

# RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



## **Mewsletter 135**

*March - April 2017*



*Simon Hodges Kitten Estate, pictured at the ROC National Rally last year. A good solid car, in daily use, and he had no idea I was going to feature it!! Simon also has a Rebel Saloon and both cars are regulars at various rallies throughout the year.*

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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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# **Dinky Cars**

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E & o e

Hello again. When I was sending out a couple of complimentary copies of the Christmas Mews to prospective subscribers recently, it suddenly struck me how little there is about Kittens (or Rebels or Foxes come to that) in it!

This was a bit of a revelation, on top of which, someone, only my memory prevents me telling you who it was, or indeed thanking the individual concerned, for pointing out that the lack of Kittens featured on

our front covers is perhaps not the best policy. This is possibly an indication that I may have become rather too focused on specials and unusual vehicles, at the expense of the very vehicles this Register exists to promote.

I remember at one point thinking that we all know what Rebels Kittens and Foxes look like, and so focusing a bit on other things would bring variety, which seemed to me to be a good thing, but, as my gran used to tell me, "you can have too much of a good thing!"

Now I know that you allow me some lee-way, and that is appreciated, but really, you ought to speak up when I get things wrong, I don't bite! (he said, trying to share the blame for that shortcoming). Oh, and of course you could help by sending in some recent, or even not so recent, Kitten, or Rebel, or Fox pictures!

Seriously, with your help we can rectify that this year, and celebrate those wonderful, and now all too rare, cars that we cherish. Send me a good picture of your appropriate cover picture vehicle please.

That said, the following extract from Dave Richmond's letter of 29<sup>th</sup> of January in response to the Asquith feature last time, reads as follows :-

### Asquith Vans

Here is a little info on those pictured in the last Mewsletter.

Knights Florists was a long established concern operating from premises that had originally been a depot for horse trams at the end of the 1800's!!

The company ceased trading some years ago and the vans were left unattended at the closed premises on the Uxbridge Road in Hillingdon.

I think that is where the photo on Page 13 of Mews 134 was taken.

Regrettably I don't know of the vans' eventual fate.

Dave Richmond. No. 338 from Hayes in Middlesex.

## *From your renewal notices :-*

Terry Atkins, our man in Hyde, mentioned on his renewal notice that he also has a 1994 Reliant Robin SLX, I'm not sure that we need to know that, (though it could provide a donor engine and gearbox for the Kitten!), but what did interest me was the fact that he also has a 1957 Standard Eight saloon!

Thanks Terry, I am tempted to ask about the Standard, but I need to focus, and I don't mean Ford!

.....

Not actually a renewal notice comment, but when Paul Jennings joined us last year, having acquired one of Stuart Vickers' Rebels, he asked me about a roof rack and tow bar for the Rebel estate.

I can't remember if I ran the appropriate Wanted advert at the time, but in case I didn't, can you help? I suppose I ought to ask if you got them yet Paul?

.....

### **Some points**

No I don't mean those electrical things that John was going on about in January, but some of the other points that B... Marshall was going on about.

Camshaft bushes in the Reliant engine? Yes, there is one, but only at the back. Where do we get them from? ME, as I have a 'stock of new old stock', if you see what I mean 'arry.

Another area that has intrigued me when I was clearing up in the garage some months / years ago, is studs. (behave yourself young Lady!) If you look at any engine there are so many studs that it isn't true, course and fine threads, different lengths, sizes etc., bewildering. I thought of making a list, or even a set, just for the Reliant...then I thought better of it, but amazed myself for a full 30 secs by considering how many studs there must be made for all the different engines....

One result of all this was I cleaned and sorted my studs, so if anyone has a need, and they don't have a lathe or access to a lathe type person, then please ask, I might have one or two you need.

Batteries - not a subject for in-depth discussion here, but a couple facts of the day. My Kitty car gets laid up most winters for a couple months, to keep it out of the white stuff, and a lot of the wet stuff that falls from the skies. This year it also ran out of MOT so it had to sulk for a while, then the road tax became due and of course, no MOT becomes an embarrassment.

So a dry day in February, and out she came, now we go for the starter (I can see your sniggers from here) Wot no battery charger!

I bought this Kitty in Dec 2008 with a nearly new Halfords battery, it has always done very well (only once needed a mains charge) so here it stood for 2½ months, one long pull on the key to get petrol up and away! Subsequent discussion with my MOT man said, Halfords used to sell Yuasa batteries (with their sticker on, now they sell cheap ones!) So now we know. Yuasa batteries – are the business. You buy cheap-you get cheap. We have recently bought Platinum batteries, no problem so far, time will obviously tell.

Again a point from last issue, we see the Stevens Sienna-prototype with its 'bling' air cleaner. I can't see what has been done inside the carburettor, but my experience of the pancake air filters is they are for 'bling' only. They make lots of sucking noise and nothing else, do nothing for performance. (pancakes being things you eat at dinner after having had Yorkshire pudding with the main meal).

The air intake into the 'umble SU needs a small trumpet, a thing that Reliant seemed to go out of their way to ignore. Look inside the air cleaner on a very old Morris Minor, and you will see what I mean.

Fitting this trumpet removes stutter on drive away, and improves pickup - basics.

Al Osborn, your Kitten alternative parts man.

*Thanks Alan, on the battery front, I knew that Halfords use(d) Yuasa ones, (I am on my third one, 2 of them changed under warranty*

by Halfords, in my Honda Jazz! To be fair to Halfords and Yuasa, it was the RAC who condemned both the struggling batteries, Halfords said they were just needing charged up, (I had recharged it overnight in November) but the last time, January 2017, they made the point that they were only replacing it as a goodwill gesture, and they will not do so again). Both the RAC and Halfords confirmed that the car is putting out the correct charge, which strongly suggests that my alternator and its drive belt are doing what they should, and that they (Yuasa batteries) were pretty good. I did not know that they (Halfords) no longer use them.

However, after recent research the Austrian company Banner, make arguably one of the best available, (I was not confident that Halfords would change the battery under warranty, and so was looking for good, reliable, readily available alternatives) within a reasonable price limit, available today. They are distributed in the U.K. by a number of firms, indeed I am sure John told me they make them here now too.

Ed.

.....

## Historic Vehicle Taxation Class Recognition

Here, at last, is the information I had meant to include before Christmas – all together now . . . “One day he’ ll get or gani sed”

We were asked this question by more than one individual, however, here is one email, ably answered by John Pearce. :-

Hi Brian,

28 November 2016

I have heard that there is a special template for getting kittens registered as historic vehicles; if so could you please send me a link to it.

Many thanks, Dave Honeywill No. 1017 from St. Austell

Dave,

The DVLA will not recognise dating letters / certificates from Clubs any longer, only from Gaydon, or the vehicle manufacture, unless the vehicle marque is one that Gaydon has no factory records of, and

the manufacturer no longer exists, or cannot / will not supply such information.

In these cases some Clubs, only about a dozen or so, have been contacted to supply this service. Reliant is one of these marques. The Kitten Register is one of that group, as is the R.O.C.

The template you require is not available for download, being a DVLA internal guide for the format of a dating report only.

Reports will only be accepted on authorised Club headed notepaper. If you need to do this, just send me the following information and I will write a suitable report and forward it to you for you to print off and submit. (If you do not have internet access write to me, and I will print off the relevant document and post it to you).

I will need your chassis number, registration number and engine number (all exactly as printed on the V5). It's also a good idea to check these against the chassis plate... I neither want, nor need, any other information.

Firstly though, do try to get your vehicle changed to Historic taxation class by the orthodox method, usually by filling in the changes section on the V5c, then taking it to a main Post Office, where they can often change it on the spot. They have the facility to directly check details on the DVLA database, and will tell you if they cannot do it.

Or you can post the V5c directly to DVLA, when the inclusion of a dating report can do no harm, but if you do, be careful to get the Post Code absolutely correct as if you don't, it'll go to the wrong department at DVLA, and might be lost forever. The correct postcode will be clearly printed on your V5c.

I have now submitted four reports for Kittens / Robins (including copies of the factory dating information) at various times. All have been accepted without problems, but in every case the vehicle was marginal, that is, first registered long after the date of construction.

The report simply confirms the actual vehicle construction details, as stated on the V5c, along with a simplified translation of the dating



codes used by the factory, as the service bulletin was published in 1975 (issued 1976) it does not show the coding for later years.

John (Pearce) No. 304 from Mansfield.

.....

John Parr had a similar experience, and kindly let is see copies of his correspondence with the DVLA relating to his Kitten’s taxation class change, and his refund of duty.

I must thank John (Pearce) for the time and effort he has put into this, and other matters on the Register’s behalf.

It is greatly appreciated John, I honestly don’t know what we would do without you and Susan.

Brian.

.....

Wanted! – A Fox truck bodyshell complete! Duncan’s red one was accosted by a Porsche Cayenne, they did not get on. The frustrating fact is that a body transplant would be a quicker and more cost effective way to keep this daily workhorse on the road. So, if you can help, or know someone who can, please get in touch with Duncan on :- 01603 663311 or at hidunc@ntlworld.com

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*Now I know that I was saying earlier that we ought to focus more on our Rebels, Kittens and Foxes but you should know me by now! So, when Roger asked if I would like to understand more about t he V6 af ter Emma’s comment s bef ore, I si mply had t o thought we would all benefit from his insight into matters Reliant.*

*Roger, thank you for taking the time to share your obviously considerable knowledge and expertise, it is much appreciated. Ed.*

## Scimitar V6 engine history

Hi folks, my name is Roger, and I am a new Kitten Register subscriber. My wife Gill and I purchased a Kitten estate about 14 months ago, to complement my other Reliants, a 1970 Scimitar SE5 and a 1978 SE6A. I am also in the process of reconstructing a very special 1966 Sabre convertible. Myself and 2 other guys, Nigel Newth-Gibbs and Dave Womack have been into Reliants for the last 40 years, running East Anglia Scimitar Centres with workshops in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. Well that's us.

The reason for this article is aimed at our members who may also own the Kitten's big brother, the Scimitar, and to maybe dispel some of the myths about engine types and the supply to Reliant. Let me say first that Ford Motor Company never supplied production car engines to any outside manufacturer direct. They were supplied as industrial units through a department called IPSO [Industrial Product Supply Operations] furthermore we are not aware of any reworked parts apart from cylinder blocks being supplied. The cylinder blocks were sometimes reclaimed when the line boring to the main bearing housings came in 'out of spec'. These blocks were then overbored by 15 thou, requiring bearing shells 15 thou oversized to the O/D.

In the 40 years we have been dealing with all types of Essex V6 engines we have only seen 2 of these blocks, so they are very rare, but always check if you are rebuilding one.

We had good relations with Reliant over the years and were always under the impression that Reliant had a similar good relationship with Fords. In the 60s and 70s they took vast numbers of 4 cylinder engines and transmissions on behalf of the Turkish company Otosan in Istanbul, for whom Reliant built bodies and chassies etc., for Otosan's very successful Anadol saloons and estates in direct competition with the Escort. In later years Reliant built the bodies and complete RS200 rally cars for Fords, Reliants diversification was endless.

On the subject of V6 engines there were 2 main types apart from industrial engines, commercial and South African engines. The early UK engines fitted to the MK IV Zephyr and Zodiac cars and the Scimitar SE5 was very different to the later Granada unit, many parts being incompatible. Early engines used Holbon & Eaton bi-rotor oil pumps,

also some very early engines had hydraulic tappets requiring reverse oiling systems. The cylinder blocks for these engines are now 'boat anchors' as they will not accept any of the later Granada parts owing to casting changes. The first cylinder heads and inlet manifolds had oval inlet ports, these along with the bi-rotor oil pump were found to perform under par and were quickly modified. Flywheels and clutches are different but can be interchanged. Front timing covers and sumps are different owing to the change from steering boxes to rack and pinion, with the dip stick moving from the front cover to down the side of the block between number 2 and 3 pug leads (a pain to get at this) . The early 40 DFA1 Webber carb ran on the rich side, which we think contributed to petrol contamination of the engine oil and the demise of the early tuffnel camshaft timing gear. The later 38 DGAS carb and steel and hardened plastic timing gear being far more durable, but they can sill strip their teeth at around 60,000 miles. Some specialists can supply a full steel timing gear, in fact all my cars are fitted with these, but in some cases they can be a tad noisy. When fitting one of these you take your chances, it's all about the accuracy of the parallel line boring between the camshaft and the crankshaft main bearings. They can be around 14 thou out of parallel, resulting in the two gears running out of mesh. There are a number of other small differences between these two engines, but that would take up too much space here.

The bottom line is, always use good quality antifreeze at 50/50 mix, and change the oil every 2,000 miles, petrol will contaminate the oil.

One last important mod you can do in your garage, if your car is fitted with an Essex V6, is to check that the heater return pipe is connected to the port at the rear of the inlet manifold close to the vacuum port (don't get these mixed up). If the return pipe is not connected, the sometimes stubborn plug will need to be removed and a hose adaptor screwed in to accept the heater return pipe. This we have found very important, as it relieves water flow around number 6 cylinder at the opposite corner to the water pump. This cylinder often overheats and can partially seize through lack of water flow during sustained high speed running, your tick-over should be up to 900 rpm to keep the water flowing in traffic.

Roger Cook, No. 1025 from Bury St. Edmunds



## Kitten seats

Nev Buchanan was in touch recently, looking, amongst other things, for a Kitten driver's seat.

This reminded me, as though I needed reminding, how bad my memory has become (and how much we would benefit from an index). I was trying to remember what fitted, what fitted easily, and what could be fitted if you were good at fabricating suitably adapted runners, and I was lost!

Subaru Justy, Daewoo Matiz, Suzuki Swift, and or Alto, even MG Midget, or adapted MGB, Mazda MX5, not to mention the Microcar range. I even remember George Burdett cutting down Volvo 340 heated ones, but that involved chopping a couple of inches out of the frames and brazing them back together, not a task everyone has the skills to do.

Any of those options which incorporate the high back style do tend to be the most comfortable, but, with very few exceptions, can dramatically restrict access to the rear seats! Now that may not be a consideration, but it is something you should be aware of!

Then, a couple of weeks later, when I was tying up a few loose ends, I was talking to Gary, another of our Carlisle resident readers, and, well, I'll just show you a picture and let Gary do the talking :-



The Suzuki Cappuccino seats are very hard to get a hold of, they are the perfect size for the Kitten and, when I get round to fitting them properly, I will take lots of pictures.

Initial sizing up of driver's seat shows I will need very simple brackets to allow the use of the Suzuki runners.

Regards, Gary (Macdonald) No. 824 from Carlisle

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## Kitten window seals

As part of my loose end securing attempts this year, I was working through a box of paperwork from 2012/13, and came across a letter from 2009! (Don't even ask). It was written from a man in Northern Ireland with whom I have had no direct communication for a few years now, and his phone number was on the letter, so, rather than spend time doing detective work on my computer to try and refresh my memory, or adding him to the list of folk that I intend to communicate with when I remember, (that list is far too big already!) and have a few minutes to spare, I decided that action this day, indeed that very minute, was probably for the best, so, with some trepidation, I dialed the number.

He answered the phone, and, 20 odd minutes later, I updated my records. Not only does he still have both his Kittens, and his sister's one, but he also has a 1930 Austin 7, and a 1946 MG TC, as well as a number of motorbikes.

You can, I am sure, understand why it was not just a brief 2 minute conversation!

Anyway, the thing that stopped him using the Kittens was an inability to find a source of new door to winding window seals. The ones on the drivers and passenger's doors that seal against both sides of the windows. (I remember being surprised many years ago, to realise that these are the same part, in all 4 locations, i.e. the outside and inside of the driver's and passenger's doors are all exactly the same part!)

I know that new ones have been unobtainable for some considerable time, indeed I have a sample on my desk – I know, how am

I ever going to get my desk tidy if I keep such samples lying on it for decades, one day.... But it made me realise another shortcoming, because I am certain that those doing major rebuilds must all have the same situation to resolve, and I do not doubt that they did resolve (it In fact I suspect we have spoken about this in the past!). So, effective communication is required.

Beside said sample, I have a note from Kaye Coles of Phoenix Supplies, along with two samples of their closest alternative “OWS 10” and “OWS 1” respectively. She tells me (back in April 2012 no less!) that one of their Kitten owning customers used OWS 1 on the inside and OWS 10 on the outside. I have to say that the 2 samples look very similar to me, but the price is quite different, one being as fiver a meter, the other being £7.50, and that was half a decade ago now!

As I type this, it occurs to me that I ought to consult Alan Osborn, our alternative parts man, and I will... However, if you have any helpful experience, please do not be shy about sharing it.

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## Getting Technical

***Well, more to do with good maintenance really!***

*While clearing some old documentation recently, yes, I really am making progress this year! I came across a letter from Alan Shaw that he wrote to me in June 2013, upon receipt of a steering rack that we had replaced “under war r ant y” .*

*I will apologise now if you have read this before, I remember, and I really do not have time to try and check. I assume that the reason the letter was not filed at the time was because I had hesitated, trying to decide what to do with it, and so, I suspect, did nothing, till now!*

*This really is a note to myself for future reference, but you might benefit from the knowledge / experience, and I might even be able to take and include a relevant picture or two!*

*Alan was saying :-*

The returned rack arrived today and the mystery of the excessive play of the pinion shaft is solved.

The rack had seen some service. It was fitted with the largest bellows that I have ever seen. Even if the Reliant recommended third pint of oil had been inserted – a doubtful supposition - none would have reached the upper ball race.

And none had. The balls and cage were bone dry and red rusty. The bottom race was O.K.

Bellows currently available all seem to be much larger than the Reliant originals.

The racks should be topped up (with oil) through the pinion adjuster button hole, having carefully removed the flange.

The “dust cap” and the universal joint at the bottom of the lower steering column should be sprayed or anointed regularly and often. They are in the sights of everything a wet road can throw at them.

Alan.

*The point is that it was all my fault! I could blame Jack, the man who lubricates the racks for us. Jack had run out of the bellows we had been using for years, having assured me, albeit many years ago now, that he had hundreds of them in his store. Anyway, he had run out, and I, trying to save a few bob, and having baulked at paying over £12 a pair, plus v.a.t. and postage, found a cheaper supplier, a Triumph specialist if memory serves, but **not** the well known Norfolk based one. That was where the chunky ones came from, (not Rimmer Bros.) I still have several pairs of them in a bag in the loft, see the pictures on the next page :-*

*I was surprised by, but had completely failed to understand the significance of, the bigger bellows. Naively thinking “t hey wi l l hol d oi l ”and assuming that would be a good thing. Live and learn I think the expression is!*

Ed.



The one with more compact “rings” (on the left) is in fact an original, but a “universal” one, in respect of the bellows it is very similar to the original type, and clearly gives a good comparison with the “cheap” alternatives that I have. In my defence, if I did not ask to see a sample first, foolishly assuming they would be the same – with age wisdom is supposed to come, I must be younger than I thought!

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## Wheel bearing care.

By Alan Shaw

Alan Shaw, again, thank you Alan, somewhat more recently, answered a question I had asked him about Kitten front wheel bearings. This will also apply to Rebel and Fox ones I would imagine.

Frustratingly I cannot remember whose question prompted me to ask Alan in the first place! Presumably you will be reading this, please feel free to remind me!

Alan, and his son Graeme, as regular readers may recall, have both owned Kittens from new, and between them have over half a million miles of Kitten experience under their belts, (both cars are still running with their original factory fitted engines) so they clearly have a first class



*record of good maintenance practice, and know more than most of us, about exactly how to look after them! (which is why I asked him!)*

*I did find it interesting to learn that, between them, they have only replaced one wheel bearing in close to 4 decades of Kitten ownership each – they are clearly doing something right! Thank you for sharing Alan.*

Dear Brian,

14.01.17

About front hubs – During 36 years and 106,000 miles the only renewals on my car have amounted to one felt oil seal, and that because I forgot to put a few drops of oil on it after a service, it shredded.

I strip and re-grease the bearings every two years, wiping out the old grease as much as possible, and repointing with a suitable trowel – the end of a 6" steel rule.

Over the years the need for adjustment has almost disappeared. The grease between the two bearings has been sitting there quietly, not doing anything.

Graeme has replaced one race which ran hot and cracked, the result of an over zealous MOT operator who insisted on zero float.

The hub thread is ½" UNF. 0.050" lead, and the combination of vertical and horizontal holes and 6 slots in the nut cover gives  $0.020/12 = 0.0016$ " steps of float adjustment.

Workshop manual instructions contain the implied assumption that the split pin can be inserted in a condition of finger tight zero float. This may not be obtained, but the use of a smaller diameter split pin can resolve any difficulties. There is no need to wrap it round the nut.

Yours sincerely, Alan (Shaw)

*Alan, thank you, though I might suggest, as one who knows nothing about engineering, but a little about corrosion, your suggestion that the grease lying between the bearings does nothing, perhaps ignores that, if moisture access in there is possible, corrosion*



of course. However, The Complete Automobilst came to the rescue!

They supply bulb holders that are nice quality, but have quite a long body (to house a good spring) and are made for the older style bulbs with parallel (rather than staggered) pins. The bulbs for these are number 381, rather than the usual 380.

The first job was to remove the old wiring, and then the spring contacts and the metal earth strip from the lamp base, plus the pressed metal hoop that formed part of the bulb holder. I hadn't realised at first that half of the bulb holder is actually part of the baseplate moulding, but after a couple of minutes with the Dremel, it was liberated from it!



With a flat, clear base, the new bulb holders were positioned so that the centre of the bulbs would be in the same position as the original setup, but the only way to achieve this was to put them at an angle (which was also better for routing the wires). New holes were drilled, and the bulb holders, plus some reflectors (made from polished aluminium sheet) and cable clips, were attached using M3 stainless steel button head screws with Nyloc nuts.



*(My apologies for the colour difference, just a printing issue, the one on the right is closer to reality, not that colour matters in this instance. Ed!)*

The cables were all taken through the original holes, but were found to be a little tight going through the large hole in the body panel, so cut-outs were filed to prevent them snagging. The light units were fastened to the body using M4 stainless steel screws and flanged nuts, then, with all the wires connected, we were ready for the big switch on.

Thankfully everything worked perfectly - hopefully it'll stay that way!

Tony Wiese, No. 967 from Wakefield

*Many thanks for that Tony, I am sure it should stay that way for many years to come – like steering racks, light fittings do not have a service recommendation, though they probably should! I am reminded that I must ask Pete if he could give us the low down on his LED conversion. Ed.*

## *Llangollen 2017*

I know that Malcolm has been passed from pillar to post, round the block about three times, and back again, in his efforts to find an individual who will accept responsibility for being in a position of authority regarding the necessary parking permissions around our intended steam train trip. Talking of which, you need to let him know if you want to join us on that. Now would be a good time to do that if you have not already done so and wish to come along.

Anyway, on other fronts progress is being made, thank you Tony for your contribution. Whatever the compromises turn out to be, I am sure a great time will be had by all.

I have booked Moira and myself into the Premier Inn at Wigan for the Friday night again, to break the journey down, so, all being well, will see you there.

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

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At the risk of allowing our publication to become too contaminated with non-Reliant distractions, (something I have become very guilty of in the other publication that I edit!) I felt that I might share the following small nugget with you.

My thanks to the FBHVC who were telling their members that :-

“Every year we receive a weighty tome from the Jersey Old Motor Club. This year is extra special as it commemorates the Club’s Golden Jubilee. It makes for a really good read and includes such bon mots as this observation, which is attributed to Albert Einstein.

‘Any man who can drive safely while kissing a pretty girl, is simply not giving the kiss the attention it deserves.’

*I can only agree! Ed.*

## Stevens Sienna-Prototype Resto Pt 5

It has come to light that my Sienna was not an 'only classic child' there was more than one produced, contrary to original thoughts, long gone now, but the photographic evidence survives, and so does the man who built it. I received a detailed account of the whys and wherefores around the Stevens produced cars from Peter Bird, who worked on the project back in the late 70s early 80s. He sent an account of how the 2<sup>nd</sup> version came to be;



The second Sienna, courtesy of Peter Bird, taken in 1982, a Herald based kit project

The second Sienna came about because of a freeze in funds when we were mid the Stevens-Cipher launch. We had presented the Cipher at the 1980 National Motor-Show (the first at the NEC) and to 'the Press', the response was more than encouraging. When DeLorean defrauded the British government out of New Enterprise Funds, and then Lord Hesketh's motorcycles also collapsed - the financial market tarred all new vehicle manufacturers with the same brush. The risk suddenly became too great and funds were frozen. I was the only employee (although we had subcontractors) but still Tony had a family to support and he'd used all his own finances in rebuilding his home and to finance the Cipher. Without external funding we were on borrowed time and yet the finance was only frozen while the situation was being considered.

As the Mazda MX5 subsequently proved, the Cipher had a huge potential. Tony had to sell the second Motor Show car, so we started building another Cipher demonstrator.

I don't know where the idea came from, but I thought of

marketing the Sienna as a kit car. Tony was generous in his encouragement (I was, after all, little more than his protégé) and so we gave it a try. Although the Cipher and Sienna were both Reliant based - the availability of affordable used four-wheel Kitten or Fox mechanicals was very limited. However, Triumph's aging Herald fitted the bill nicely. It was plentiful and cheap as a donor car. It had a ladder chassis which supported all the suspension parts, and it had an appropriate interior (wooden dashboard & seats) which were re-usable. In an age when alloys were coming into their own, the Triumph's wheels, albeit too small for the style, were usable, as they had hub-caps appropriate to the 1950's style."

Peter built the second Sienna for the Kit Car market with Triumph's Herald as a base, but the model went no further, the idea though continued and after being a partner at Lomax Cars, Peter Bird went on to create Falcon Automotive, utilising 2CV power, and often three wheels in his designs.

Returning to my garage over three decades after Peter completed his, we have almost reached a rolling chassis, and, via a new master cylinder, (single outlet MGB type), we were able to bleed the brakes through, after fitting new rear shoes and wheel cylinders.

The original exhaust now resembles that cheese they produce in Switzerland, plenty of holes but light in substance, and had to go. We found the down pipe solid, so removed the rest and worked the system around that, with one major variation. The original route was to the rear



of the car, running close to the fuel tank, which we had now repositioned more centrally using a rubber mount for further support. It had always been the plan to exit the exhaust out of the side just behind the

passenger seat, this required one flexi joint plus a Mini silencer, and a 90-degree bend to run the system just behind the chassis. The options were limited as the clearance is minimal, but at least we can prevent the first ‘Sleeping Policeman’ ripping all our endeavours from the car.



Several hours of preparation took place on the GKN Silverstone wheels, the outer rim was taken back to a shining alloy finish, with the rest receiving several coats of black, and then lacquered. Alan managed to manufacture centre wheel discs featuring the Stevens logo from the 70s, attaching them to the chrome centre caps, which offered a nice contrast with chrome plated wheel nuts. Tyres, and obtaining the correct size with a period look, required some thought. Low profile modern ‘boots’ would not work, so I contacted the man who knows about all things rubber. Peter, at Bedford Tyres, immediately realised what I needed, and ordered in a new set of Excelon Touring (offering a more period pattern) but in a tall 165-80-13. They look correct, and will hopefully offer good road holding with such a light car.





Another major obstacle we have overcome was the steering and its extreme angles of turn; on full lock the old tyres ripped at the fibreglass so with the new larger ones something drastic was required. Dave Corby is a Cipher owner who faced the same problem with his 13in rims running close to the bodywork, as Reliant's excellent turning circle became a hindrance on the Stevens machines. Dave came up with a fantastic solution and posted a pair of small tubes, cut to length with instructions on where they would clip into place once a small section was removed. It worked perfectly and we dropped the car from its stands and rolled it out into the daylight for the first time in months.



Next time :- Road test: beer and backslapping all round, or oils leaks and horrible noises?? Urgent mods are required as the pedals are too close together for my big plates of meat.

Grant Ford , No 1023 from Aldwick – [www.grantford.co.uk](http://www.grantford.co.uk)

With thanks to Simon Fitch- [www.stevens-cipher.com](http://www.stevens-cipher.com), Brian Marshall Reliant Kitten Register, Peter Bird & Dave Corby.

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## Good maintenance, or Renovation?

*You may recall James Holland asking the question about the three "R" Repair, Refurbish or Replace? Well, at this point in time, to the best of my knowledge, the Replace option, in regards to Kitten and Fox wishbones (with new ones) does not exist, (Rebels are quite a different story) so you are left with Repair, Refurbish, or replace with a,*

*presumably / hopefully, better condition secondhand option.*

*In that regard I must thank John Pearce for keeping up with the demand for serviceable secondhand wishbones this past while, his bead blasting cabinet has been kept busy.*

*My thanks to Dave Richmond for the following Bushy Fox Tail, oh, and, purely by co-incidence, Jim Alexander too, on the same, and also a closely related subject, with the following pictures :-*

*One thing that Jim's wishbone pictures do not show clearly is how thick the metal is, and, having asked him what lengths he went to remove the paint from them, he told me "The originals were pretty sturdy in terms of thickness if not quality of material." (I say that because Rebel ones, which are on average at least a decade, if not two, older, tend to be in much better condition, and, should that not be the case, new ones are readily available.).*



*Jim also wanted to protect his investment in a pair of new front dampers and springs, and, when I was unable to offer him a solution, he came up with the following :-*

*I mentioned previously about covers for the new shocks I sought, well, I've bought a set on eBay for £18 delivered, the guy makes them to order any size in lots of different colours. I chose black ones, they fit very well, and should keep all the nasty muck off the shiny new shocks. I'll send you some pictures. (which he did, and here they are, Ed.)*



Oh just a question, are the C spanners available to make adjustments to the lock rings? All the C spanners I have are used for my motorcycles, and are too small.

Best regards, Jim Alexander No. 1033 from Coventry

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### A Bushy Fox Tale by Dave Richmond

The wishbone bushes were looking weary, and, with the MOT looming a rebuild was needed.

The kit from Brian is supplied with poly bushes, stainless steel sleeves, special fitting grease and guidance on installation.

#### **Top wishbone.**

Reliant had fitted the bolts with the heads inboard, so the spring unit had to be removed to enable the bolts to be removed.

Once the bolts were out, the wishbone can be swung through 180

degrees, making it easy to remove the old bushes with a length of studding, various distance pieces, and a short length of 1" bore tube. On re-fitting, the bolts were installed with the heads outboard.

### **Bottom wishbone.**

Firstly slacken the two bolts securing the bottom ball joint, then un-do the nut holding the drop link to the anti-roll bar, and the bolt securing the strut to the wishbone. The pivot bolt (wishbone to chassis) is reached through an aperture at the front, and screws into a nut which is welded to a lock plate with a turned over edge which is supposed to stop it turning.

After 30 odd years the sleeve in the rubber bush was rusted to the bolt. There is no room to saw through the sleeve (*I think there are other views on this, Ed, see - aaarrgghh, we really need an index!*), so a liberal dose of release fluid was applied and lunch break taken!

There is just enough clearance to get a slim open ended spanner on the nut. Now a packing piece of metal, about 3/16" thick, is needed to wedge at the back of the nut so that when the bolt is turned it extracts its way through the sleeve. Once the nut is free from the bolt it will drop out. Further removal of the bolt will require some careful levering and drifting out with a punch. In extreme cases it may be removed by drilling and tapping a hole down through the bolt to take an extractor bolt.

Once the wishbone is on the bench, the old bush can be replaced using the special grease supplied with the new poly bush kit.

### **And another thing!**

The drop link can then be inspected and repaired if required.

Reassembly is straight forward, and a coating of copper-slip grease to all the threads will help in the event of any future dismantling.

The fitting of new bushes all round should return the camber and castor angles to the original factory settings, but wheel alignment should be checked for zero toe in / out.

All bolts were replaced with new H. T. ones.

The bolt specifications, all UNF H.T., are as follows :-

- Top wishbone - 3/8" by 2 1/4"
- Bottom wishbone & strut - 7/16" by 2 1/2"
- Damper to bottom ball joint - 1/2" by 3 1/4"
- Bottom ball joint to wishbone - 5/16" by 2 1/4"
- Strut to wishbone - 3/8" by 2 1/4"

Dave Richmond, No. 338 from Hayes.

.....

## Epilogue

I have to say that the budding swimmers that the BBC have enlisted to replace the swimming pigs do nothing for me, (not that the pigs did either!) however, I just love the new words to the Modern Major General, and the re-vamping of the Periodic table to reflect their current range of programs! G & S live! (mind you, that seemed to be short lived!)

To more relevant matters, this will be the last magazine that you get if you have not yet renewed your subscription, we do not like to lose track of the cars, or the people who run and maintain them.

If I think that you have renewed your subscription for 2017, your "membership" card will be enclosed, though our 5 year folk will note that their card (the one they got last year) shows December 2020 as the expiry date, you won't get another one till after that!

There are a few anomalies, but, please, talk to me if you are in any doubt, and I will confirm the position as I understand it.

We were pleased to see the following report in the FBHVC Newsletter 1/2017 :-

It is the 25th anniversary of the Reliant Kitten Register, congratulations! The current edition of their magazine has a brief article on the Cipher, one of three survivors of the six that were made. Is there someone who can tell us more about this striking looking little car?

Obviously we put them in touch with Dave Corby, who put them right, as in fact all 8 of the Ciphers survive! Though there are just 2 on the road at the moment. Thanks Dave.

I have to admit to some surprise here, as the Federation have been getting a copy of the Mews for a decade or so now, and so should have been well aware of the Cipher....

No matter, it is all good publicity.

Moving on, I am suddenly acutely aware of rather too many shortcomings here, and am frantically trying to tidy up far too many situations before we, all being well, head south for a long weekend in 2 weeks time. So, you will need - yes again – to bear with me, and excuse any glaring omissions and or mistakes; getting this in the post before we go is a top priority task (I know that we have a very busy week ahead upon our return, so this must be put to bed first, if I am not to sink beneath the waves!)

I know that I don't need to tell you what to do with your ball joints and or trunnions, but do drive safely, and keep on keeping on, I know I intend to.

*Brian*

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