about these ones!



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## *From your renewal notices :-*

Dear Brian,

Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> 2016

BBY 969T is slowly regaining its former glory, but there is still a lot to do, mainly new window seals (All of them). Rubbing down the bodywork (it appears to have been hand painted with emulsion, or a white water based paint, in the rail!) It has thousands of like popped minute bubble marks which take some rubbing down to the basic fibreglass bodyshell. The front end is now about 60-70% blob free, but with winter here now and no garage to work in, it makes further progress difficult. But with luck, good health (me), and some decent weather, she should be back on the road in quite sound condition by summer / mid summer 2017.

I met a guy at the local “old car show” / car boot sale – he had a Rebel estate which he stated had a 1,600 Capri engine factory fitted in what he said was a very limited run of such cars built.

Ford, he stated, had put a stop to Reliant producing such Rebels, as it was in direct competition with the Capri, which Fords did not want! It was allegedly an ultimatum, “If you carry on with this idea then no

more 3 litre Capri engines for your Scimitars from us”

*Interesting this, as I thought the 1,600cc Rebel project was a one off, a saloon, and it was Reliant that didn't want the embarrassment of it out-running the Scimitar, well, perhaps not out running, but certainly quicker up to 60 or so! Also, I understood it had been broken up at the factory – but like the BRM OHC engines, not every instruction there was carried out to the letter – thankfully! Ed.*

*On the subject of Ford supplied power units for the big Scimitars, it has come to light that the engines sold to Reliant, or at any rate the heads on such engines, were, as I now understand things, often ones which had failed initial quality control checks at Ford, and had been re-worked to save them from being scrapped. Such re-working however was not as long lasting as might have been hoped, and has, over the years, or is that decades now! caused countless headaches for those trying to refurbish the Ford V6 used in the big Scimitars. Ed*

I gave him my details, but so far, no contact has been made.

Wishing you and yours all the very best for Christmas and the New Year, and thank you for producing such an interesting, informative and humorous magazine.

Lang may yer lum reek.

Charles, over and out (No. 1016, from Prestwich near Manchester.)

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Steve Head (No. 1013 from Andover) tells me that his Kitten estate is enjoying life with the engine that James Holland rebuilt for it, and it sailed through the MOT last month. Good to know Steve, long may this happy state of affairs continue.

.....

Darren was asking me, many months ago, if I knew where he could get a set of Reliant camshaft bushes (A E REF. C3058 S)?

I must be confused, perhaps the Jowett connection from the

distant past, I know the Javelin and Jupiter flat 4 has the camshaft run just against the aluminum of the crankcase. It was (confession time!) news to me that the Reliant engine had camshaft bearings, we need a Technical Information Officer!

Can you help with a supplier for camshaft bearings?

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David Miller (No. 965 from Leighton Buzzard) had the misfortune to require a loan of Alan Shaw's cylinder head removal tool during the summer, but the car is back on the road again. My thanks to John Pearce for returning the tool to Alan, and thank you too Alan.

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Dave Richmond, (No. 338 from Hayes in Middlesex) is one of those guys who has been with us for over two decades now. Dave, like quite a few of our readers will be relatively safe when the internet comes crashing down, as he is one of a perhaps surprisingly large group of our readers who is perfectly happy not to be "on-line". In truth I worry just as much for such individuals as I do for the rest of us Lemmings, but that is another story for another day, if not another publication!

Dave tells me that both his Fox and Rebel are running well, and that the Rebel has vastly improved starting abilities, not only from cold, but more noticeably so when hot, since he fitted a ballast resisted coil to it. *(from my admittedly somewhat shaky memory these days, I seem to recall that "fitting a ballast resisted coil" is not quite as simple and straightforward as the sentence might suggest, that said, I don't think it is that complicated either, perhaps time for a technical article? Ed.)*

*Though I most sincerely hope that I will have attended to it long before you read this, I will send you the Fox suspension bushes you asked for Dave.*

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Alan Plews, No. 819 from Falkirk tells me that it is 7 years now since he last saw his old Kitten, and he thinks it is now appropriate that he called time on his subscription. Alan enclosed a donation with his complimentary note wishing the Register well for the future. I will send him a copy of this one to say both goodbye and thank you.

# Tempest Update

Hi Brian,

December 2016

Sorry you have had nothing from me for some time - the fact is nothing has happened in the Tempest world, not even any new things from Joe.

However, you can let people know that Yoland has booked the usual pitch for ShACC at Stoneleigh (29th April - 1st May) where all Tempest owners are very welcome.

We will have a barbecue on the Sunday, please let me know if you will be there.

Roger Brown

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## *Llangollen 2017*

I can tell you that the response to Malcolm's request in the supplement that went out with the last Mews for suggestions, ideas and input, in particular regarding a date, have been greeted with a deafening silence.

Now we could take that to mean that you are quite happy with the way things are organised, and that is fine. You know by now I am sure, how much I love a benign dictatorship – but Malcolm is perfectly happy to consider your thoughts and ideas.

**Time is running out however, so if you want your ideas considered, please act now.**

Malcolm can be contacted on [rkrshowpostbox@gmail.com](mailto:rkrshowpostbox@gmail.com)

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## Stevens Sienna-Prototype Resto Pt 4



A before shot.

With the chassis complete I was able to admire the framework finished in gloss black, now able to offer many more decades of motoring, although the vision was somewhat let down by the rear axle covered in years of thick grime; a guilty oil seal was at fault here.



And after many hours, and a couple of quid!

Removal was fairly straight forward and the opportunity arose to take out the driveshaft after making location marks at either end. The fuel tank was removed over a year ago when we tested the vinegar and baking soda method of cleaning. Once we had evicted years of solidified fuel, the inside of our tank looked new; to preserve this, a mix of oil and petrol was 'sloshed' around and to this day it remains spotless. The suspension has received a makeover and was reassembled with little fuss, apart from when we tightened the new ball joints the steering wheel became very difficult to turn. More than a little worried I bothered all the leading authorities on the Lotus derived Reliant set up. The reaction I received was 'don't panic it will be fine once the weight is returned to the wheels'. Really? Once the car is back on the deck the steering should work normally; to be honest I wasn't convinced, and would have to wait to be sure as the wheel refurbishment was still on going.

## Up-rated Stoppers



Before, and after many more hours and a lot more than a couple of quid!!

Joe Mason from Reliant Spares obviously carries a wealth of knowledge on anything that originated from the Tamworth factory but also mods and upgrades to improve performance. I was keen to try out the disc brake conversion which should not only improve the Sienna's ability to stop, but also aid handling but first we had to make all fit. The kit arrived and each side consists of a spacer, mounting bracket, disc,

caliper and carrier also pads and a wheel spacer plus various bolts. Luckily, I was able to follow a Stevens Cipher owner Dave Corby having recorded the same upgrade in the Reliant Kitten newsletter only a couple of months prior.



Brake disc conversion kit with spacers this went together quite well.

Once the old drums are removed the stub assembly needs to be cleaned perfectly, the spacers need a perfectly flat surface to sit correctly. Mounting bracket followed and all was going swimmingly and we ground the corners from my original hub so it would fit easily into the VW discs supplied. Whilst Joe's conversion has been developed over the years, it is worth pointing out that when fitting modern parts to a 40 year old car it is unlikely to just bolt together first time; some re-engineering maybe required. The wheel spacer wouldn't sit flat over the old hub and the inner edge required grinding back at 45 degrees to accommodate. My caliper carrier looked resplendent in red gloss but much of that needed to be removed for a flat edge plus several edges ground back as they were catching the disc. That said, once the carrier fitted correctly the Ford caliper (I believe they are Fiesta) looks comfortable and we had the minutest of runout, so once new hoses arrive we can bleed the all new system.



Snug fit inside the freshly blasted GKN Silverstone 13in rims.

The original master cylinder was as old as the car, so following some sound advice from Simon Fitch (Cipher owner) I swapped it out for a new single exit MGB version.



Refurbished rear axle with freshly painted prop shaft turned out quite well.

The rear drums have also enjoyed new shoes and wheel cylinders, so whatever else, the Sienna should stop; but first we need to make it go.

## The Motor

Under the bonnet could only be described as grim, therefore a degrease of the block was our first task, followed by the removal of oil stains from the driveway after getting 'told off' yet again. Alan fitted new hoses after we flushed the system through several times, this followed warnings from various sources of corrosion issues within the Reliant engine if left unused. The rocker cover received fresh paint which offered the opportunity to reset the tappets and check for excessive wear. New ignition leads with coil and a full tidy of the maze of wiring continued to improve the motors presentation and a sexy air filter and braided fuel lines added some bling. Alan took away the carb for its ultrasonic bath and on its return the mirror finish was good enough to shave in.



Alan serviced the Reliant motor completed with a quality oil change

Encouraged by our success the drive shaft and rear axle also enjoyed a degrease (got in trouble for that one too) and several coats of paint to match. New gaskets, seals and bushes courtesy of Phil at Reliant Specialist Brook Hill Garage meant just coolant and Shell X100 oil remained before we could run up and check for leaks. No oil escaped but coolant drips required re-tightening of every hose and connection, whilst the exhaust chose this very moment to give up on the world, and blow from several places. The Sienna's exhaust was 'homemade' forty odd years ago, so we will re-manufacture a new system, losing the rear end exit by fitting a Mini box and bringing the tail pipe out of the side; just prior to the rear wheel.

The list of 'to do's is still lengthy and whilst the garage is packed with semi prepared parts from the Sienna we had reached the point where it cannot get any worse, the time has arrived to start assembling the car again.

Grant Ford for Classiccarmag.net - [www.grantford.co.uk](http://www.grantford.co.uk)

Thanks to Simon Fitch- [www.stevens-cipher.com](http://www.stevens-cipher.com)

Brian Marshall Reliant Kitten Register- [www.kitreg.org.uk](http://www.kitreg.org.uk)

Next time :- My GKN Silverstone wheels enjoy paint, rubber and super bespoke centre caps.

Alan redesigns the dash with some really novel features.

We have a rolling chassis at last, but without a floor it's tricky to drive!

~~~~~

Just reporting back to Brian and John.

November 2016

The vehicle is now back on the road, and going better than before its operation. Whether the cost involved is worthwhile only time will tell.

We noticed on re-assembling that the distributor shaft was a wee bit wobbly. Would it be sensible to do something about this? If so, do we know of a source of recon distributors?

Thank you both once again. Without your help we wouldn't be where we are.

Dave (Miller) No. 269 from Leighton Buzzard.

*And below, John's answer to Dave's original question about electronic ignition systems :-*

Hi Dave,

21/11/16

Over time the bushes in the distributor do wear allowing axial play in the shaft. Also the pins and springs of the bob-weight assembly wear allowing radial play. This effectively makes the points gap "variable" leading to inaccurate ignition timing. Not urgent if the car is running OK but it will need to be addressed sometime.

The problem is worse on later Reliants, mainly post 1992 or thereabouts when Lucas stopped fitting bushes in the distributor bodies and had the shafts running in just the alloy casting, and even worse still with very late Reliant engines when the distributor was changed completely for an Indian manufactured one which was all but useless even when new. Luckily though the "update(?)" was reversible and I doubt that there are many still in use, most having been replaced with the earlier design.

There are several companies who can recondition your distributor, but it would be cheaper to buy a brand new one, again these are easily available, usually coming as electronic ignition kits. Simple to fit, just a couple of wires to connect, once strobed up the timing need never be touched again. I run one on my Kitten, been on there 4 years now. The two main suppliers of these kits though are very different in quality.

The "Powerspark" kits (used to be called "SimonBBC) are not as well regarded as the "Accuspark" kits, which are very well regarded. Neither is particularly expensive, but the Powerspark is cheaper than the Accuspark. Neither supplier gets good reviews for customer help/service though, but the Reliant community have fitted hundreds of these to their cars, so there's a wealth of help and advice available should you hit problems..... With Kittens and Foxes, few people have experienced problems with either kit, but in the more confined area of the three-

wheeler engine bay, many of the Powespark/SimonBBC units have failed due to overheating. I know of no Accuspark units that have failed.

A third supplier, Aldon, are completely bulletproof, weapons grade electronics, but also, obviously, significantly dearer. These are widely sold in the USA under the brand name "Petronix". I don't think they supply as a complete distributor assembly.

I have an Accuspark "locked" distributor (no bob-weights or vacuum advance) but fitted with an Aldon module and external ECU. This has to be set up using a laptop! My engine is highly tuned (just over 50% more bhp than standard) though so needed to be set up on a rolling road!! I originally ran it with the Accuspark module, and it ran OK but the rolling road session showed I really needed a wider advance curve than the standard set-up was capable of (stage 2 Rebels Racing camshaft) so I fitted the Aldon kit.

These distributors are "universal" in that they don't only fit Reliants, also BL A series and others, so the advance curve (the bob-weights inside) is slightly different, which can cause problems on certain Reliant engines, principally the "yellow top" HE ones used on mid-production Rialtos. These have the letter E clearly marked on the cylinder head, although the problem is caused by the different camshaft, rather than the high compression ratio. The vacuum advance ranges are also not optimum, but for road use this will not cause issues. With standard red, early/late yellow and green top engines, most have said that there is a marked improvement in the way the car starts and runs.

If you don't want to convert to electronic ignition, only Accuspark will supply a new points distributor. Accuspark are based in Hemel Hempstead by the way.....

John (Pearce) No. 304 from Leighton Buzzard (for now!)

.....

Ah, an odd corner, and a chance to let you know that Roger and Yoland's spectacular, if steep, garden will be open to the public this year on Tuesday April the 25<sup>th</sup>. Brownhill House Ruyton XI Towns.

.....

Give a man a woman and he will be happy for a night. Give a man a woman who loves cars, and he will be happy for the rest of his life!



## **Music to my ears.**

A tourist in Vienna is going through a graveyard and all of a sudden he hears music.

No one is around, so he starts searching for the source. He finally locates the origin and finds it is coming from a grave with a headstone that reads: "Ludwig van Beethoven, 1770- 1827."

Then he realizes that the music is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and it is being played backward!

Puzzled, he leaves the graveyard and persuades a friend to return with him. By the time they arrive back at the grave, the music has changed.

This time it is the Seventh Symphony, but like the previous piece, it is being played backwards.

Curious, the men agree to consult a music scholar. When they return with the expert, the Fifth Symphony is playing, again backwards.

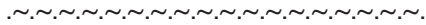
The expert notices that the symphonies are being played in the reverse order in which they were composed, the 9th, then the 7th, then the 5th.

By the next day the word has spread, and a crowd has gathered around the grave.

They are all listening to the Second Symphony being played backward.

Just then the graveyard's caretaker ambles up to the group. Someone in the group asks him if he has an explanation for the music?

"I would have thought it was obvious," the caretaker said :  
"He's decomposing."



## The Mk II Kitten

This unique car has led a pretty chequered history for the past decade or three.

I first saw it during a tour of the Reliant factory which I enjoyed, along with many other R.O.C. members, during that Club's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary run from Land's End to John O'Groats in May 1998.

At the time it was not for sale. Sadly, I cannot find the pictures I took of it then, though I seem to remember showing you one or more of them in a previous edition...

Here is one I took of it last year :-



Anyway, fear of waking sleeping monsters prevents me from telling the whole story, but things changed at Reliant, and it was eventually advertised, I think on ebay.

It was generally known within the Reliant fraternity at the time, that Mark and Sue Cropper were going to get it, even though they were to be away the weekend the auction ended, but one rather sneaky individual took advantage of the fact that they were away, and nipped in with an eleventh hour bid, preventing that from happening.

He regretted doing so very soon after however, as it had, misleadingly, been advertised as new, which of course everyone in the know knew it was not. Having been based on an early, used Kitten chassis, which had been used as a donor for the prototype Mk II body and interior.

The car ultimately ended up back at Reliant, where it lay in a container for nigh on another decade until a deal was done, and its future was finally secured.



Clive and Keith then set about investigating what work was needed to actually get it through an MOT and on the road. Something it had not been since its original incarnation in the 1970's.

Sadly, because they tend to work on it independently, no pictures were taken during this pretty major refurbishment, indeed completion. Sadly, the original had only ever reached the mock-up stage, and much work was needed to stiffen it and to make it safe to use on the road.

I was kindly allowed access to it in December 2016 (for the third

time in three decades!) to make some record of progress at that time.



My thanks to Keith and Clive, Ed.

.....

## Classroom funnies

Teacher :- Maria, go to the map and find North America.

Maria :- Here it is.

Teacher :- Correct, now class, who discovered America?

Class :- Maria.

Teacher :- Glenn, how do you spell crocodile?

Glenn :- K-R-O-K-O-D-I-A-L

Teacher :- No, that is wrong.

Glenn :- Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

Teacher :- Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?

Donald :- H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O.

Teacher :- What are you talking about?

Donald :- Well, yesterday you said it was H to O

Teacher :- Harry, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when no one is interested?

Harry :- A teacher miss.

## Epilogue

So, we have a new meaning for the 3 R's! (see page 7) Repair, Refurbish or Replace. Hmm, what a wonderful language we have. I should reach for my Dick'n Arry I suppose, but time is short.

As far as vehicle restoration goes I suppose the critical question is just what does one means by repair as against refurbish? I would suggest that a repair can either be a lasting repair, which must surely be more like a refurbishment, or a temporary repair, which in my experience can last anything from a few seconds to a few decades, yes really!

Moving on, there could have been some repairs made to this edition. I have lost count of the number of times that I have tried to shuffle articles about to try and get stories starting at the top of a page, but it is the 13<sup>th</sup> of January now, yes, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, and I really need to focus on other matters, so this needs to be going to the printers today – he said at 03:54, yes really!

I was saying to someone the other day that I sometimes despair of my failings, I do my own proof reading these days, a bad idea I know, but. Then I see the caption on Page 28 of our Extra 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition, beneath Malcolm's Kitten, and discover that I let stead creep in there instead of steed, and I just cringe. My only consolation is the old adage that the man who never made a mistake didn't make anything, but I ask you.... I really must do better!!!

Right, I see the end of the page rushing up to greet me, so with the usual words of wisdom, and the suggestion that you read the supplement for the latest Llangollen update, I will sign off for now. I can't believe that Desmond Carrington has actually retired! ***When can I?*** Drive safely.

*Brian*

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