

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



Mewsletter 154

July - August 2020



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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 issue's cover car is Simon Fitch's excellent Cipher. Been a while since we've featured a Cipher. A little bird tells me there's an article on Ciphers in the wings, albeit not in this issue!

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>

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SALES, SPARES, REPAIRS,

Mews 154 I N D E X

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E & o e

Summertime, an’ the living sure ain’t as easy as it used to be, I just wish it was. Anyway, welcome to this, I hope timely, summer edition, *he said in the middle of July, as the nights start growing longer!*

As I type this I am feeling a bit guilty. Moira gave me a hand packing the last edition at the weekend, and there are only a dozen or so of the envelopes that we use to send this out to you in (*our digital readers excepted of course*) still to be packed prior to posting, and I really ought to be finishing them before I start this.

However, it is Monday morning, July the 13th and I have a few individual “catch-up” notes to include for some folk, though that plan caused friction yesterday, as it prevented us completing the task.

I was, am, absolutely determined both to do it (*send out a special note to a few folk*) and not, as to my shame has happened in the past, delay posting their mags, till I attend to it.

That said, we have a number of our digital readers who have not paid a subscription for a while, and chasing them up has been on my to-do list for well over a year in some cases – one day.....

Just so that you do not feel neglected in any way, I will share that note with you later, you know, in fact, there is no time like the present!

Here is the text of the “extra” sheet that went to a few folk with Mews 153.

Dear fellow Reliant enthusiast,

14th July 2020

I hope this finds you well. I am determined both to communicate with certain people, and, very importantly, not to delay posting their magazines, something I have failed at in the past.

You fall into one of three or four categories, (I think!) I am really not sure, and, thanks to a very quick turn-round at the printers, who started back last week with a staff of just 3, I have no time to check right now! I have, as you might have guessed from the fact that, uniquely, the enclosed Mews (No. 153) covers not 2, but 4 months, been struggling a bit recently.

So, either we have not spoken in a while, and I wanted to ask you something, or tell you something. Or I believe your subscription is overdue, and I do not want to lose touch if I have made a mistake, or you have had an oversight, (I will confess that I had printing problems with some renewal notices, so you might not have had yours, sorry if that was the case) or you had something, or should have had something advertised that I wanted to confirm with you.

Or none of the above, but there was an anomaly in my records somewhere that I want / need to resolve. Anyway, please get in touch if I don't, thanks.

With kind regards, stay safe. *Brian*

Hopefully, long before you are reading this I will either have made contact with, or heard from, those concerned. Delaying getting this (*the last edition*) in the post by a day seemed like a small price to pay for ensuring they all went out together. Moira, I have to say, takes a different view, and, given the problems I am having with the printer that I use in the house, I could almost be swayed to agree with her, but, you know me better than that, don't you?

Moving swiftly on....

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## Words of historical interest from the White House.

I suspect like many others I have been using my imprisonment to look through old papers and do some pruning. Twenty five years ago we were doing a lot of engine testing at Reliant. The main problem was the engines we were selling to Angus Fire (a good customer) were not as powerful as they should have been. They were, in theory, supposed to produce a minimum 39 HP. Since the switch from Birmal to Barton cylinder heads, and deteriorating exhaust manifold castings, an average engine was only producing 36 HP. Angus were planning to use an improved pump which, when engaged, virtually stalled the engine. We enlisted the help of a man who specialised in wringing power out of Ford BDA engines.

He was not over impressed with our humble offering, until an engine on test stopped running, he presumed it had seized. It had not. It had exceeded the 7,000 rpm safety cut out on the dynamometer!

The Barton head was poorly cast, with misaligned ports, so we only tested engines with the early Birmal head. The casting patterns for the exhaust manifolds were renewed.

History revealed that at some time, the flywheel weight had been reduced. This is probably why the 850 engines don't idle very sweetly, and stall when you let the clutch in! We added two pounds to the flywheel. We played with camshafts, compression ratios and carb needles. Eventually we got our extra horsepower back, anything up to 42. The engine was pretty stretched at this point so we looked at overall improvements for future production with a keen eye on expenditure.

In all probability the best configuration would be a bore out to 900 cc a high torque camshaft (Yellow Top). Beefed up main bearing caps, and a cast alloy sump that attached to the lower portion of the bell housing, in effect forming a tube from timing chest to gearbox tailshaft, thus stiffening up the engine / gearbox assembly. These mods would have made the Robin 3 more quiet and flexible.

It was all too late, and never happened. Three wheelers were becoming unacceptable in the 21st century.

Regards to all, John & Jackie.

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Well, that must be something of a record, 6 pages in, and, our President’s input excepted, (see the bottom of Page 27!) hardly a mention of Reliants at all. Standards are truly slipping. My apologies. In my defence, I should point out that if you do not send me anything appropriate, you could be faced with even more off-topic input, there might even be a “Brian’s Diary” in here, and that would be your fault – where is that pointing finger when you need it?

~~~~~

## Rebel round up

Oops! I am told that I included an incorrect web address in here last time, it should have been <https://youtu.be/56SJINNvDkI> that I directed you to, my apologies. It is interesting, though it was news to me that the Rebel went from positive to negative earth, and the full syncro box was so late arriving on the scene. As for the 850 engine....

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Hi Brian,

14th June ‘20

I’ve got to the stage of replacing the rear spring front mounts (which was the reason for putting a new chassis on the Rebel since mine were of the early non reinforced design). Since I am using different leaf springs which are wider and shorter than the originals where do I place the mounts? Some searching on the internet found an American who had the same problem on a pick-up truck, and he had built a series of plywood springs to understand the problem.



Basically, you need to measure the length of the top leaf spring which is the centre to centre distance ALONG the curve and the centre to centre distance of the rear shackle (let's call it shackle length). The optimum position of the rear shackle when the top leaf is completely flat (straight) seems to be 30 degrees from the vertical rearwards. Using sine 30 degrees (which is 0.5) and the shackle length, the end of the top leaf when straight will be $0.5 \times$ the shackle length behind the rear chassis spring mounting point. Taking this from the spring length will give the position of the front mount relative to the rear.

I am using MG Midget springs, so I have made up a piece of hardwood with holes drilled in it to mount onto the front and rear mounts. All I have to get right now is the width between each mount, which I make out to be at 920mm centre. I also need to add gussets, as Reliant did, to prevent them pulling out of the chassis.

Hope you are both well and this is just to get the little grey matter going!

Regards Phil

Off topic I know, but this appealed to me.

A Farmer is overseeing his animals in a remote part of the County when suddenly a brand-new BMW advances out of a dust cloud towards him. The driver, a young man in a designer suit, Gucci shoes, Ray Ban sunglasses, and YSL tie, leans out the window and asks the farmer, 'If I tell you exactly how many cows and calves you have in your herd, will you give me a calf?'

The Farmer looks at the man, obviously a yuppie, then looks at his peacefully grazing animals and calmly answers, 'Reet, why not?'

The yuppie parks his car, whips out his Dell notebook computer, connects it to his Cingular RAZR V3 cell phone, and surfs to a NASA page on the Internet, where he calls up a GPS satellite navigation system to get an exact fix on his location which he then feeds to another NASA satellite that scans the area in an ultra-high-resolution photo. The young man then opens the digital photo in Adobe Photoshop and exports it to an image processing facility in Hamburg, Germany.

Within seconds, he receives an email on his Palm Pilot that the image has been processed and the data stored. He then accesses a MS-SQL database through an ODBC connected Excel Spreadsheet with email on his Blackberry, and, after a few minutes, receives a response. Finally, he prints out a full-color, 150-page report on his hi-tech, miniaturized HP LaserJet printer and finally turns to the farmer and says, 'You have exactly 1,586 cows and calves.'

'Wow That's right. Well, I guess you can take one of my calves,' says the Farmer.

He watches the young man select one of the animals and looks on amused as the young man stuffs it into the boot of his car.

Then the farmer says to the young man, 'Ey Up!, if I can tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my calf?'

The young man thinks about it for a second and then says, 'Okay, why not?'

'You work for the British Government', says the farmer.

'Wow! That's correct,' says the yuppie, 'but how did you guess that?'

'No guessing required.' answered the farmer. 'You showed up here even though nobody called you; you want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked. You used all kinds of expensive equipment that clearly somebody else paid for, you tried to show me how much smarter than me you are; and you don't know a thing about cows this is a herd of sheep. Now give me my bloody dog back.'

Left me with a big grin I may tell you.

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Ahh, an odd corner, as you may have spotted, we have a recent picture of Simon Fitch's Cipher on the cover of this, late summer edition.

It was 40 years ago that the Cipher first saw the light of day, and I really feel that we can do better, watch this space, or one like it, hopefully next time. Ed.

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Kitten update

Dear Brian,

06/06/20

My membership lapsed since December last. A family bereavement, and then ill health struck, so my attention to detail has been compromised.

My Kitten goes from strength to strength, and is providing sterling transport. My modern daily driver has to take a back seat, even the wife prefers the Kitten. So there is an upside to this mess.

I will send some pictures in the next few days.

Sorry for the lapse.

Regards, Richard Darling - No. 1076 from Shropshire.

All sins forgiven Richard, thank you for the lovely pictures, Ed.



Had I not acted in haste, that could have made a great cover picture!



Oh well, I've started, so I may as well continue, and share the other pictures that Richard kindly sent me.

As I said in my reply, something that I may have mentioned on occasion in the past. A good Kitten is a very hard act to follow, even when compared to the variety of modern alternatives that exist “out there” today.



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Foxes Den

Hi,

30th June '20

I have been thinking about purchasing a Reliant Fox or Kitten and am struggling to find any for sale. I would like to become a member of your Register in order to find cars if they become available for sale. Could you please advise how I can become a member?

My Dad owned two Robins, one a 1973 750cc and then a 1978 850cc. As a young lad, I became quite familiar with these cars. The 1978 car covered 146,000 miles until it was sold in 1995 to a new owner. The engine was original, never overhauled and still showed 45psi oil pressure with its high mileage. It was on its second clutch, but original gearbox and axle. All in all, a great little car.

Hope to hear from you,

Regards, Brian Wilson.

Now I know this is cheating, however, I really need be trying harder to tidy things up here (at my desk), and some things I just need to share with you :- see the next couple of pages.....

My file of things to do has changed this year. I used to keep a daily task list, but it seldom changed, with the vast majority of tasks just carried forward from one day to the next, in some cases for over a year, which is not only not good, but also a bit pointless in many ways, not to mention demoralising.

So, once it became clear we were to be in lock-down for a few months, I adopted a monthly list to replace the daily one, in the hope that a new approach to things might help me to make some headway.

Sadly, progress was minimal from March till now (July). One thing that did happen was a dramatic increase if the number of witty, and in some cases thought provoking, communications to come my way. I could quite easily fill this edition with them, however I will resist that temptation (though it would let me get this to you in August, rather than September! – so it is actually very tempting!). ***Here is a Kitten related true story, thanks Tony.***

I saw a repeat of an old edition of "The Chase" quiz show on TV last night. In the final chase Bradley Walsh asked the chaser "Which British car manufacturer produced the Kitten?". She didn't know, so the question was passed over to the 3 remaining contestants.

Their answer? Nissan!!

All the best, Tony.



Some unusual Vans

By Andrew Norman

Hi Brian,

August '20

Hope all is well with you and the family. As usual the last Newsletter was entertaining and informative.

Anyway, I promised I would make a contribution to the mag' in case you needed any articles. I didn't really have anything in mind, but whilst re-organising some old photos, I came across some relevant pictures. I doubt if most readers will be familiar with all of the small vans built on the Fox chassis, so here are some pictures I took in the past: Asquith 'Shetland', John Box's 'Vantique', and GB Cars 'Radnor Van'

Asquith were founded by furniture makers Crispin Reed and Bruce West, they built three models the 'Shire' and 'Mascot' on a 3.5 ton chassis, and the 'Shetland' on the Fox chassis inspired by a 1929 Morris Minor van. Partly due to a cancelled order from Japan, they went into liquidation in 1997. They were revived in 2019. This photo was taken on Anglesey 2006. **(the blue one on page 14, Ed)**

Regular readers might recognise Neil Kenneally's Asquith. It has featured both on the cover, and within a couple of editions in the past.

John Box made the 'Vantique' and 'Tempest' car (perhaps he can provide the figures and dates, in case I make a mistake). This photo was taken at the Reliant works in Burntwood, showing a sadly neglected van (is this now owned by Joe Mason who is 'Tempest of England' now?) surrounded by interesting vehicles such a Berkley, and other ancient Reliants (where are they all now?).

I can tell you that the Vantique that Joe has is the last one that John built. I had the privilege of using it for a few days during which I introduced it to Michael Bentley, who subsequently bought it from John, and ran it for a decade or so, painted in Wensleydale Railway livery. We featured it on the cover of edition. Michael insisted on trading in his Austin Nash Metropolitan, which John did not really want, but it all worked out well, as Joe Boulderstone-Salthouse, a Tempest owner, and at that time Tempest Registrar, was a huge fan of these Austins. A fact that came to light during a casual conversation they had, at just the right time! G B Cars made the 'Radnor' Van and 'Raglan' car, with grp body made by Protoco, based on a 1929 Austin 7 'C' cab van. I have a Radnor van that I bought off e-bay (thanks to Tony Wiese for pointing it out to me), all I have managed to do so far, has been to remove the wheels and check the brakes. That seems to confirm the 25 miles on the odometer. I wonder what drastic event caused it to be put in storage when almost brand new? This picture (on page 15) of another Radnor van was taken in Suffolk 2008.





The yellow "Reliant" Vantique was resprayed, and became a mobile advert for the catering business of the wife of Reliant M.D., the late Stewart Halstead. He ordered it sold in the months before he died, and I was fortunately able to ensure its future, and excellent restoration, by its current custodian Keith Gittus. (sorry Keith, I know you did not need the distraction, but, as I know you are well aware, it is really useful, now that you have sorted it out, jsn't it?) As to what became of the other vehicles that were there, I am afraid I have no knowledge. Ed.

Hope this fills gap. Best Regards, Andrew Norman.

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This one made me laugh

FORREST GUMP GOES TO HEAVEN

The day finally arrived. Forrest Gump dies and goes to Heaven. He is at the Pearly Gates, met by St. Peter himself. However, the gates are closed, and Forrest approaches the gatekeeper.

St. Peter said, 'Well, Forrest, it is certainly good to see you. We have heard a lot about you. I must tell you though, that the place is filling up fast, and we have been administering an entrance examination for everyone. The test is short, but you have to pass it before you can get into Heaven.'

Forrest responds, 'It sure is good to be here, St. Peter, sir... But nobody ever told me about any entrance exam. I sure hope that the test ain't too hard. Life was a big enough test as it was.'

St. Peter continued, 'Yes, I know, Forrest, but the test is only three questions.'

First :- What two days of the week begin with the letter T?

Second :- How many seconds are there in a year?

Third :- What is God's first name?'

Forrest leaves to think the questions over. He returns the next day and sees St. Peter, who waves him up, and says, 'Now that you have had a chance to think the questions over, tell me your answers.'

Forrest replied, 'Well, the first one - which two days in the week begins with the letter 'T'? Shucks, that one is easy. That would be Today and Tomorrow.'

The Saint's eyes opened wide and he exclaimed, 'Forrest, that is not what I was thinking, but you do have a point, and I guess I did not specify, so I will give you credit for that answer. How about the next one?' asked St. Peter. "How many seconds in a year?"

Now that one is harder,' replied Forrest, 'but I think and think about that, and I guess the only answer can be twelve.'

Astounded, St. Peter said, 'Twelve? Twelve? Forrest, how in Heaven's name could you come up with twelve seconds in a year?'

Forrest replied, 'Shucks, there's got to be twelve: January 2nd,

February 2nd, March 2nd... '

'Hold it,' interrupts St. Peter. 'I see where you are going with this, and I see your point, though that was not quite what I had in mind... but I will have to give you credit for that one too. Let us go on with the third and final question. Can you tell me God's first name?'

'Sure,' Forrest replied, 'it's Andy'

'Andy?' exclaimed an exasperated and frustrated St. Peter.

'Ok, I can understand how you came up with your answers to my first two questions, but just how in the world did you come up with the name Andy as the first name of God?'

'Shucks, that was the easiest one of all,' Forrest replied. 'I learnt it from the song',

ANDY WALKS WITH ME,
ANDY TALKS WITH ME,
ANDY TELLS ME I AM HIS OWN.'

St. Peter opened the Pearly Gates, and said: 'Run, Forrest, run.'

Lord, give me a sense of humour, the ability to understand
a clean joke, to get some humour out of life,
and pass it on to other folk.

Here endeth today's lesson.

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29 July 2020

For immediate release

Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs appoint new Environmental Director

The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs (FBHVC) has announced the appointment of Peter Spours to the newly created position of Environmental Director, with immediate effect.

The FBHVC currently represents over 540 clubs, museums, independent and trade supporters encompassing a collective membership of over 250,000 historic vehicle enthusiasts. As the umbrella organisation for the historic vehicle movement in the UK and the representative of the Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens (FIVA) for the United Kingdom, the Federation seeks to work towards defending the freedoms of historic vehicle owners, whilst also addressing the environmental impact of the community's activities.

Peter Spours joins the Federation to take up what will be a critical new role in the coming months and years. The Federation takes the need to assess, study and mitigate the impact from the historic vehicle community on the environment very seriously. As the world progresses towards a future of net zero emissions, the Federation must ensure that we have the expertise and leadership within the team to ensure that the historic vehicle community is doing all it can to demonstrate our responsibilities towards ensuring and maintaining a minimal impact on the environment.

Peter's professional background was in intellectual property for BT and TomTom, latterly with Deloitte. His experience in managing corporate legal affairs will greatly assist when it comes to the FBHVC assessing the influence of environmental legislation on the freedom to use historic vehicles. Furthermore, Peter's years working with legislators, mainly the EU Commission in Brussels, mean he will be an invaluable and enthusiastic addition to the team of Federation volunteers.

Peter Spours is a member of West Berks Classic Car Club and currently owns a Lotus Elan having previously owned various MGs including an MGB, TC and PA.

Speaking about his appointment Peter Spours said, "I am fortunate to be in the position to be able to volunteer my time towards the activities of the FBHVC. I am looking forward to doing what I can to draw from my professional experience and my passion for historic vehicles to contribute towards ensuring the future of the community in an ever more environmentally conscious world."

David Whale, FBHVC Chairman said, "On behalf of the Board, I welcome Peter to the team and look forward to his involvement in our goals. The Federation and the historic vehicle community are going to be increasingly challenged to assess, monitor and take responsibility for the environmental impact of our activities. We take this very seriously and so are seeking to amend the FBHVC constitution to allow us the ability to add a Director to the board who will take direct responsibility for our responses in this regard."



Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs appoint new Legislation Director.

The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs (FBHVC) has announced the appointment of Lindsay John Irvine to the position of Legislation Director, with immediate effect.

The FBHVC currently represent over 540 clubs, museums, independent and trade supporters encompassing a collective membership of over 250,000 historic vehicle enthusiasts. As the umbrella organisation for the historic vehicle movement in the UK and the representative of the Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens (FIVA) for the United Kingdom, the Federation's activities around interpreting and responding to legislation represent their most crucial work on behalf of the historic vehicle community.

Lindsay Irvine, a Barrister, will lead the Federation's legislation committee who monitor all UK legislation, rules and procedures pertinent to historic vehicles. The voluntary role will also see Lindsay Irvine managing and guiding responses to government departments in Westminster, Edinburgh and Cardiff and to local authorities.

Lindsay Irvine comes to the Federation with a wealth of professional legal experience, the majority of which was gained through his over 30 year service with the Royal Air Force, where he held the positions of Director of Legal Services and Head of the Legal Branch in the rank of Air Vice Marshal.

Lindsay Irvine remains as a fee paid Legally Qualified Chair for a leading Professional Regulator and as a specialist in the Military Aspects of Aviation Law. He is also a Visiting Fellow at the University of Stafford and a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

Lindsay Irvine explains his lifelong interest in cars and aviation,

"As a young lawyer I ran a Riley 4/72 during my posting in Cyprus in the early 1990s. For the past 25 years, I have owned a Riley RME, the trafficators being of particular delight to my children as they grew up! Having learned to fly at the start of my RAF career, I have flown vintage aircraft for 20 years and own an ex-RAF de Havilland Chipmunk and a share in a Tiger Moth both of which have regularly attended air show events."

Speaking about his appointment, Lindsay Irvine said, "I am very supportive of the aims of the Federation. Interestingly, some of the issues, which face older vehicles, are common to the vintage aircraft fraternity as well including fuel, technology and liability challenges."

David Whale, FBHVC Chairman said, "Both the Federation and the historic vehicle community we represent, find ourselves in an ever more challenging and changeable world that is increasingly revolving around legal issues and legislation. Lindsay Irvine brings with him a unique set of skills and experiences that, coupled with his passion for historic vehicles, will bring an invaluable depth of knowledge to the team. We are very enthusiastic about having a volunteer of such calibre joining us to support the Federation's aims."

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## *Brian's Diary July 2020*

### *A motor car history*

Once upon a time, a long time ago, I longed to be able to drive a car. My first experience was behind the wheel of a Ford, I can't actually remember the model, possibly a Zeypher or Zoidac, or perhaps a Consul, certainly a Ford, a big car with bench seats. I would have been in my early teens, it was the mid to late 60's, about 1967 possibly. The car belonged to the father of one of the lads whose parents, like my grandparents, had a caravan, which while mobile, spent all its time on site at Maidens in Ayrshire.

I have long forgotten the names, and we never kept in touch beyond when we were at the van on holiday. This would be about the time that I missed seeing Winston Churchill, who had been staying overnight at Culzean castle. I had assumed (*little in life gets you into more bother than making assumptions, especially ones made with insufficient, incomplete, or inaccurate information*), that because he was an old man, he would not be up at the crack of dawn, how wrong was !!

I digress (already!) The drive lasted about 20 minutes, running up and down the old abandoned airfield at Turnberry, under the close supervision of my friend's dad.

My dad's first car was a Jowett Javelin, he bought it as a 4 year old car in 1956, it had been the company car of the local Pru. Rep., and had just had its engine reconditioned.

We were planning a family holiday in it to Golspie the following week, however, in spite of dad driving it very gently, running in the re-con engine, it ran its big ends after a few days.

Not only was that frustrating and annoying, but the garage who rebuilt the engine, had put it back together using brown Hermitite, instead of the red stuff – result, it was effectively glued together, and took dad ages to dismantle.

Fortunately, dad was an engineer, and rose to the challenge, I think we were only a day late getting away on our holiday.

While I was too young to be involved, being the same age as the car, I do remember that they had re-ground the crankshaft, but had fitted standard sized bearing shells, instead of the plus 20's they should have used to match the re-ground shaft!

Moving on through the decades, after learning to drive in my grandfather's Hillman Minx and my mum's Vauxhall Victor, I passed my driving test (in a driving school Mk 1 Ford Escort) 6 weeks after my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, blowing a head gasket on mum's Victor, it was a 1962 FB model, (YSG 181) in what they called "Honey Gold". I was allowed to take dad's Javelin out the following weekend on a date. I don't think I ever drove the Victor again, the Javelin, though a decade older, was a much better car to drive. Sadly, LGB 750, was scrapped in 1973, its last journey being on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday – Just to give you a clearer understanding of my lack of organisation, I have, in front of me now - 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2020, a tax disc, which expired on the last day of April 1970 for 4 months road tax on LGB 750, it cost £9:3:0 and was issued by the Renfrew Post Office on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1969. They used ink that did not fade in those days! If you are really unlucky, and I get organised, there might be a picture of it below!

Sadly it had major chassis corrosion, and had been jammed in top gear for a few months by that time. Three point turns were interesting, the front doors were "suicide" doors, hinging at the back, so I could open the driver's door, and push the car backwards with my right foot, while steering with my left hand, my right one holding the door handle, meantime holding the clutch down with my left foot. The things we used to do!

I left home in January 1973, my car then was an HA Viva (ATS 510C) it served well enough for a year or so, and was replaced by a 1956 Austin A30 van, which sadly gave way to chassis corrosion just before our wedding in 1975. My grandfather kindly loaned us his Hillman Avenger for our honeymoon.

We bought a new Reliant Robin next, I bought it from Havelocks in Glasgow, I actually registered it myself with the number from another Jowett Javelin I had acquired, EGS 105. The Robin was made during the last weeks of 750cc Robin production in 1975, had I realised the 850 was coming, I might have waited! With hindsight however, increasing the stroke of the Reliant 750 engine did not actually do it many favours, it was the SU carb that made the improvement in performance.

Then a friend of my dad's (dad had sadly died a few months before our wedding in June 1975), approached me to ask if I knew anyone who would be interested in his Javelin, he had owned it from new. He was wanting to buy an Austin Maxi, more suited to transporting his model boats than the Javelin. XS 7831 it was, a Paisley registered car, so I sold the Robin just 2 years and 44,000 miles after buying it, and bought the Javelin. Unfortunately it did not take kindly to a tenfold increase in annual mileage.

Jumping ahead a few decades, skipping past several Reliant Rebels and a couple of Kittens, in the 80' and 90's a Morris Marina, a V W Beetle, a Hillman Avenger, (great car to drive) a Talbot Horizon, a Volvo 240, and 3 Citroen BX's, I found my legs not functioning as they should, and found myself needing a two pedal car, with hand controls. I should have had the last BX converted, it was an automatic. Best ride ever, great heater, good economy, relaxed motoring, but a camshaft failure stopped it. It is still in my lock-up here in Renfrew with the head off! My first venture into this new phase in my motoring life found me, after quite a lot of research, behind the wheel of a ten year old Honda Jazz CVT, which I had had suitably adapted with hand controls, in anticipation of future needs, and to give me time to get used to them before I was forced to do so.

We enjoyed a relationship that saw me cover 93,098 miles in it over the course of almost 8 years. It averaged 47 MPG under my light driving style, but latterly major intermittent transmission problems, the upcoming need for new discs and pads, and finally, a broken exhaust, at the cat, caused us to scrap it in January 2020. I found it really frustrating, the engine was great, but some rust was going to cause problems, it needed a couple of thousand pounds or more spent, just to keep it on the road, and so it was just not worth it. I drove it to the scrap yard in Paisley, and, by arrangement, kept the front wheels, which had new winter tyres that had only covered a few hundred miles. We had,

some 14 months previously, added a very tidy Toyota Verso-S to the stable, and finally we come to the crux of all this. The Toyota was, indeed is, a relatively low mileage example of a fairly rare model, the Verso-S. Only sold in the U.K. for about 3 years I believe, and, as soon as I started using it, there were a number of benefits compared to the Jazz, and a number of deficits.

On the plus side, it has similar heater controls to the original Jazz, which was good, and it had a much more effective handbrake. The drums at the back, rather than the all-round discs of the Jazz, make for a vastly superior handbrake.

On the minus side, I was aware that the Toyota did not have heated outside mirrors, what I had not realised, is how much I would miss that feature, something the Jazz had.

The Jazz, indeed many Hondas, have a very nifty, quick and easy to operate, folding up rear seat feature, which, as it happens, was something I used a lot. It makes it so easy to fling my manual wheelchair behind the front seats, which is much easier than having to take the footrests off it, and lift it into the boot, which I only need to do if wanting to carry more than one passenger.

The Toyota however, while not enjoying the Honda's rear seat trick, can easily have no lip at the back, which makes it very easy to slide the wheelchair in on its side, with no need to remove the footrests, a big plus compared to the Honda – but! Opening the tailgate on the Toyota is much more difficult, from a wheelchair, that the same operation on the Honda.

There are two reasons for that, the tailgate on the Toyota is a bit larger than that on the Honda – makes for better access, but, the handle is about a foot higher up, which causes me two problems, firstly it takes considerably more force to lift it, less leverage, and also, I need to be further away from the car to allow clearance for the bottom of it to lift past me, which makes it real stretch, at a less than ideal angle, from a seated position. The Jazz's handle is just above knee height, easy to lift, while the Toyota one is at shoulder height, and, given that I need to be further away from the car, just very awkward to open, and impossible to close! Being slightly bigger, the open tailgate is further off the ground than the Honda's, just enough to put it completely out of reach from a seated position!

So, if I am going to need the wheelchair, the Honda is so much simpler and easier.

I mentioned the handbrake earlier. The one on the Toyota is really great, just like my old Rebel, you can lock the back wheels while the car is in motion if you want to, but, much more importantly, it has no bother at all holding the car still against the pull of the transmission. The one on the Jazz really needs a strong pull to enable it to resist the transmission pull, and if you are facing downhill at all, it just can't cope when you are in gear.

Both cars have CVT transmission, which, for everything other than low speed manoeuvring, I really like.

The Toyota's brakes are smooth and progressive, while those on the Honda are sharp and aggressive, either too much servo assistance, or a poor mix of materials between the discs and pads.

The difference is dramatic, and going from one to the other, you get a rude reminder the first time you try to stop!

The hand controls only accentuate these differences, those on the Jazz only requiring a light single finger touch to bring the car to a swift halt, while in the Toyota I am crushing my fingers against the dashboard before the anti-lock kicks in, a wee bit disconcerting, and probably something I should take up with the hand control folk, or I could always just use the back of my fingers, like I tend to do in the Jazz. Given that I seldom allow a situation to develop which calls for abrupt speed reduction, it is seldom an issue.

To other differences, the Toyota has a vastly superior communication set-up, (yes, I have been forced into using a smart phone) and, from my point of view, a much more easily understood and operated heating and ventilation system, not to say a much better heater.

From a running cost perspective the Toyota is almost £100 a year cheaper to tax, which is surprising as it is a slightly bigger car!

Anyway, I decided to replace the old Jazz with a newer one, the main thing being it had to have cruise control, and be low mileage.

It took me over a month, both searching on-line, and visiting local



showrooms, before I eventually found one. It was in Newcastle, at almost 5, it was a few years younger than I could really afford, but with one previous owner, a full dealer service history, and just 2,600 miles on the clock! He consistently did 600 miles a year, and it looked almost as good as new, I decided to abandon fiscal prudence, and get into debt.

My good friend Phil kindly agreed to come with me to take it for a test drive (something I could not safely do, without hand controls), and, if it passed muster, to drive it home for me.

It seemed smooth enough, and an underside inspection (yes, I had forewarned the garage that I would require it up on ramps so that I could inspect the underside, and they had it up in the air when we arrived), suggested that it was indeed an almost unused car, the only obvious (and anticipated) thing being rust on the discs. No doubt caused by lack of use! So we brought it up to Scotland.

The firm I use to supply and fit hand controls is Jeff Gosling, (he used to be an aircraft engineer) and, since I had them fit the ones to the Toyota at their main place in Stockport just over a year ago, they have opened an agency in Glasgow. It was a couple of weeks before they could fit me in, and there was a little bit of a communications problem, but the job got done, and then I discovered just how bad a thing progress and development can be!

The first problem was that the accountants had got their claws into the design. My old Jazz, indeed all of the early ones, had a very handy lever on both of the front seats, at the outside edge near the top of the back of the front seats, which enabled you to move the front seat back and forward when outside the car with the back door open, (you could also no doubt do it from seated in the back of the car) I used that feature almost every time I went out anywhere. I like the seat in a mid position for driving, but put it right back to exit the car. When I have got out from behind the wheel, I close the front door, open the back door, reach in, use said lever to allow me to push the driver's seat fully forward, which gives me plenty of room to pull my wheelchair out onto the pavement. This 1995 model does not have that, very useful, feature. Something I had not spotted during the test drive, because I left my wheelchair at the garage while Phil took me out for a spin.

Next frustration was in the boot. The old one had one of those "blinds" that retracts when you detached the back of it, and it disappears

into a neat holder just behind the top of the back seats, instead of a hard parcel shelf. The new one has a solid 2 piece shelf, the back half of which hinges up when you lift the tailgate. No use to me at all, as I need to completely remove the entire shelf if I want to put my wheelchair in the boot, which I do if carrying more than 1 passenger. That is a real pain.

Another feature my old one had was a sunroof. I always did think that a bit odd in a car fitted with air-conditioning, but I enjoyed the light it let in, even though I seldom opened it. The new Jazz feels claustrophobic in comparison.

A fact that is compounded by an extra feature on the Toyota, it has a panoramic glass roof, hidden above an electrically operated headlining. The roof does not open, but does let in a tremendous amount of light with the blind (headlining) back.

Another difference is that, in spite of the wider opening doors on the Honda, I find it easier to get in and out of the Toyota. Not exactly sure why that is the case, but it is.

Also, I prefer the steering on the Toyota, difficult to define why, I just do. Oh, and it has a reversing camera that the Jazz does not. No use in certain conditions, but a great aid most of the time.

If only it had cruise control, heated mirrors, Honda style back seats and an automatic tailgate, and better sound insulation (that wee engine works very hard if you want to drive with any enthusiasm!) it would be perfect!

Just reading this over, starting my motoring history with a Jowett and then Reliants, I am bemused that in my old age I have gone Japanese, how times change!

I doubt I will be driving far enough into the future to enjoy the delights of electric propulsion, keeping warm in such a vehicle in our Scottish winters sounds like a challenge I would not enjoy!.

Range anxiety is a fear I can happily live without!

Brian.



A distraction I know, and completely off topic, but I needed to fill a page quickly. “**Watch out as it passes you**” was as Jowett advertising slogan for the Javelin, here are a dozen or so of them at Peebles in 2017.



I think I am in withdrawal, it is now well over a year, possibly even 2 or more now, since I last travelled in a Javelin.

Just like our Kittens, Rebels and Foxes, no two are alike these days. Varying standards of restoration and maintenance over the decades have introduced a wide variety of subtle changes, and the differences in both ride and performance are – oh my, it is that elusive adjective time again! Ed.



Just time to thank our President for the interesting picture that arrived today, 20/8/20. I won't remove the non-Reliant things above to make room, rather use it to get the next edition off to a flying start. Thank you John.

Ed.



**What a quote: “The virus doesn’t move, people move it. We stop moving, the virus stops moving, the virus dies. It’s that simple.”**



**IF YOU DON'T SHARE ANY THING ELSE SHARE THIS ONE**

## Epilogue

Well, here I am, still in the first week of August, determined to get this out before the end of the month, and, not for the first time having to apologise to you, and in particular Phil Hallam.

Last time I shared only part of a story of Phil's adventures in chemical / electrical rust removal, which, on its own, really was so out of context as to be virtually meaningless. This time I let him begin with his rear spring mods on his Rebel, and could only find the pictures of the work he has done at the front! Hopefully by the next edition it will be a case of third time lucky!

I can tell you that Kyle Cartmell from Duffus, near Elgin ( a ways east of Inverness) has kindly provided me with a good deal of information, with pictures, of his excellent progress with his Kitten estate restoration. So the next edition is off to a great start. Thanks Kyle.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, I allowed my focus to stray to that other magazine I edit, and it is now almost 20/8/20 (will be tomorrow) and I just sneaked in an off topic picture on page 27 to fill a gap. I did promise Christina (the wonderful girl at the printers (well, one of the wonderful girls at the printers), that I was hoping to have this with her on Monday (the 17<sup>th</sup> !), if I am to have any chance of getting this to you this month, I must get it to her before the weekend.

So, without further ado, I am sure that by now you know what you should be doing with all things that need lubrication, don't you? ("Oh yes I do", is the correct response) so get out there and do it!

Having survived the initial blast of COVID-19, thanks we believe, to an effective avoidance of exposure, we have been seeing the grandchildren again, but they started back at school this week....

Till next time, take care, stay safe, and good luck.

*Brian*

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