

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



Mewsletter 137

July - August 2017



Continuing our theme of featuring cars from our European subscribers, this excellent Kitten is owned by Patrick Vallat in Switzerland. Like Coen's, it too has a superb interior, which you'll read about inside.

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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

It is still May as I type, I have just put in Patrick Vallat's pictures, thank you Patrick, and am about to share the next part, or two, of Grant Ford's Sienna restoration story with you, and suddenly this edition is well under way. What joy!

Speaking of Joy, I was pleased to see us getting a mention on page 19 of the FBHVC News in Issue 3 of 2017, a bit of flag waving for the Liege.

Suddenly I find myself so far on with this that I am going to stop talking, and get on with things!

Is this what being organised feels like?, or is it just the result of a week with virtually no sleep?!

Whatever it is, I hope you enjoy the results. Oh, the signature tune on page 13, it is not a television program!

A Swiss Kitten

A decision was taken last year, to focus our front covers more on Kittens this year, and, given that we had moved over the North Sea with our cover picture last time, I thought we might stay on the continent this time too.

Patrick is not only a skillful engineer, (those who made it to Burford will have seen the results of some of his skills first hand) but he is also one of those rare people, who does not have a television. A conscious decision which I greatly admire. Like folk who still have a piano and or an open fire, say grace before a meal, and or own a lathe, or something powered by steam, the number of such individuals I know who fit into one or more of those categories, is sadly shockingly small.

Here then is a summary of some of the work that Patrick has done to his right hand drive Kitten. I did ask some questions after seeing some of the pictures, I do not doubt that you will get the picture!



Hi Brian, here are a few pictures of my Kitty. The bonnet is the only thing not repainted this time, taken from my first lhd car, I did the Union Jack during the Easter weekend of 1994, apart from a few crazes around corners, it has stood the test of time well.



I still have to run in the rebuilt engine, the race camshaft makes the drive very funny, not a lot of low down torque, but once on song, it flies.

Best regards, Patrick (Vallat) No. 702 from Porrentruy in Switzerland.

The gear lever is a simple remote system using a 5mil. alloy plate fitted on top cover, and a large rose joint into which the short lever is fixed, a spring loaded stop for reverse (stop on the reverse selector fork filed away) and the original lever shortened, a short tube with forks both ends links the two, a fiberglass tunnel top cover sloping up to under heater, allows for the linkage, and makes engine/gearbox extraction child's play, undoing the transmission from inside, instead of crawling under the car. I never liked the cranked original lever having to pass

through the centre console, a nightmare to refit the C spring. As you can see. The battery migrated behind the rear seat inside right wing, its place needed for the Liege twin SU kit, passenger foot well shortened for the same reason, but it looks right. The air filter is made from scrap stainless, aluminium mesh, and two hours of hammering and polishing, cost only the two Vokes stickers bought at the Netley Marsh bike jumble, and the two conical K&N who came with the kit hidden inside. To pass the veteran vehicle MOT here (more than 30years of age), it should be completely original, but as they don't know of another Kitten, very rare here, they believe what I show them, I'm known in my region for my British vehicles, so it works very well.



A lot of other little changes have been made, an MGB brass cooling expansion tank, home-made stainless steel cylinder head domed nuts (I don't like rusted bolt ends), removal of cooling fan, front mounted electric one makes valve setting so easy and traffic jam overheating a thing of the past, high flow Minispares oil pump, an SU electric fuel pump near the tank to allow use of the mechanical pump hole in the block as a large breather going into the valve cover. Home-made banjo fuel line

connections to the float chambers for a nice look and easy positioning.

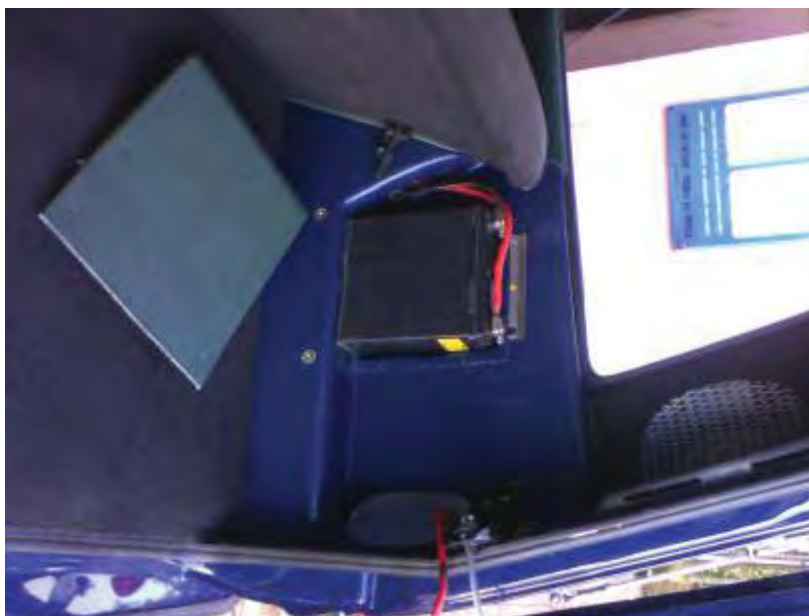


A small oil cooler in front of the water cooler, behind the two slits below front bumper rubber, a Joe Mason tubular exhaust and large diameter pipes and silencer, the dashboard with Jaguar clocks and door panels, on the car since the first rebuild, only covered in leather instead of vinyl. Minispares ribbed alloy brake drums, including a wide spacer at the back, don't fit the front, too wide for the wheel arches. Rear lamps made of round Lucas glass lamps and reflector screwed on an alloy base having the same form as the original and rotting lamps, cheap, available, and a good look...

All these things, apart from engine parts and material, didn't cost much, I collect a lot of scrap from industries here around, incredible how much valuable metal can be reused for free, only time and patience, a body shop owner friend with many British cars in need of mechanical work, a well furnished workshop (even if sometime too small) and no television since at least 15 years (and yes, we are still alive....)



As it is now, I won't use it in winter as before,
they spread so much salt on our roads....



I was going to turn that picture round, but I would have had to shrink it!



Just a few more pictures showing the gear lever and rear lights, the Reliant badge is made of water jet cut stainless, polished, and fixed with tiny m2.5 screws.





Another couple of shots of Patrick's beautifully restored Kitten.





Partick, thank you for taking the time to share your lovely car with us. I well understand your reluctance to use it on salted snowy roads, I have a friend with a Jowett Jupiter who, like you, did a complete bare chassis up rebuild, in his case taking well over a quarter of a century to complete the task, and, now that he is retired, only uses it in snow free weather. That said, he does a lot of miles in it, and not all in the U.K.!

I have to say that Patrick's engineering skills, expertise and ingenuity reminded me of the saying, I think it is on a tapestry or something similar in Alan Shaw's house, which reads something like – **"An engineer is a man (sorry girls!) who can make for a penny, what any fool can make for a pound"**!

Your friend's HRG is a dream car, out of reach of my social status, one of my ex. colleague's older brother had one in the sixties, and the only thing he retained before sending it to scrap was the enamel badge, what a shame, but I'm a lucky man with a Kitten, a Marcos coupé, a Norton Commando, a Triumph Thunderbird combination, and most of the parts to build an Austin Seven Special.

Patrick (Vallat), No. 702 from Porrentruy in Switzerland

I have to say that I love the, presumably Jaguar, heater controls in Patrick's Kitten's fabulous looking dashboard. Though the speedo goes just a wee bit high, and the rev counter not quite high enough, but hey, some compromises would be just so easy to live with! I had been telling Patrick about Dick (Watson's) HRG, here is its dashboard :- Ed.



The HRG originally had a 4 spoke steering wheel (it is on the garage wall, hidden behind the open bonnet!) But Dick found it obscured the instruments too much!

On the subject of HRG, I actually did tick one long standing item off my to-do list today (1/6/17) and spoke on the telephone with Ian Dussek, author of the bible on HRG, "The Sportsman's Choice". He still has a few new copies of the book if you are interested, £40 delivered. John (Noton), if you are paying attention, **do not buy one**, one is wending its way to you – it will probably say inside the cover that it has been stolen from me, I asked Ian to inscribe it so! Consider it a long term loan.

Everyone can relax, the bottom of the page is nigh.... Ed.

A cleverly coded Liege Page

I do feel a little guilty here as it is still the first week in June, and I have not, yet, heard from, or attempted to make contact with, any of our Liege owning readers, to encourage them to help fill this bit of the mag. One day I'll get organised!

However, we are where we are, as they say, so I will just use a picture that Simon Fitch kindly sent me last week to fill this page, and make up for the absence of a *Cipher* section in this edition! Ed.



This picture was taken at the Wellesbourne Classic Show in June 2017 – who says I live in the past?!? Ed

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And now I have one of those rare awkward spaces to fill!

Tum te tum ted tum te tum, tum ted um te doo da.  
Tum te tum ted tum te tum, tum te toodle eye eigh. Etc etc.

And if you can tell me which program that is the start of the signature tune for, I will be most impressed, though also not sure if I will be most impressed by your recognition, or my rendering!

## Stevens Sienna-Prototype Resto Pt 6

Now the car runs and rolls, we were rather excited about having a little run up and down the road; did we have all the gears? Would the clutch be ok? and finally, would the new brakes work? But all good things are worth a little wait, so I thought it would be best to at least fit one part of the floor prior to our adventure. The original internal panels are fibre glass, and most were covered in ancient black carpet that was rotten. This was all removed, and the panels cleaned down with brake cleaner, before both sides enjoyed a matt black finish. The plan always has been to line out the floor with alloy plate or chequered finish, but these will sit inside the original panels and contrast with the dark paint. The inner panels would also be required in place before we could confirm our frame repair welding is located in the right place; for example, we replaced the front box section, and with the inner panels in place, the outers could be fitted. Better to find out now that we have 'dropped a clanger', than try and correct it once the panels are painted.



Floor and inner panels with carpet removed are treated to a matt black finish, later alloy plate.

### Problems, problems.

Our new exhaust system had a small blow, an easy fix but the oil leak from the rear of the gearbox presented a major issue. I had the

correct rubber seal to stop the drip, our problem was that in its distant past, someone had tightened the main securing bolt into place with an air gun, but without the correct washer in place. The nut had chewed into the sprung spacer, and was totally locked into place. Several hours with air guns, breaker bars, and lots of bad language, failed to make any impression on the nut. The leak wouldn't stop without a new seal, and the nut was offering no signs of budging; choices now involved either an engineering shop, or a new gearbox, both guaranteed hours of extra labour. Alan brought his super air gun along, and we adjusted the compressor to give max output for our final do or die attempt. Third rattle from the gun, and the nut finally surrendered, and with the old, extremely brittle and broken seal finally replaced, we went for a celebration fry up. Time for a Break.



The exhaust is made of various angles and flexi joints, plus a Mini silencer, no wonder it leaked.

Summer is arriving, and after six months working most weekends on the Sienna, we are 'all restored out', so we will put her away until the winter, and hopefully begin again around October, with a freshly painted body.

With the prospect of having to move the car to another location, we thought it wise to fit the seats, making it easier to drive, and gets

them out of the way. The bases were both seized and covered in corrosion, so required gallons of WD40 and grease to release and allow for adjustment. Once we had movement, Alan took the chance to weld in an additional support we could use to secure the base, then several hours cleaning up, before primer and black top coat sealed in our good work.



Most worrying, but Alan's super air gun meant we could remove the leaking rear gearbox seal.



The bases were then re attached to the seats followed by the



arduous task of fitting into position, one of those jobs that should require an hour, but took most of the day.



Once solid, rust resistant under coat and top covering of matt black before refitting to the seat.

### Big Feet, Small Pedals, No Space!

The driver's side inner panel will require a lot of modification to allow my giant 'size ten plates of meat' to operate the pedals, the space only allows for a very small ballerina to drive this car. This problem became apparent immediately, as I found jumping on the brake also involved the accelerator or stamping on my other foot, neither ideal. The pedals are too close together, so to increase the width, a large section of the fibreglass was cut away, to be replaced with reshaped alloy plate; for the road test, we omitted to fit the inner panel. With almost all the internal fibreglass fitted, we began to adjust the outer ones, getting them into place and checking for fit. Where the original framework had not been replaced, all matched up correctly, and only minor adjustments were going to take place fitting over new metal. Our calculations had been pretty exact, and the front wings sat square on the frame, whilst

the doors went into their required gaps; at least now we could expect all parts to fit back together, roughly where they should.



With brake lines wire protected (gravel guards) in place the system bled through with ease.

## Blimey, that Goes....

Alan's surprise at the way the Sienna went up the road was apparent, but even considering the weight of its body, which will certainly slow the car somewhat, it still impressed. The clutch is light and the brakes, although still to 'bed in', stop our weightless machine very well, and our fears of the disc conversion 'locking up' at every opportunity, proved unfounded. The gearbox has stopped leaking, but gear selection is far from precise, with too much gearstick contributing to its vague feel finding the next gear; this we can address later.

We found our throaty homemade exhaust wasn't loud enough to annoy the neighbours, but offered enough, although repositioning will be necessary, as it runs too close to the rear tyre. All fixable without breaking the bank, so we hope those who have followed this rebuild

have enjoyed our trials and tribulations, and will look out for the continuation later this year.



The first time the Sienna has moved under its own steam for at least two decades.



Body check before paint, would be most embarrassing if it didn't fit after!

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)

Peter Bird & Dave Corby.



Rear inner and outer panels fit reasonably well, and the floor is perfect.

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

~~~~~

Llangollen 2017

So, I managed to get this edition to you ahead of the event, if only every aspect of my life was so easy to control!

Anyway, I, indeed hopefully we'll, see you there!

Moira had her latest brain surgery on June the first, and while I had her home within 48 hours of the op., it is early days yet.

Malcolm can be contacted on rkrshowpostbox@gmail.com

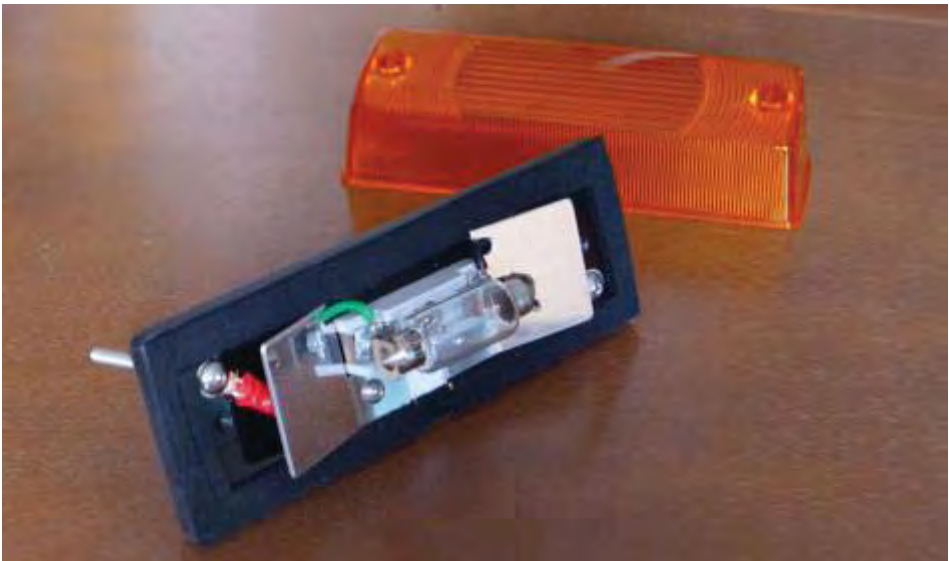
Getting Technical

Kitten Front Indicators

By Tony Wiese

When I bought my Kitten van it was fitted with round conical indicators on the front, as seen on classic Minis and other cars of the period. The previous owner (a Mini enthusiast) had filled in the original rectangular holes in the front valance, and fitted the Mini ones further inboard, presumably because he'd found it difficult to locate the original type. Being a van, with 7" round headlights, the round indicators didn't look too far out of place, but I really wanted to return the van to its original setup.

The most common use for the Lucas L787 indicators was on the front of Vauxhall Viva HBs and it was on one of these (my first car, back in 1979) that I first encountered the Lucas unit. Despite being just 10 years old at the time, the rubber covers under the wing and metal parts inside the lights had seen much better days, so it was easy to imagine what the Kitten ones would have been like at more than 30 years of age!



I found the lenses were easy to source on that well known auction website so I bought a couple and set about designing my own

lamp units to go behind them. My plan was to make the new units 'surface mount' so the bulb holder and bulb would have to sit within the depth of the lens and not protrude behind the baseplate, and the neatest solution came in the form of a festoon bulb and holder. In order to keep the bulb as far away as possible from the lens a couple of millimetres of material were removed from the festoon holders. These were then screwed to the baseplates which had been cut from black nylon sheet (6mm thick if memory serves me right). Nylon is a good quality engineering plastic so drilling and tapping M4 holes for the lens screws and the festoon holders was easy. Further holes were drilled and tapped for the screws that would hold the polished aluminium reflectors in place, plus two for the mounting screws that would hold the unit in the valance. The latter were threaded, rather than clearance holes, as I would be screwing long screws in from the front (thus making them studs in effect), then holding them in place with nuts. All the fittings used are stainless steel. Seals for the front face were made from adhesive neoprene sheet, and a further piece was stuck to the rear of the units to allow for any imperfections in the fibreglass.



However, the mounting screws mentioned earlier would serve a second purpose!

I was keen not to have open holes for the wires at the back so I fitted short lengths of cable between the connections on the festoon holder and the long mounting screws. Then, once the units were held in the body, I fitted eyes to the ends of the original wires and connected them to the two mounting screws using Nyloc nuts, finally finishing them off by covering the connections with little rubber boots.

Tony Wiese, No. 967 from Wakefield

Stevens Sienna- Prototype Resto 7- A.

It was eight months ago when the Sienna finally drove for the first time in decades, and it was an opportunity to park her up for the summer. Back now, we face another winter of restoration. Lifted onto the stands, it is time to face the body work, with all that entails, plus the final assembly. Although, on writing this, that is weeks away. It happens rarely, but when they do arrive, it gives us enthusiasts fresh impetus to continue onwards; I am referring to that perfect day in the garage. Eight hours where nothing goes wrong, everything fits, and works first time.

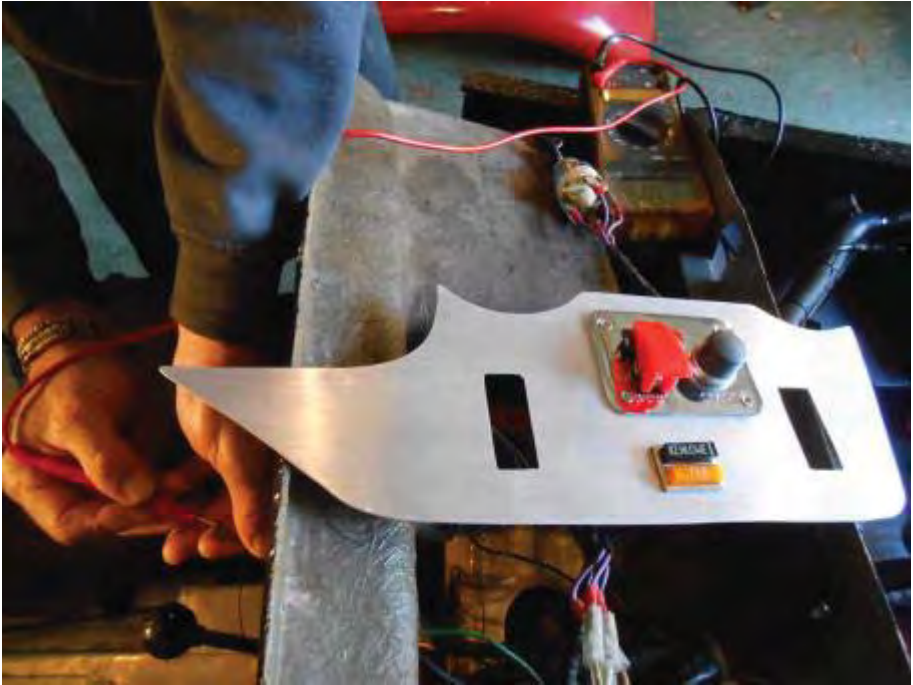


My new Land Rover style lighting which should offer a classic look.

I decided to abandon the 1970's trailer board lighting that illuminated the Stevens Sienna, and chase a more mature look with a set of Land Rover round lights. Britpart was the name on the box, and the quality is really impressive, solid units with plenty of wiring attached, they even came with bulbs fitted. Stop and tail, indicators front and rear with side lights for a mere £25.00 delivered.

The dash on our Reliant Kitten based sportster was a mess, it wasn't a pretty sight from new, but after 40 years it has become embarrassing. Duct tape secured it to the body panels, so the first job

was to clean up and mask up; repainted, I then set about the steering wheel and boss. The finish on both had begun to peel, but after an afternoon's prep and paint, they could be reattached with shiny stainless fittings. We removed the old dash front and decided on a radical transformation that included replacing the ignition switch and key with a toggle switch; all very 'Top Gun'. The original lighting, fan and hazard switches were then incorporated into a brushed stainless panel, with our new fighter switch and push button start.



Rewiring required my pal Alan's skills with his multi meter readings to prevent starter switch melt-down.

Whilst I normally prefer originality, the in-car appearance is vastly improved, and the best part about the process is that our wiring all slotted into place, and the 850cc engine turned over.

After a triumphant day with the electrics, it's a return to the bodywork for me, eliminating defects the best I can, and cutting holes for those splendid new lights.



Refitted, the brushed stainless cut to shape fits perfectly, and the original switches work well with the fighter pilot toggle starter.

Measure twice. Weld once

It has been fairly busy in the garage over the past month. The bodywork on the Stevens Sienna has taken priority, as I endeavour to get the panels in paint before the worst of winter arrives; hence the arrival of 'Spraying Bob' to discuss colour choice, plus my below average bodywork. It was fortunate the mysterious veteran restorer arrived when he did. We took time to test fit the fibreglass panels, and found that the rear section was distorted once in place. This was due to a miscalculation of about half an inch when we replaced the rear frame; basically, we got the angles wrong, and the stress will cause the panel to crack once bolted into place. After that large step backwards, we cut holes to accommodate more suitable lighting, which came via a Land Rover specialist. Bob assisted in the preparation work, including removing the many imperfections that adorned the 40-year-old fibreglass panels.



Just when we thought the Mig work was over! Now all parts fit, but I will need to repaint now.

Those experienced in non-metal car bodies will be aware that removing every blemish is time consuming, whilst eliminating cracking is a thankless task, as it tends to reappear not long after paint is applied.

The near side rear wheel arch was also duly trimmed, allowing for the exhaust to exit with sufficient clearance, but we could go no further; not without modifying the rear frame, and for that, I asked Alan to return with the Mig welder (see above).

The Sienna was designed with just eight body panels in total. The rear section from the rear of the driver's door to the passenger's side is one piece without a boot opening. The frame that supports it is all one-inch box section steel and, unfortunately, we cut the frame too long, and then attached it at the wrong angle; oops.

Alan cut away his previous welds, repositioned and tacked in the correct position. Much test fitting ensued before the rear panel sat comfortably, following this, cover plates were attached, hiding our misdemeanour.

Internet shopping can be classic.

By chance, I found the Sienna had been road tested by Autocar magazine back in May 1977, and via the worldwide web, I located a copy. The issue featured the Chrysler Avenger Estate, and the 320 BMW alongside my Reliant based Stevens that the road tester described as quality, economy, and fun; well it was the 1970's.

Looking resplendent in black and white, the images show a young mum with two small children in the back, strange, as the Sienna



never had rear seats or belts, how times have changed. The stars must have been aligned, for it was at the same time I located some replacement headlights.

Towards the end of last summer I was trying to source a pair of original sealed beam headlights for my Mark 2 Jaguar, I solved this by stealing them from the Sienna, and now the hunt was on for a replacement set; accomplished by the power of the internet at Bowers Automotive. A really nice set of 7-inch Halogen conversions with crystal lens and flat glass, purchased, minus pilot light holes, for a mere £27.00. Add on a couple of bulbs and new rubber seals/gaskets for a smooth wing attachment, and I should light up the countryside for under £50.00.



I hate shopping, unless it's for classic parts, and I struck gold with a pair of flat glass headlights.

Mend-a-Send-a

It was in April 2015 that I boasted to have cured the lack of information offered by the fuel gauge, with some deft work involving my soldering iron. Well, that lasted no time at all before failing again.

Grant Ford, No. 1023 from Aldwick www.grantford.co.uk

Thanks to Simon Fitch- www.stevens-cipher.com

Brian Marshall Reliant Kitten Register- www.kitreg.org.uk

Peter Bird & Dave Corby.

However, thanks to last minute editorial changes (I finally got James' new advert organised, apologies for the delay), I have been distracted, Moira had to go back in for a second attempt by the brain surgeon exactly two weeks after the first attempt, I think the hospital food is better than she is letting on! So, you will have to wait till next time to find out how Grant mended a senda.

Epilogue

I have all but given up trying to plan things, probably just a phase, but it is the first of June as I type, Moira should be having her latest brain op within the hour, this does not need to be with you for a couple of months or so, but thanks to a combination of my forgetfulness and disorganisation regarding the Sienna articles, oddly enough I had a call about it from Grant just yesterday, and the great pictures and story from Patrick Vallat from Switzerland, I might just have this printed this month and fill you in with any more recent developments in the supplement, we will see...

I even got to take what might be our next front cover Kitten picture a couple of days ago when Chris Sherrington called by. It's all happening!

Talking of all happening, I was talking to our President on the telephone earlier today (6/6/17) having seen him and Jackie at Peebles with close to a hundred Jowetts the previous weekend, and Dick Watson (the guy with the HRG, he actually served his time and worked with them from 1947 till 1955, before becoming a Formula 1 mechanic in the 1960's, is on the lookout for a good Kitten estate for one of his grandchildren. He ran one for a decade a while back, it is with Frank in Chile now, hi Frankie!)

Meantime I have decided to press on and complete this edition very early, so my apologies for the absence of Presidential comment or anything Tempestuous in here, there may be something in the supplement!

Take care, drive safely, and..... Grease Those Ball Joints!

Brian

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