

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



Mewsletter 150

September - October 2019



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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.....



The Reliant Kitten Register

Hon. President John Box

This month a picture of Henry Haddon's very smart Kitten pick-up, which after a huge amount of work, is now back up, running and on the road – Excellent work Henry.

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.

It should be noted that opinions and ideas, information and advice printed in this publication are as recommended by our readers and others, and, while believed to be accurate and correct, such information is given in good faith, and it does not necessarily have the approval of the Reliant Kitten Register, and cannot be guaranteed by either the Editor, or the Reliant Kitten Register. Owners must satisfy themselves as to the suitability of any suggestions made within these pages, as no responsibility can be accepted.

Web page: <http://www.kitreg.org.uk>

For technical advice, help with locating parts or other queries, contact Brian or John.

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Mews 150

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E & o e

Welcome to our 150th edition, right now I feel minded to, once again, offer our 5 year folk 5 more years, come next December. The thought of reaching edition 200 seems like a tempting prospect at the moment, but I have a year to think about it some more, before committing us all to another half decade of this!

Back to reality now, there are a couple of new things in this one, my thanks to Duncan Bradford and John Pearce (who may feel that his input is nothing new, and to a degree he would be correct, but). Also, our retiring President. Read on...

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, thanks to Terry's communication, see page 10, I feel liberated (or rebellious?) for the moment at any rate!

So, our 150th edition, like our 100th (I don't remember anything to mark the 50th one, must look back – though not in anger! And see). As I was saying, like our 100th, I feel ill prepared. Perhaps I ought to begin planning number 200 at once! After all, that will only be just over 8 years from now, if my arithmetic is still up to scratch. About Spring of 2028. Wait a minute, I'll be 75 by then, is it likely I'll still be doing this then?

Moving swiftly on....

.....

From the Oval office.

RAPTOR – THE MARK 2 TEMPEST

When Beans industries bought Reliant from the receivers, they had several products available to them to keep Reliant alive. Principally there was the Three Wheeler, the SS1 Sabre, and the supply of industrial engines. There was also tooling available for the Fox commercial, all completed chassis of which had been sold off. Robin production continued at around twenty per week, so priority was given to the Sabre, which needed an alternative engine. The chassis was re-worked to accept a K Series Rover engine, in place of the Ford unit used previously.

Discussion then centred around the Fox chassis, which, it was felt, could be developed with simple modification, into a chassis/cab configuration that would accept a variety of coachwork for light duties. The plan was to widen the frame so that the rear spring anchorages were beneath the side members, and lengthen the wheelbase. The front suspension would be modified to accept SS1 stub axles and disc brakes, and utilise Robin spring units. In order to simplify meeting emissions requirements it would probably have used a 1000 cc. Lombardini diesel engine, and Ford gearbox.

The front suspension was redesigned and fitted to an unmodified Fox chassis, but, before the project moved on, Beans were in financial difficulties, and no further progress was made.

In order to save the chassis from scrappage it passed to Thoroughbred Projects, designers of the Tempest and Vantique.

Over the years, many modifications to the Tempest had been thought out, and now there was an opportunity to put them into practice. All the components were unused, and a scrap Kitten provided the necessary paperwork.



The front suspension modifications were completed with the Sabre disc brakes and ball joints, and the wheelbase increased by 3½ inches. The engine had been blueprinted by TVR Power in Coventry for test purposes.

The rear axle and gearbox were new build, from the production line. As the stud pitch was now different between the front and rear hubs, adaptors and wire wheels were fitted. This completed the rolling chassis.

A new restyled body was constructed which, although completely different, displays its Tempest roots. The body frame is timber and the alloy panes are bonded to it to add to its strength. The body is wider as are the doors and footwells. The four wings and gunmetal raked radiator shell are the only GRP components. A very efficient 'Everflex' hood and side-screens are fitted. The car has a good quality finish (Citroen Storm Grey) with blue hood and upholstery.





I am not able to look after this unique car any longer, and would like to pass it on to a new appreciative owner. The price will be £6,500 with some spares, including a complete set of the new front suspension parts. It has covered 5,000 miles since completion.

Call 01524 781841 or e-mail johnsbox711@btinternet.com

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## Tempest News

I'm beginning to think that James Bond should run a Tempest.

Seriously, I think (shocking memory accepted) that we have only had 3 Tempests visit Glendee Gardens in the 38½ years that we have lived here. Two thirds of them arrived unannounced! Indeed the first one was on its own!

Yesterday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, Moira shouted through to me – I was in the boy's room supervising Thomas, one time SS1 and later Rebel owner, hang a couple of pictures for me – yes, it really has come to that, I can't even hang a picture without help these days. Anyway, "there's a wee black sports car just drawn up outside" she said. So I abandoned Thomas and went to open the front door. I had one of those ITMA moments (apologies to the youngsters – I wonder if even Google would help you out with that one?) Anyway, this, not unfamiliar face announced that he was looking for Brian Marshall – not sure how bad you think my memory is Andy?



This is Andy Gambrill, you may remember I mentioned him recently regarding his last visit here – not in the Tempest.

Anyway, he had driven up from Oxfordshire yesterday, and, having just dropped his daughter off at Glasgow Uni, thought he would pop in to do some running maintenance. His timing was impeccable, we had just one bowl of home-made soup left!



After lunch he sorted out a battery / solenoid connection issue, topped up a certain rather dry dashpot, and was on his way back to Uni to pick up his daughter after her lecture.

I know, that would have made a good cover picture, I could even run a “guess who” competition, but I need to get this edition finished – Christmas will be here before you know it!



Andy, great to see you again, and in the Tempest this time too, wonderful to see one being used.

I know you were heading off to Belfast today, 15/10/19, but regret not having time to ask about the rest of your Tempest trip. Anything you care to share?

Oh, and to give credit where it is due (I could not find my camera!) thanks Thomas for taking the pictures. Ed.

.....

# Thought provoking?

*I received a thought provoking email after the last edition fell through letterboxes (or landed in in-boxes).*

*I did consider not sharing it at all, or editing it a bit, but I thought that seeking views on its content might be no bad thing to do. That said, the existing formula has served us well for over a quarter of a century, and I continue to be amazed that our numbers have held up over the past decade or two, with a lot less of the cars surviving now than back then!*

*Enough preamble, here is what Terry Scott (yes, he who used to run the Rebel Register), had to say :-*

Hi Brian and John,

23/08/19

I guess you were disappointed with the turn-out at Llangollen noting some of the comments in the Mewsletter.

I think what you experienced is common with the way Car Clubs in general are going, if you read the article in the September 2019 copy of the magazine Practical Classics, it was a front page article on Classic Car Clubs, mainly aimed at trying to promote Car Clubs, I know this is a Register, but you get the drift..

The Kitten following has a significant problem with existing in the future because of a few problems.

- 1) As they get older it's only the hardy that can try to keep them on the road, due to the significant fact of parts peculiar to this Reliant car.
- 2) Chassis rotting, which have their own problems repairing.
- 3) The internet is taking over from club meets, because folk still keep in touch even though they don't go to gatherings and meetings.
- 4) It gives the impression of being a one off type of car following,

until you read the bottom of the front page of the Mewsletter

5) Most owners are getting on a bit..... I include myself in that. I could go on, but I think that sums most of it up.

Brian, you do a fantastic job at putting a Mewsletter together and circulating it, and one must accept this is the only communication process that keeps the Register members together, but as cars disappear due to rust, or lack of parts, and with us all get older, then the numbers at gatherings and meetings will start to disappear, as you observed at Llangollen.

*O.K., I didn't interrupt at every point, but I fear I may miss something if I don't deal with the points raised in each section.*

*Terry, I should like to say thank you for what I know is intended as observation, and constructive comment.*

*You are quite correct in your point about our disappointment at the attendance at Llangollen this year. There were a number of factors, another Reliant event on the same weekend organised at relatively short notice, not too far distant. The British F1 Grand Prix being on the same weekend (sorry about that Paul), and yes, the death of one of our regulars since last year.*

*That said, you make the comparison with "Car Clubs in general", and, to be fair, you do recognise that this is a Register, not a Car Club.*

*What did surprise me is that you have the impression that there is a problem with the supply of parts for the cars. We take great pride in doing our bit to fill any gaps that appear in the supply of bits essential to keeping the cars on the road. I quite accept that some prices have risen a lot in the past couple of decades. Rear springs and fuel tanks spring to mind as things that have more than trebled in price, but others, like exhaust systems, have hardly changed at all.*

*Chassis corrosion can indeed be an issue, but by the very nature of the design of these wonderful wee cars, you can easily remove the body, strip everything off the chassis, and start with a clean slate, with the help of your local shot-blaster.*

*To digress for a moment, John Bonnett is currently having the chassis on his Kitten shot blasted, after which he is going to set about making good any weaknesses. However, he is un-decided as to whether to have it powder coated or galvanized, and I am reminded, thanks to Derek Wallace, who brought his Fox chassis round here on its way back to Fort William a year or so back, that, these days, you can do both! Yes, his was powder coated on top of the new galvanising, something that I was not aware was possible, but it seems that processes have changed!*

*Your comments about the internet are fair, but I should point out that not everyone is, or wants to be “on line”, we have quite a number of readers in that category, some of whom are key to our ability to refurbish and make parts, and without whom, a number of things would be a lot more expensive. I’m sure I’ve said it before, but we are as a nation, if not a species, becoming far too dependent on the internet, when it fails, and it will, many things will grind to a swift and disastrous halt.*

*Lastly, for now, I’m not sure I get your point about giving the impression of the Register being a one off type of car following, what is wrong with that?*

So, what to do about it.?

I suggest we need to do more to get the car itself as the number 1 subject in the Register, and maybe not people’s travels. You guys know all about Reliants, and Reliant Kittens, but folk who join the Register don’t, they join it to find parts and learn some technical stuff they don’t know.

I know there are people like Joe Mason, who have enough Reliant stuff to keep the Reliant car going for many years, but some Kitten parts are a different story, I understand there are lists of parts that can be found on other types of vehicles available somewhere, maybe we should try to publish that on the website?

Maybe the website needs updating, for instance it talks about today being in 2008, that’s 11 years ago. *(fair comment, and updating it is on the to-do list, Ed.)*

But back to the newsletter, maybe consider dividing the Kitten (as an example) maintenance manual into 6 subjects and having a

technical item in the mewsletter on each subject in rota, please remember you guys know all about the cars, new members don't.

If finding the technical info on steering, for an example, is a bit of a struggle to put in the newsletter, then use an item from 1992 that everybody had forgotten about or never knew existed, I guess it's all been done at sometime, but as time goes on, people will find a way around the lack of spares issue.

Maybe ask the members to put up something about how to fix chassis rot, there was an article in facebook by a guy who has made his own front suspension parts, from scratch, some achievement.

So it's your Mewsletter folks, I am just trying to suggest ways to stop the car and its followers disappearing as we all get older....

Have a fun time some time every day.

Terry (Scott) No. 1108 from West Sussex.

*Just me again, on the matter of re-publishing old technical material, that is something I have sometimes considered, especially since Dick Goodall's index became out of date (thank you for those time consuming efforts at the time Dick) . Then Steve Casey came to our rescue, and with his up-to-date on-line index, which I did publish in these pages when it first became available (which excludes the personal stuff and funnies) and, with us having all the old Mewsletters on the web site, I really feel that we cover that aspect of things quite well.*

*I don't have the time or energy to keep up with facebook, but if you are referring to David Henderson from Fife, with the Fox, regarding the creating of new wishbones, clearly a talented chap. He did it off his own bat, perhaps not realising that we have copies of the factory drawings for these parts.*

*Clearly some individuals can cope perfectly well on their own, which gives great hope for the future of the vehicles fortunate to find themselves in the custody of such clever people, though not everyone possesses such a useful skill set.*

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## *Some sound advice*

Getting angry with somebody? **Think before you talk.**

If the person is junior to you, **think for 10 seconds.**

If they are equal to you, **count to 30, and then talk.**

If the person is your senior, **count to 50, and then talk.**

**If the person is your wife, keep counting, don't talk.**

.....

***There follows an interesting series of electronic communications between Steve Payne from Norwich, one of our recent subscribers, and John Pearce, who kindly handles that side of things for us.***

From: Steve T To: John Pearce - Subject: Kitten Advice 17 July 2019

Hi John,

Great advice, thanks ever so.

I removed the Propshaft, and the oil seal was so hard it was as hard as wood. I take it it's called a Rear Pinion axle seal?

I drained the gearbox before removing the seal, super fun, I've never had so much fun.

As you can see from pics I marked the prop and mating edges with a punch.

What would be recommended for correct Gearbox oil?

Gearbox oil was dark grey, obviously never been changed. There was a little bit of swarf in there, but it's to be expected.

The clicking noise was indeed a Balance weight on the N/S/R wheel, touching the spring.

Regards, Steve

From: John Pearce Sent: 17 July 2019 21:26 To: 'Steve T'

Subject: RE: Kitten Advice

If the balance weight was clipping the spring then the tyre wall MUST be way too close!!!! Tyre walls expand with speed, some by up to 10mm, so, for safety, you need at least 15mm between the tyre wall and the spring leaf. You obviously don't need much, so maybe a 10mm spacer – this should not need longer studs.

I had the tyre wall clip the spring leaf on mine years ago, just after I'd upgraded to 12" wheels. On Sunday evening I was on the A1M up just south of Doncaster on the way back from the ROC Northern Gala at Pontefract racecourse. The tyre literally exploded off the rim, fortunately missing the bodywork, and I came to a halt on the (now ruined) wheel rim (offside rear). I was cruising between 70-80mph (with the traffic). Huge noise, thought the diff had exploded, but got it safely stopped on the hard shoulder.

Then it all turned into a bit of a farce as, although I had a jack, spare wheel, wheel brace and such, no way could I get the wheel nuts undone – I had had the wheels balanced on the preceding Friday and I guess that the nuts had been "gorilla'd" up with an air gun. A motorway police car stopped and, with their help, we did get one nut undone. Then, on the second, the (about 16 stone) copper jumping on the wheel brace snapped the brace. So, call the RAC time. The police coned me off and left me to it.

About an hour later they returned with coffee!!! They had seen me still waiting from the opposite carriageway, and took pity.... Shortly afterwards the RAC arrived. His "windy" gun failed too, so he got out a 3 foot breaker bar with an impact socket. That got the other three off. Spare on, nuts tightened, (correctly this time) and I was on my way again.

The odd thing is that I've always carried an old 3/8 drive torque

wrench in the car tool kit set to the correct torque for the wheel nuts, and I'm sure I had told the guy this at the tyre place...

On return home I checked the other wheel, ended up having to buy a breaker bar to get the nuts undone!!! Then I fitted 10mm spacers (which are still on there). I have 16mm clearance on one side and 15mm on the other..... Quite good for a hand-built car! The breaker bar is now in the boot tool roll as well.

Gearbox oil is standard GL4 80/90 gear oil, again standard mineral. GL5 is semi-synthetic and it WILL damage the bronze synchro hubs in the gearbox, so don't use it.

Front main seal (I presume you mean gearbox rear seal) if OK, don't bother to change it. Not difficult anyway, but will need gearbox removal. If you mean the front timing cover seal, then simple, just remove the timing cover, tap out the old seal, and tap in the new. Worth replacing the cam chain tensioner as well whilst you're in there, just slides on to a pin on the cover. When replacing, slip the bottom pulley into the seal first and then offer the cover and pulley up as an assembly. This correctly centres the seal on the pulley, before replacing the cover bolts. James is contracted to Comma, as are most small dealers, so might not stock Millers/Morris's/Valvoline.

I'm not criticising Comma by the way, I use their gear oil and brake fluid, just that I'm not impressed with their "classic" engine oil....

I usually use Opie oils online. Delivery is OK and prices acceptable.

John.

From: Steve T  
To: John Pearce

Subject: UJ's for Kitten

17 July 2019

Is it worth me changing the Universal Joints while I Have the prop off? although they do seem free and ok.

Regards, Steve.

Hi Steve,

In a word, no. If it isn't broke don't fix it..... Prop shaft u/j's on Reliants, if greased regularly, pretty much never wear out (like the front suspension ball joints). Mine is a case in point – 623,000 miles and rising and still has the original prop shaft and u/j's (and also 3 of the original 4 ball joints)

The one ball joint changed, nearside upper, was changed purely as a precaution after the top wishbone was replaced due to a crack being found on it, this itself being caused by an "incident" with a Badger late one evening, which also bent the lower tie-bar and wishbone too! Remarkably hard, Badgers.

The only steering/suspension replacements have been the rack, back in about 1990 or so, plus a few track rod ends (these never came with grease nipples). Moral is, if it's got a nipple, grease it regularly (but sparingly). I give all of mine 1-2 pumps every couple of months. More on the handbrake cable if it's got nipples on it. Replacements never have but original equipment ones do.

Right, oil, as discussed on the 'phone earlier today. Reliant engines, as fitted to Kittens, Robins, Rialto's, Foxes were designed in the very late 1950's and first appeared in 1962 on the Regal 3/25 range as 600cc. The world's first mass-produced all-aluminium engine, they were broadly based on the Standard-Triumph small engine layout, NOT as social media has it, the old Austin 7 engines (though the earlier side-valve 750cc engine was, back in the 1940's).

Synthetic oils on the other hand were not even envisaged back then. They came about in the 1980's as a solution for engine manufacturers who were pushing up power outputs tremendously and standard mineral oils were struggling to work under the much tighter tolerances inside these new engines. Ergo synthetic and semi-synthetic oils are not really suitable for older engines.

They will work, but they contain more detergents than mineral oils do so on a used engine they can behave a bit like a flushing oil, pulling the sludge up from the sump and circulating it through the engine, blocking the oil filter. The chemicals can also degrade some plastic (and will kill leather) seals, causing leaks. On a newly rebuilt

engine this should not happen though, so it's probably alright to use a semi-synthetic, but never, ever, a full one – this is specifically for turbo or supercharged engines only really!!

But which mineral oil? For years I used Duckhams, until Castrol bought them out and discontinued it. Thereafter it's been Millers or Morris's, or, as I do now, Valvoline. All of these are available either directly from the manufacturer's, or from an online specialists like Opie Oils.

I haven't yet tried the newly relaunched, now independent again, Duckhams, nor have I any feedback from any that have, but I might try some at the next oil change. I did have a long conversation with their representatives at the last NEC classic restoration show...

I have however, tried many of the cheap and not so cheap "classic" mineral motor oils over the years, all of which to me appear to be exactly the same, bar the colouring, all producing a sickly odour through the engine breather, plus all seeming to be burned in my engines. If I buy a 5l tin of one of these to change my oil, the remainder is used within the first 1,000 miles or so, simply from topping up. Not so with the pure mineral oils. With my usual oil, maybe half a litre is needed in 2,500 miles.....

I've been told that all the "classic" brands are made by Comma, and that all are part recycled, which, although denied by Comma, I suspect to be the truth. One organisation had them all chemically analysed, and all proved to be all but identical! These oils tend to be the ones sold in Halfords, Wilco's, supermarkets, and back-street independent car places.

I change my oil every 2,500-3,000 miles, normally using 10w40 in the cold months, and 20w50 in the summer. The engines were originally designed for the latter.

So I recommend that you drain the oil you've put in there when you get the chance, and replace it with a straight, quality, mineral oil. For your car, I would advise Millers.

Before I sign off this mail, a quick word on oil filters. Reliant engines need one with an anti-drain valve in it. I only use genuine



branded Reliant or Volvo (300 series) filters. Many of the filters available in this package don't have one, so overnight, the oil drains back to the sump, meaning that on the next cold start, the engine is effectively dry, until the system primes. On even a mildly worn engine you can often hear the ends rattle on a cold start! On most engines the filter fits from below, so cannot drain out, but on the Reliant engine, it's at 90 degrees to the block wall, so it can, and does....

Last time I looked, none of the physically compatible filters at my local Halfords had a drain valve!!! Certainly their own brand ones don't, even though they are recommended for Reliants in their book.

John

*Right, enough of this “cheating” as I feel it is, using emails to fill our pages, but it does give those who are not on-line, a glimps into what goes on there, and makes it clear the amount of time and energy that John puts into looking after that side of things for us. I hope that things with the Kitten are under control now Steve.*

*Thank you John, Ed.*

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## New info on front Kitten and Fox coil springs.

Once upon a time I allowed myself to be talked into selling a pair of Kitten / Fox front dampers to a chap who wanted to save a few quid, and believed, quite possibly correctly, that his old springs were fine.

That didn't work, as the new dampers and springs are metric (with Imperial bushes) and the old springs were just a fraction too small to fit the collets on the new dampers. Obviously there were solutions, but the point is, that it is not straightforward to do that. A lesson learned.

That was a decade or so ago now, and this year I was asked if we could supply a pair of front springs, the original dampers being believed to be fine.

I did explain that we had never tried that before, and with the problem encountered doing it the other way, I was not very confident, though in this case one might expect the clearance to be slightly too big, which might not be a problem?

Peter's email below explains the snag, not of course a problem with the new dampers, as they have adjustable spring seats, which allow you adjust the ride height to suit.

Hi Brian,

10/7/19

Hope you're well, just got the springs on the Kitten, fitted O.K., but should probably have got the heavier ones, they were about an inch shorter than the original thanks.

Peter O'Reilly, No. 1102 from Dunfermline.

*Peter, I can't remember if I said to you at the time, but the heavier springs are exactly the same length as the lighter ones, so would not have altered the ride height significantly.*

*Brian.*

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Buyer beware!

Once upon a time (sometime last century) one could, quite possibly, buy a Kitten, confident that the chassis (and wishbones) might be in reasonable condition.

That was then, nowadays not only are Kittens pretty thin on the ground, but an increasing number of them are suffering from serious chassis corrosion.

To some individuals such situations simply provide a challenge, a situation to be resolved – relatively easily. To others however, it can present a huge problem, which may even cause the car to be scrapped!

Quarter of a century or so back, one of the common problems was rusting of the welds at both ends of the curved cross-member, an easy fix, and, more importantly, one that does not require body removal to effect. (Though it is even easier if the body is off!).

More serious though is corrosion at or near the front suspension mounting points. Collapsing front damper mounting turrets is nothing new, and it can be tricky to get the geometry correct when trying to repair problems in that area. An error there will most likely not be picked up by the MOT man, nor will it prevent you driving the car, but it can ruin the handling, and cause it to eat front tyres.

Recently the Bonnetts, father and son, both signed up, welcome John & Chris. John had bought his Kitten from one of our advertisers, as a project, but Chris had travelled hundreds of miles, relying on the internet, to find a good one that he could use right away. The first one he was interested in turned out not to be as advertised, the seller was very surprised when Chris walked away, having brought a trailer several hundred miles to collect the car, subject to viewing. He did however find another one, not far away from the first, which, though more expensive, seemed to fit the bill.

Back home, he began using the car for his daily commute to work. He liked it, initial impressions were good, though it seemed down on power compared to his hopes and expectations.

He ordered new front dampers and suspension bushes, to tighten things up a bit, but then discovered that one lower wishbone was effectively only attached to the chassis by one bolt, the bit of chassis the second bolt goes through was completely detached due to excessive corrosion! Not something that new bushes, dampers or springs was going to rectify. I refer you to the title of this article.

Now it looks, at this point in time, that this will most likely have a happy ending, and we certainly hope it does, and wish Chris well with the project.

He should be o.k., because, as John said to me, having taken the body off his Kitten, stripped it bare, and had it shot-blasted, he found it to be no worse than his initial inspection led him to believe it was. (in my experience that is unusual, either John's inspection abilities are first class, or he was lucky, in either case it bodes well for the car's future.) See pictures :-



In John's words, "some repair needed".



Chassis after blasting.

Dear Brian,

13/10/2019

Update on my car. The chassis has (as you can see) now been sand blasted, which fortunately hasn't revealed any further sites of corrosion or unpleasant surprises. Damage seems restricted to the very front of the chassis particularly on the nearside probably a result of

having stood for many years exposed to the sea air in Cornwall. Photos attached. Three out of the four wishbones are beyond repair. I have sourced two lower ones, and have asked John if he could find two top ones from his stock. I managed to find two NOS Viva lower ball joints and purchased the last NOS lower from Keith. Ideally, I would like another lower to complete the set, but if not, I believe reconditioned ones can be purchased through the Register. The steering arms are corroded and I would be happier if they were replaced and I have asked John if he has any (much to his surprise as he has never been asked for any in 30 odd years!)



So, what next? I'm not sure how I'm going to repair the corroded areas but I do have a complete front chassis section which includes the suspension towers, anti-roll bar bracket, and the very front cross member. In any event, I'm going to set the chassis up on a jig so that whatever replacement bits I fit, will be in exactly the correct position. So tomorrow I'll be round at our local steel stock holders to get some material to mount it on the flat table.

I'll keep you posted with progress, and drop you photos as progress is made. This is meat and drink to me, and I can't wait to get started.

Best regards, John (Bonnett) No. 1112, from Devon.

In the Beginning

A story in N parts by Dunc.

Part ONE

Dear Sirs,

I have a Reliant Fox which needs some urgent work. The balljoints are shot I'm afraid. Mix-up with Grunting the gamekeeper. His hearing's not what it was due to all those bangings in the trenches I suppose.

Anyhow when I was mourning the loss of chickens and told him to shoot the fox in the, er, 'dangleberries,' to be polite, he entirely misconstrued and, well, one Reliant Fox fully disabled in the middle of the drive! Jolly good shooting with a 12-bore though, especially considering his eyesight and the trembling fingers.

Anyway, ball joints shot to blazes. Ben Dover, my chauffeur, couldn't steer it anywhere, and quite frankly, I think the repair job will be a little beyond his waning capabilities. So while he went to find the trailer, I sought help, and eventually, with careful manhandling, Ben, Dan and Roger, the gardeners, had it on the trailer under my close direction.

Not sure if new ball joints are available. Our local engineer, young Rusty Parts, has been trawling the internet, and googling all over the place. He says nothing's come up in ages, but as he was once one of my privates, I feel fairly sure I can trust him to come up with something.

Nevertheless, I should be glad of any suggestions.

Major Futtick,
Futtick Hall,
Nether Chomping,
Greater Bristol.

.....

Ancient history?

Trying to get ahead of the game, well, in truth having been forced to move some boxes of old paperwork when having some work done in the house recently, one of the hundreds (I could probably say thousands and only be very slightly exaggerating) of bits of paper I came across, was a torn out page from a shorthand notebook. (Yes yes, I had gone through the entire box first, and shredded and or recycled about 80 sheets before homing in on this one.)

I used to pride myself on keeping good records, things have slipped a bit in recent times, not on one of my recent trips south of the border was a log kept (Moirra does not like having a clip-board on her lap, and I am seldom allowed to escape on my own these days!)

This sheet had the date at the top – I had a boss once, who always maintained that anything written or typed without a date, was worthless, and while I always felt that was a bit hard, he had a point.

Back to this less than pristine bit of paper. The date on it is 9/6/00, almost two decades ago now, and on that same top line a single word – Vantique. Ah yes I remember it well, as M.C. used to sing.

Just like the song however, time has taken its toll on my memory, but bits do still remain.

The background to this exciting trip was not that it was essentially a sales promotion (I tried being a salesman twice. Not really my thing) However, this deal involved me having the use of the last Vantique ever made, for a few days. The same one you saw sporting the No. 44 on the cover recently, and, in a different livery, on the cover of Mews 45.

The idea was to whet Michael Bentley's appetite for unusual vehicles, and in view of his involvement with the Wensleydale Railway at the time, the obvious opportunity for it to be a mobile advert for same.

I'm pretty certain that I would have related the tale at the time, feel free to search the back issues about then to see how much the story has changed in my mind since.

One thing I do regret about that adventure was that, having left my BX at the Tempest factory when I collected the Vantique, I had put

the suspension up, something I always did to make exiting the vehicle easier. Of course I always put it into normal running level when starting off again, but I didn't think to put it back down after parking it, nor did I show John how to lower it, resulting in he and Jackie being deprived of an opportunity of experiencing the Citroen's legendary "Magic carpet ride" when they brought the BX over to meet me at the Bentley residence at the end of my trip.

Back to that bit of paper, still in front of my keyboard three days later! I will throw it out, but first, this is what it tells us :-

I collected it on the 6th of June 2000, it had just 1,045 miles on the clock. I left Burton in Kendal at 3:20pm and headed by way of the Ribblehead viaduct on the Settle to Carlisle railway, where I stopped to again marvel at that feat of Victorian engineering, and then on to Preston under Scar, where I arrived at 5:00pm (I will leave you to speculate if there might be any significance to these both being triple barrelled place names!). I was stopping over at Preston Springs House that night. The sheet does not record which film we watched that evening in Michael's private 36 seat cinema, but we always did, and I think it unlikely that it was any different on that evening.

Off then the following morning to Bedale, I can't now remember why or what for, but the log shows me returning to Preston Springs for the night – it might have been the Wensleydale Railway's AGM, it was held there for a number of years.

The 11th saw me heading off for Hessay, (just west of York) to see my mother's cousin who lived in the Old School House there back then, stopping at Leyburn for fuel on the way. The mileage was now 1,204.

After lunch I headed south on the A1 arriving at Skellow, just east of the A1 north of Doncaster (again both my memory and the log let me down, I cannot remember who I was meeting, or why I was going there!) mileage on arrival was 1,249), I was back on the road by 3:00pm, arriving at Selby half an hour later, mileage now 1,269.

From there it was back to York, then the Barbican, mileage now 1,297. From there to see my cousin at Scoreby, a few miles east of York. Mileage there was 1,320 and it was 7:00pm. I presume I spent the night there, that would be normal, but the log just shows me fuelling

at Leyburn, mileage 1,425, on my way back to Preston Springs House via Haws, by which time the mileage was 1,492.

I know I had something on board the van heading south, and, looking now at the mileage, it seems likely that I did a number of trips between Haws and Leyburn, but I made no notes. I do remember taking several loads of shop-fittings from Haws to Leyburn when setting up the Wensleydale Railway shop, and the Vantique would have been a useful tool for that task, but I think that was a few years later, who knows, and I have already spent far too long with just one small bit of paper from that box. I must be more ruthless!

Anyway, John and Jackie (Box) met me there in my trusty BX, and I headed home while they took the Vantique back to the factory at Burton in Kendal.

O.K, enough, time to move on. It has taken me over an hour to type this up, if I allow every bit of paper in that box to take a similar amount of time, I won't get onto the second box before Christmas (No, I will not be drawn on which Christmas that might be!), oh, and there are another 6 boxes to go through after that!

For those who have not read every back issue, Michael did buy the Vantique, though he insisted in trading in his Austin Nash Metropolitan – more work for John!

.....

You will gather from the above that I have ignored Terry's advice, its early days Terry, we will see what responses your suggestions create. Over to you dear reader....

.....

Hallo to all,

I wondered if anyone else has come up with clever ways to make Reliants faster? My easy solution is to remove as much weight as possible. You only need 2 wheelnuts, not 4, for example. They weigh quite a bit you know. In fact there are quite a few places with unnecessary fittings added. Track rod ends, for example. They're made to fit tight so the nuts are not necessary. Mine came straight off. Have a look around and see what you can do without. Think carefully though. You don't want to compromise on safety, do you?

Yours for now, Harry Kiri.

Liege Page

At the risk of repeating myself, I must update everyone, in particular our Liege owning friends.

Thanks to Paul Wheatley, I was able to make Bob and Judith Riches, in Australia, aware that theirs is no longer the only Liege down under.

Here are the relevant communications :-

Introductions first, my name is Phil Bennington, living on the Gold Coast, originally from Leeds-Yorkshire-England 30 years ago.

My dad bought the Liege in 2012 after my mum past away, (it gave him a whole new focus).

Unfortunately my dad passed away in 2018, I did get to spend about a month with him prior, I made him a promise that I wouldn't sell his Liege (ever).

After being refused a permit to import, I had to take it to court and challenge the decision, not cheap, but there was no way that I was letting this little car go.

Long story short, it's in Australia, and registered as of last week, rego number 'LIE6E'

Such a great little car, hopefully you're not too far away.

To which Bob duly replied :-

Thank you for alerting me to the Bennington car, Phil wrote a note to me, to which I have replied and I hope we can get together in the future.

Not easy because he lives about 800 km. north of us.

With best wishes, Bob Riches.

Epilogue.

Who knows, if we do end up moving far enough in a certain direction, this may be the only space I can talk to you! Not only that, but the end of page 27 and its like, may never be seen again! (Thanks Duncan, a useful filler, and something different).

It is still August as I type, there are no pictures in this edition, yet, and it is half way to being complete – if only....

Oh dear, I spoke much too soon, life got in the way, again, it is October now, I have not touched this for weeks, I had intended it to be at the printers last month!

This being our 150th edition, I had thought we might do something different, but time and tide.... I console myself with the thought that by including Terry Scott's thought provoking email, that might start something, a change of emphasis even, over to you. Also Duncan's wicked side is being given an airing.

Meanwhile, with Autumn imminently arriving, it is time to prepare our cars for the coming Winter. In some cases that will mean SORN decelerations, and preparing for hibernation. Anti-freeze checks, I'd love to know how many of us use waterless coolant? Please let me know if you do (unless your name is John Pearce, I know he does!).

Brakes can always do with more care than most of them get, so, if you have the car under cover, perhaps some thought in that direction would pay benefits in the future. On the subject of brakes, my memory is letting me down again, who was it, and why? that was going to convert from front discs to drums?

Chassis corrosion is a topic we will be hearing more about, and while moves are afoot, wishbones are better looked after rather than ignored.

Right, here we are, grease lubricate, and oil yer dashpots. Till next time, which will, hopefully be sooner rather than later, the more so if you help. Take care, and drive safely.

Brian

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