

# RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



## **Mewsletter 147** **March - April 2019**



I was rummaging about for a cover picture with a spring like flavour, and this oldie caught my eye. Happy memories of old number 00003 outside my front door, tinged by some sadness that it is no longer in the country. Ed.

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**The Register caters for all the under 1 litre Reliant 4-wheeled vehicles plus all of their derivatives: Kittens, Foxes, Rebels, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, PK 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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# Mews 147

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E & o e

Welcome to our Spring offering. It dawned on me, after including the text of the letter regarding MOT exemption for vehicles over 40 years old last time (on the back of the January supplement), that I should of course make two points very clear – THERE IS NO REASON WHY YOU CANNOT CONTINUE TO HAVE YOUR 40 PLUS YEAR OLD VEHICLE MOT TESTED ANNUALLY.

This is, for some, not optional, because not all (if any!) Insurance companies that offer limited mileage policies, will accept anything other than the mileage on the vehicle's MOTs, as proof of annual mileage.

**ALSO, ALL VEHICLES USED ON A PUBLIC ROAD MUST BE MAINTAINED IN A SAFE AND ROADWORTHY CONDITION, the penalties for failing to do so have dramatically increased both in terms of penalty points and £££££s.**

**The long and short of it is that the exemption is not a get-out-of jail free card, and the annual fee and inconvenience could well be looked on, not only as a great safety check, but also cheap insurance should anything go wrong.**

There are a couple of related articles further on, so it is not just me suggesting this! Ed.

My apologies to Bill Starkey, his letter arrived just too late to be included in the last edition, and, as you will realise, events have, to some degree, moved on since then. See what he had to say back in January on pages 25 to 28. Bill, thank you for your kind words, and welcome David.

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## From the Oval office.

I have been trying to unravel notes from the Department of Vague Licensing Advice (DVLA) regarding MOT's for vehicles that are over 40 years old. The rules particularly affect Kittens that have been made into something else. Our cars will fall into category R, which are vehicles registered or manufactured 40 years ago that have not been substantially changed in the last 30 years. Components considered 'substantial' are chassis or monocoque body shell (including any sub-frames) engine, axle and running gear (including alteration of type or method of suspension or steering).

Other changes are not considered 'substantial':-

Changes of chassis or bodyshell to same pattern as original.

Alternative cc. of engine, providing the number of cylinders is as original.

Axles and running gear which improve efficiency or safety.

Changes can be made to preserve a vehicle where original parts do not exist.

Changes of a type that were made when the vehicle was in use (within ten years of the end of production.)

It appears that not all policemen are familiar with the rules, and you might be apprehended for not having an MOT, even though you, rightly, believed you did not need one.

**My suggestion is to have an MOT cert. for your car, regardless of your right not to have one. The emissions levels have also been changed, and are more severe for cars built after August 1975. Fit a weak needle before your test.**

You can obtain a V112 Declaration of Exemption from MOT from Post Office.

John.

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## Rebel Round Up

Brian,

15<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Mewsletter 146 arrived today, as ever interesting and informative.

Over the winter my Rebel now has new trunnions (Greased!), Propshaft U.J., (*yes all you Kitten and Fox owners, the Rebel only has one hardy spicer on its propshaft – Ed.*) and Drag Link ends. The latter being challenging to source, as Graham mentioned in his email.

Amsteer Sales Ltd., are a manufacturer of steering and suspension parts, and quickly were able to make a pair, based on the original removed from the Rebel. Even better they did not charge any more than their advertised price for stock products.

Good service and good value. They are Tamworth based, so perhaps have a little of the Reliant spirit? They can be found on-line at :- <http://www.amsteer.co.uk/Reliant%20Car%20Parts>

Current Rebel project is to replace some distinctly fragile wiring!

Fortunately, my Tempest, sitting alongside the Rebel, has behaved impeccably, just needing an occasional polish!

Regards, John Wheeler No. 1045 from Norfolk.

*Thanks for the update John, I must however jump in, before our President does, and point out that the Rebel (Triumph) trunnions are meant to be oiled, rather than greased!*

*This does make me think that perhaps I ought to check my frequent lubrication advice, to make sure that I have not been misleading people! Ed.*

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## Foxed!

### MUSINGS ON SAFETY, by Duncan Bradford

I feel I have something of an apology to make:

I have for many years banged on at the slightest opportunity about the superior strength of the Fox body design. Mainly because of breaking or cutting up one or two, with not a little difficulty. Forward of the B/C post at least, the GRP is thicker, and there is cross-bracing between the inner and outer moulds to a much greater extent than other models. The firewall is 2mm thicker than the Kitten's, according to Reliant, and the squarer angles and moulded returns convey further strength to the design. Aft of the B/C post is another matter, the GRP can almost be cut by looking at it while holding a butter knife. The boxing in of the rollover bar and the box-section design of the sills and rear seat area point to some degree of side-impact protection.

However, having experienced 2 low-speed shunts recently, which rendered the body tubs unsalvageable with any degree of safety, I am now in something of a different frame of mind.

The first accident was a frontal collision with someone pulling out

of a side road into my path. I estimate the combined speed as only about 20 mph, but the front corner that hit the 3rd party's front wheel experienced disintegration of the grp along the joins of almost every body panel under the bonnet, and in the front end and wing panels. My driver's door and A post were shunted far enough back to chip the B/C post with the door lock. There was the pattern of the other vehicle's black plastic wheel arch spat arching across my bonnet almost halfway up, meaning that the Fox had crumpled over half a metre in before regaining shape [approximately], which was good for impact absorption, and all the affected body joints had sprung apart, which was not. It would have only taken both of us to be doing 20mph maybe for the body panels to all separate themselves.

The second accident was a side impact exactly on the B/C posts at about 10 mph. It deformed the front passenger seat by crushing it about 10% narrower, and stove in the whole side, wrenching the rollover bar off the chassis and either cracking apart all the laminated joins with the inner tub, or tearing the GRP apart. And the rollover bar was healthy and not rusting away! The accompanying picture may give you an idea. The BMW that hit me had a 2cm crack and a scuff mark in the plastic bumper.

6 months later, and I still feel less than safe driving in a Reliant now, bearing in mind that in both these incidents I couldn't have driven any more slowly, safely, or defensively. I have taken the step of buying a NON-Reliant for the first time since I sold the Mk X Jag in 1981! The SIP and side and curtain airbags give a certain peace of mind, and make me wonder whether it is sane to drive among people who assume that everyone has such protection, and that therefore they do not need to take the utmost care to avoid collisions when driving.

I see now why old people drive like old people do: It's the only way to get to live that long!

Duncan (Bradford) No. 46 from Norfolk

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The damage to the passenger's side of Duncan's Fox.

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## *Fox Alternative Parts List*

This was never a published list, but I had compiled, with the help of old catalogues, a fair chance of cross-referencing a part which is obsolete from Reliant's parts lists, but in use by another vehicle, e.g. few sources list the ignition switch under Reliant, but it is still listed for Landrover Series models, or there's the classic Mini brake shoes etc. The time has come though, when so few parts are in use by current models, or they have been re-sourced by interest groups such as Minor / Mini / Landrover OCs and are well known, that there are very few over-the-counter items available – in fact in some parts of the country there are few motorists' shops around anyway.

In short, for the last year or two, I haven't been able to give people useful ideas for readily-available alternatives, and there are far more resourceful people than I, just a click or two away on the main forum or, for immediacy, the facebook group, where posing such a question often brings an immediate answer.

So please consider the 'list' retired. Not that I mind the odd phone call, and I have got a fair collection of spares gleaned from all over, which I really should try and thin out!

Duncan Bradford, No. 46, from Norfolk

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## Liege page?

Dear Brian,

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019

I was out in my Liege in the Peak District yesterday, and decided to drive around the Ladybower / Derwent / Howden reservoirs complex. I stopped for a drink at the Fairholmes car park café, and there I came across an ageing couple who had a problem with their very nice looking MG Roadster, and the bonnet was up.

A number of "senior / born again" bikers on very new motorcycles were gathered round and keen to help, but it appeared that

none of them seemed to know much about older cars. The old chap's wife was not at all happy - not a nice place to get stranded with no phone coverage, and the afternoon was drawing on.

I offered to help, and asked what the symptoms were. Apparently the car had begun to run rough on the way there. When they tried to leave again it started and idled normally, but died completely and stalled as soon as the accelerator was pressed. The owner was very keen to tell me that as a member of the MG Owners' Club he had the car very regularly serviced and it had been done quite recently. It was in very good condition.

First thing I went for was the dashpot on one of the carburettors (1.5" HS4s on these cars, but basically the same as the HS2 used on most Reliants). I unscrewed the damper, wiggled it up and down and found virtually no resistance, and heard a gurgling noise. The second carb was the same. There was insufficient oil in both of them. I asked the owner if he carried any spare oil? - he didn't. Neither do I - my Suzuki G10A engine (in the Liege) has never used a drop of oil in 8,500 miles, despite the supercharger giving it a 55% power upgrade.

There was a bicycle hire shop round the back of the café, so I sent the owner off to ask if they kept oil of any sort. He came straight back with a small bottle of blue coloured bike lube (possibly the most expensive oil on the planet at £7 for about 250 ml, but never mind). It was a bit thicker than ideal, but after I put about a thimbleful in each dashpot the problem was immediately fixed! He didn't get out of the car, he just asked me to shut the bonnet, so I did. He called his wife over, she quickly climbed in and off they went... he didn't bother to thank me, but just gave a quick wave and was gone!

So, Brian, as you always advise us to, "Grease those ball joints", I would add "Oil yer dashpots!"

Best regards, Paul. (Wheatley) No. 422 from Shireoaks.

*I replied to Paul thus :-*

Hi Paul,

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019

We are muddling along thanks, Moira got her driving licence back last week, 11 months after re-applying, a year after her last brain op! Just for a year meantime, but it should make a big change for us both. 23 months is quite a break, but she is finding her feet gradually.

We, the whole family, and dog, are going away for a week's holiday in 2 log cabins in Argyll a week today, hoping the weather is not too bad. I've booked all 7 of us (except the dog!) on a tour of Cruachan Power Station on April Fool's day.

I love the MG carb story, sad they didn't think to say thanks, but I can't, sadly, say I'm surprised about the problem, or the bikers' lack of knowledge. A really depressing reflection on the world we live in, I hope it does not put the wife in the MG off forever, though I suspect it might, all for the want of a few drops of 3 in one! (which lub is best is another debate entirely!) So much for his maintenance / service team, just ridiculous, but I suspect all too common.

Dashpot lubrication will indeed be mentioned regularly in here in future!

The lack of mobile coverage is something that is quite common in many areas of the country, and all too often not recognised by the masses till it is too late - ask any mountain rescue team!

I can only imagine how mortified they will (hopefully) have felt when they got home and, again hopefully!, realise that they failed to thank their good Samaritan.

I'm going to forward this to my good friend Peter Wilson in the MG club (though there are a few different ones) and see if he thinks that a mention in the mag. Might be appropriate on several fronts!

I hope this finds you, Sue, and the family well.

Oh, and I'm glad that you are getting good use out of the Liege, though sorry to hear of the "development" problems. I will always treasure the memory of that run you took me on in it, just fabulous, thanks again.

Regards from Renfrew, Brian.



Happy New Year Brian.

16<sup>th</sup> January 2019

I have purchased and fitted an exhaust to my Fox that came from Keith Gittus. Would it be possible in the Mewsletter to let Fox owners know that they are available at a good price.

Willie. (McKenna) No. 1078 from Aviemore.



*I did point out to Willie that we have been advertising these in the Magazine advert supplement for the past year or so, but it is always good to be on the receiving end of testimonials, thank you Willie. Ed.*

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Hi Brian,

5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Just an update, we pointed out in the Mewsletter that Viva bottom ball joints can be used as an alternative. You will need to put a flat on the top edge, and need a spacer and circlip to make it fit.

I now have spacers and circlips available for RKR members @ £8.00 per side inc p&p. Keith (154) tel. :- 01543 682125.



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Alan (Shaw) - I saw this and thought of you! Brian.

## Bonny Prince Charlie!

Prince Charles is visiting an Edinburgh hospital. He enters a ward full of patients and greets one.

The patient replies :- “Fair fa yer honest sonsie face, Great Chieftain o’ the pudding grace. Aboon them a ye tak yer place, Painch, tripe or thairm, as lang’s my arm”.

HRH is confused, so he just smiles and moves on to the next patient.

The patient responds :- “Some hae meat and canna eat, and some hae nane that want it. But we hae meat, an we can eat, so let the Lord be thankit.”

Even more confused, the Prince moves on to the next patient, who immediately begins to chant :- “Wee sleekit cowerin timrous beastie, O whit a panic is in thy breastie, thou needna start away sae hastie, Wi bickering brattle”.

Now seriously troubled, Charles turns to the accompanying doctor and asks “Is this the psychiatric ward?”

“No, no,” replies the doctor “This is the serious Burns unit”



# Getting Technical

I was going to say something at the time, in the last edition, relating to Al Osborn's comments about a drop off in revs when depressing the clutch being down to wear in the SU carb spindle. There simply was not the room or time to address the situation then.

He is probably not wrong, even though I used to attribute that feature of many Reliant engines in many of my Reliants in the 80's, 90's and even this century, to excessive crankshaft endfloat. In truth, with the benefit of hindsight and wisdom accrued over the years, I am fairly certain that both situations contribute to a dropping in revs, to what degree each is responsible, I honestly do not know, but one thing is certain, it is easier to maintain the carb spindle by regular lubrication, or, at worst, by replacing it, or even the whole carb (with a new one, not a used one), a lot less work and expense that stripping the engine to reduce crankshaft endfloat! – Ed.

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Hi again Brian,

No he looked at the clutch and decided it was ok.  
Think (memory is going) James Holland did the clutch when he rebuilt it last.

The head was re-torqued after a couple of 30 second runs and long cool downs on the bench. Must say, I found it all rather interesting.

During dismantling we discovered that a previous owner had got carried away grinding the inlet manifold.

Probably explains why it never had any low down power.  
A good second hand one was obtained from James for £8.

I presume I will need new mounting rubbers for the steering rack.  
Do they come with the rack, or can I buy them elsewhere.

Thanks Steve. (Head) No. 1013 from Andover.



*Ah, yes, a long story there, and to some degree I must hold my hands up for at least some of the, considerable, confusion on the inlet manifold / flow situation, Ed.*

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## Some sad news

I have to tell you that my friend Brian Millar died suddenly last month. He suffered a heart attack on a bus on his way to the airport to fly home for the weekend from Sweden, where he has been working for a while. Brian was the man who wrote the database for us, I think of him every time I run off your address labels. He is survived by his wife Polly, son Ian, and daughter Alison, Brian was a few years younger than me!

Our thoughts are with Polly and the family at this difficult time.

## **Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs – Press release**

10 April 2019

For immediate release

### **London ULEZ Information**

As the London ULEZ has just come into force, it is a good time to remind everyone that all UK vehicles in the 'historic' taxation class (including Northern Ireland) are automatically exempt from charges under the ULEZ and do not have to register with TfL to obtain the exemption.

We have placed guidance notes on our website at <https://fbhvc.co.uk/news> which we hope will assist drivers and keepers of vehicles over 30 years old.

The Checker function on the TfL website does not currently easily identify all exempted vehicles and we therefore do not recommend the use of this facility. In several places on the TfL London ULEZ site there is a link to a 'Discounts and Exemptions' page which accurately sets out the position, including the following:

- All vehicles that have a historic vehicle tax class [status] will be exempt from the ULEZ
- If your vehicle meets the above criteria and is registered in the UK, it is automatically exempt and you don't need to register with us. This is a clear confirmation of the position by TfL.

We should add that the introduction of the ULEZ does not affect either:

- The existing London LEZ (for larger vehicles), in respect of which the cut-off for affected vehicles remains 1973, or
- The Congestion Charge, from which historic vehicles are not and never have been exempt (except buses and minibuses, which do need to register)

FBHVC Editor's notes :- The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs exists to maintain the freedom of its members to use historic vehicles on the UK's roads, hence its campaign message: 'Yesterday's Vehicles on Tomorrow's Roads'. The FBHVC has over 550 member clubs representing over 251,000 individual owners.

## **The 'Middle Wife' by an Anonymous 2nd grade teacher.**

I've been teaching now for about fifteen years. I have two kids myself, but the best birth story I know is the one I saw in my own second grade classroom a few years back.

When I was a kid, I loved show-and-tell. So I always have a few sessions with my students. It helps them get over shyness, and usually, show-and-tell is pretty tame. Kids bring in pet turtles, model airplanes, pictures of fish they catch, stuff like that. And I never, ever, place any boundaries or limitations on them. If they want to lug it in to school and talk about it, they're welcome.

Well, one day this little girl, Erica, a very bright, very outgoing kid, takes her turn and waddles up to the front of the class with a pillow stuffed under her sweater.

She holds up a snapshot of an infant. 'This is Luke, my baby brother, and I'm going to tell you about his birthday.'

'First, Mom and Dad made him as a symbol of their love, and then Dad put a seed in my Mom's stomach, and Luke grew in there. He ate for nine months through an umbrella cord.'

She's standing there with her hands on the pillow, and I'm trying not to laugh and wishing I had my camcorder with me. The kids are watching her in amazement.

'Then, about two Saturdays ago, my Mom starts going, 'Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh!' Erica puts a hand behind her back and groans. 'She walked around the house for, like an hour, 'Oh, oh, oh!' (Now this kid is doing a hysterical duck walk and groaning.)

'My Dad called the middle wife. She delivers babies, but she doesn't have a sign on the car like the Domino's man. They got my Mom to lie down in bed like this.' (Then Erica lies down with her back against the wall.)

'And then, pop! My Mom had this bag of water she kept in there in case he got thirsty, and it just blew up and spilled all over the bed, like psshheew!' (This kid has her legs spread with her little hands miming water flowing away. It was too much!)

'Then the middle wife starts saying 'push, push,' and 'breathe, breathe. They started counting, but never even got past ten. Then, all of a sudden, out comes my brother. He was covered in yucky stuff that they all said it was from Mom's play-center, so there must be a lot of toys inside there. When he got out, the middle wife spanked him for crawling up in there in the first place.'

Then Erica stood up, took a big theatrical bow and returned to her seat.

I'm sure I applauded the loudest. Ever since then, when it's Show-and-tell day, I bring my camcorder, just in case another 'Middle Wife' comes along.

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## Llangollen 2019

Moving on to motoring related topics, and in particular our now annual gathering at Llangollen (for now anyway). We find the goal posts moved this year, as the Museum owner wants us to pay a single fee for the use of the field and facilities, the fee will include entry to the Museum.

We have always enjoyed a high level of subsidy for this, now annual, gathering of like-minded souls, our grateful thanks are extended to those involved, and while we have no wish, desire, or intention to commercialise the occasion, some form of financial support would either reduce or avoid the Register, or the event organiser, being out of pocket.

Tony has, once again, very generously offered to provide us with attendance plaques, which is a big help both financially and logistically, and is very much appreciated, **THANK YOU Tony**. That said, he needs to know numbers by the beginning of June. To that end I will be sending out a "Booking form", which I guess needs to go with this edition, as it could be too late for the June deadline if I wait till next time.

So this is your invitation, if you are intending coming along. to send me a fiver, or two (per car) "admin fee" now, which would go a long way to giving Tony the numbers he needs in good time to have the plaques made, not to say avoiding, or at least greatly reducing, the matter of collecting cash on the weekend.





## 5 year subscriptions.

Still on money matters, it came to my attention recently, that I perhaps do not make enough reference in here to our **5 year subscription deal**.

Believe it or not, I try not to repeat myself too often within these pages, the lubrication of things, ball joints in particular, excepted. However, I was recently surprised to discover that one of our readers, with us for almost a decade now, was not aware of the 5 year deal, which we have been offering twice a decade, for the past 15 years.

This was introduced in an attempt to save time, reduce my workload, and save everyone money, and it has proved quite effective.

We offer, twice a decade, to give readers the opportunity to enjoy 5 years' subscription for the price of 4. This saves money, as we only have to produce 1 card every 5 years, and I have less cheques to bank every year, and, potentially, less folk to chase for their renewals each year, and so less work to do. The proverbial win-win situation.

This was introduced in 2006, subs then running till 2010, and every 5 years since, the current crop, about a fifth of our number, have their subscriptions due for renewal at the end of 2020, by which time I will need to decide if I am up for another 5 years of this fun!

As ever, I make life difficult for myself from time to time by allowing exceptions, so things are not quite as tidy as I had intended them to be, but, on the whole, it has been a really good thing

As I am forever finding these days, my memory is not great, and I simply do not know when last we mentioned this (the 5 year subscription offer) in the magazine. That said, given that we only offer it every 5th year, it could well have been a few years ago now, hence this update.

I will remind you as we approach next December – if I have decided by then!

*Brian*

# A cautionary tale of car insurance.

By Duncan Bradford

Spring 2019

I have had a bespoke policy for my 3 foxes through Peter James for several years. It is basically an unlimited mileage multi-vehicle comprehensive policy including breakdown, agreed values, and salvage retention rights. The insurers are Markerstudy who, according to their website, are specialists in such things. Many 'classic' insurance agents use them.

When someone pulled out into my path and mangled the front of my red Fox, I wasn't unduly worried. A breakdown truck magically appeared and took me the 100 miles home, with the Fox on the back.

It took some time to source another body, and a little tussle to remind them I had an agreed value on the vehicle, from which they deducted 10%, in payment for me retaining the vehicle to re-body, but basically, all ended well.

So, when 18 months later a very similar event stove in the side of the 'new' body, as someone tried to share my space by entering a roundabout while I was crossing in front of them, I was, if not pleased, at least prepared for a straightforward enactment of Groundhog Day.

**Not to be.** This time the damage was awarded category B damage. This means the 'body shell' must be crushed. [But unboltable items can be removed, retained and reused.]

In most modern vehicles the term 'body shell' includes the framework of the vehicle, and the Vehicle Identification No. (VIN) therefore resides with the shell. In Reliants, the Vehicle Identity is with the chassis, and the body is a bolt-on tub, so is not included in the Vehicle Identity.

Insurance assessors no longer bother inspecting the vehicle, although their code of practice suggests they should, and they merely go by pictures of the damage which, understandably showed a body beyond repair, and they insisted the vehicle must be crushed and could

not be repaired. This was in spite of having allowed a re-bodying due to a similar accident on the same vehicle eighteen months before.

In truth, although the body was squished, the rolling chassis was unaffected, and just needed another body tub fitting, so the vehicle had received no structural damage, and should never have been awarded category B.

Persuading the insurers of this took several months, many phone calls, dozens of emails, the help of the agents, an explanatory letter and offer to inspect from John Box, who helped adapt the chassis for the use of Fox, Tempest and Vantique bodies, and a huge amount of time and stress.

One trump card was that we held on to the V5, and also retained the vehicle, instead of being inveigled into releasing it for 'safe storage' by Copart [sic]. But mainly it was insistence, learning the Code of Practice for assessors inside out, and dogged determination, that won the day.

Eventually the chief engineer grudgingly accepted that I was right, and the vehicle had not sustained any structural damage and was therefore category N, i.e. no category registered. Then they offered me a small amount in value, and only grudgingly accepted that I had an agreed value policy. In fact they said they didn't do agreed value policies anyway, in spite of their website promoting the fact. After another verbal battle they changed their minds. Then they tried to retain over 20% of this, instead of the usual 10%, as a fee for salvage retention.

The final hurdle to cross was to send them satisfactory evidence of the body tub being crushed which seemed somehow a bit redundant – what else would one do with it? I soon found out that no-one will provide such a service! At last we have agreed that a receipt for a skip, and pictures of the body being cut up and placed in the skip will result in a payout.

Bear in mind that I am fortunate that this policy includes uninsured loss recovery, or I would probably still end up worse off: I can reclaim the £100 excess, the 10% retention fee, the pay for the 4 days in hospital and recovery time off work etc.

The agreed value was £2,000, which seemed enough at the time, and just covered the job last time. This time however a respray and some repairs to the body tub will be needed, so the final bill will well exceed the agreed value. I have now revised the agreed values of the pickup [£5,000] and the camper [£10,000] to reflect this.

We all hope that we will never have to take recourse to using our insurance cover. Maybe I have just been lucky, as they are my first claims in well over 40 years of driving, but you would be wise to at least review your insurance arrangements, certainly if you put any value on your vehicle.

Make sure that you have uninsured loss recovery, and that your agreed value covers the true cost of repair and replacement.

Luckily I had the time – several hours each week – and the wit to record almost every phone call, for evidence that I could quote back to them when they denied what I had previously said, or had been informed of. Sheer dogged determination and the refusal to give up was the only way I won the case. [I kept the financial ombudsman in my back pocket as insurance services are technically financial services] but the whole event has left a feeling of unease and mistrust in what should have been a simple straightforward transaction.

For peace of mind against future episodes I am trying to secure a letter from Markerstudy to state three things: that they understand that with a Reliant vehicle the VIN is with the chassis, not the body, that yes, they do do agreed value policies, and that I have one, and that salvage retention entitles them to deduct 10% only off the agreed value.

At the time of writing it is now approaching 9 months since the accident, and this week I have received the cheque for the vehicle damage, and fingers are crossed that soon the uninsured losses, which should be substantially more, will be processed satisfactorily.

Markerstudy agreed to award me compensation for time, stress, and admin costs during the battle. They admit their performance was not as it should be.

.....

Hello Brian,

January 9th 2019

And a Happy and healthy New Year to you all. Health wealth and happiness to everyone in our excellent little group.

I see from the last Mewsletter that I got a mention in the “minutes” as to the General Lee paint scheme and sound effects, I can assure you that it is no wind-up job!

Not to my knowledge at least, as I’ve bought David the paint, bright red vermillion in Tekaloin coach enamel. The lad has the colour scheme planned.

He informs me that “the old man” has lost the plot (*I get that a lot from Arleen, Ed!*) here as the white flash down the side was Starkey and Hutch’s Dodge Charger, and the Confederate flag on the roof, is now a Union Jack!

It has been re-christened “The little General Lee”, with the name along the front wing in script I suppose. Personally I think the flag should honour our Brian, and be a St. Andrews’ cross.

David has plans for getting some cat images screen printed along the lines of Felix the cat, which we ancient ones will remember from sixpenny cinema matinees (*speak for yourself, though that might be my memory at fault, Ed!*)

The theme from Dixie air horns are organised, although where under the bonnet he is going to install the small theatre Wurlitzer is his problem, not mine! I suppose my task will be to do the wiring up job.

Photos, and possibly a sound track, will no doubt be made available in due course.

Dave still has some finishing to do, as, at the moment, the job is stopped, sitting in primer, ready for progress once the warmer spring weather arrives. This bloke suffers from an impediment in that he is a perfectionist, accepting no compromises. To give you one example, he had dad (me) re-glassing the bonnet from gel coat outwards, and levelling it off, as the shut lines had been all over the place.

I reckon it was the engine heat, coupled with the thinness of the original fibreglass, that was responsible for the distortion of the original.

He cracked the whip for close to 6 weeks, until he was finally satisfied. All through that lovely summer we had last year, I was sweating on that bonnet, even having to supply my own beer!

He has flatted the car down after applying multiple coats of some special base coat (*come on Bill, spill – exactly what basecoat? Ed.*) it positively shines now, so much so that I quipped “why don’t you just varnish it as it is Dave?!, sod the topcoat – well that suggestion went down like the proverbial lead balloon.

The primer is some fibreglass marine paint product, apparently used on boats, so being as the wee car is outside in all weathers, that seemed appropriate, bit boat like. The paint is available on-line and I came across it purely by chance, looking for an expensive paint brush, £40 for a 3” as it happens, American with silk bristles.

Yes, he is brush painting it, we have painted my old Landrover numerous times before I sold it, over the 30 + years that I owned it, it weathered well and looked good, over 250 thousand miles we did in that old girl, we ran a motorcycle recovery and breakers’ business.

Previously we’ve used cellulose, but it’s not that readily available right now due to saving the planet, or Europe, whatever? The cellulose always faded to an emulsion like finish, especially on the ‘Kitten. The primer, purchased from the ‘Supply Shed, marine boat undercoat paint for fibreglass and GRP, we used ‘Poppy Red’ which is a brown in effect, there are 3 x colours available, 750 ml tin costs £22.48 all in, postage and the vodka and tonic included!

I was reticent, in regards to the postal delivery, but it arrived securley packed, and I am so impressed with the finish and the way it goes on and flats down on the Kitten, that I intend using it on other things as well.

Worth the noting is that it thins with white spirit, so is not likely to be suitable for any spray paints like cellulose, you go there at your own peril, as I am no paint shop expert.

The contact details for Supply Shed are :- [www.supplyshed.biz](http://www.supplyshed.biz) or 01948 664071 for those of us (*and there are quite a few I may tell you – Ed.*) who are not “on-line” They are :-

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I have no connection with them, other than as a customer who knows a good product when he sees one!

I will now move on to the subject of MOT exemption? Having read the various comments, I found it all fascinating, having had no end of fun with our Post Office when Dave tried to tax the Kitten, they refused to tax it without an MOT, and it took the threat, by letter, of me bringing my MP down on them, along with a full explanation of the legislation, before they finally taxed it.

What I did was firstly get the taxation class changed to "Historic Vehicle", filled in the V112 etc., and applied for tax and MOT exemption, a "bigwig" duly emerged from the backroom, as if by magic, and the situation was sorted.

The excuse for the initial confusion was, that "the counter staff are not up to speed with the new legislation."!

I'm very much afraid that, in so far as this legislation goes, and the comments I read in the Mewsletter regarding what the DVLA computer says when questioned about MOT status, I can see nothing but trouble brewing on this front, unless or until someone "up there" with sense sorts it all out. *Editor's note, check the date on this letter! We have since then published the Federations press release on this matter, and there have been further developments.*

I can't help but wonder if such a person, in authority, who possesses the relevant ability, knowledge and expertise exists on the payroll of the department involved.

Meanwhile, sorry to spoil the party, but I have noticed another factor that I have not seen mentioned, insurance!

Both the Kitten, and my Jag, are on limited mileage policies, the Kitten on 1,500, the Jag. 5,000. O.K. so far? If you are not on a limited mileage policy, read no further (though you might want to check) I suspect that a number of us are not, my advice is “read the small print”.

I quote exactly what both my policies state, take note, two insurers, and yet exactly the same statement!

### **“Permitted annual miles XXX IMPORTANT.**

This is a limited mileage policy, you are required to retain your previous three years MOT certificates as evidence of your annual mileage. If the annual mileage is exceeded and copies of your MOT certificates cannot be provided. Cover under this policy may be prejudiced.”

The highlighting is theirs not mine, and the print tiny on both policies, you can read that statement any way you want, but it still comes out the same way, in the absence of MOTs, how do you know if you have exceeded the agreed limited mileage? We all know, but the legal question remains.

So, I rang both my insurers, and they said “get an MOT” Then I asked my friendly MOT man, an elderly old school gent, who said “Billy, get an MOT, or you’re up the creek.”

Now, as it happens, the Jag does need one, it is some years off being exempt, **it is any exempt vehicle we are talking about here.**

I know of several dubious characters who intend running classics as opposed to modern cars, solely for the MOT exemption, and the tax too, irrespective of the vehicle’s roadworthiness.

They are, I will add, not enthusiasts like us ladies and gentlemen, but would fit very well into that minority that so often spoil things for the majority.

I saw mention of wishbones possibly becoming available, we will be interested in a set as spares.

Regards to all those hard-working volunteers who help keep things running, you all do a magnificent job, I know that Brian could not do it without you.

Best wishes Bill Starkey (0386) and David (1096)

# Epilogue

Regarding Duncan's very welcome observations on page 6, and at the risk of repeating myself (a prize to the first person who can tell me the edition and page that I have mentioned this in before!)

Back in the day, and I am talking late 70's / early 80's here, when Kittens were still being made, the powers that be did indeed notice an unusually high percentage of fatalities in small Reliants that were involved in road traffic accidents. However – they chose to do nothing, because rear seatbelt legislation was already in the pipeline, and the vast majority of such deaths involved rear seat passengers being flung out, and subsequently hit by other vehicles.

They discovered that the nature of the fiberglass body-shell was such that it shattered on high impact, and that in fact, you were safer in a wee Reliant than in almost any other make of vehicle, provided you were in the front, and wearing a seatbelt. No one got trapped in a Reliant, unlike all too many poor souls in metal bodied vehicles!

So relax Duncan, though I do fully understand how frightening it can be, I was once hit on the nearside rear corner of Moira's Rebel, REO 224L (or was it 244?), the Mitsubishi that hit me on the M9 just the Glasgow side of Stirling at the back of nine in the morning, was traveling at about twice the speed that I was on impact, the force broke the driver's seat, and the egg size lump on the right side of my head was caused by it striking the plastic hook that you hung the seatbelt up on when not in use!

The guy was not only drunk, but there was an outstanding arrest warrant out for him, fortunately it was a hired car, and so the insurance paid out, in spite of the lies he told them when hiring the car! (he told them he was a policeman!).

Right, you know what to grease, but don't forget to **"Oil yer dashpots!"** too. That's for those who use an SU!

Till next time, drive safely.

*Brian*

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