

# *Reliant Kitten Register*

**MEWSLETTER Twenty-Nine**

**July / August 1999**



**The Register caters for all the under 1 litre Reliant 4-wheeled vehicles plus all of their derivatives – Rebels, Foxes, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, Jimps, Asquiths and all other specials including the Liege.....**

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Our first front cover in the new format is graced by Bob Keene's very original looking Kitten DL saloon VLN 666S. This Kitten, 6K6/14701235, was first registered first August 1977. It was originally supplied by Thrift Motors of Southall. Bob has been its custodian this past 19 years. He took the car off the road in 1995 for a body off rebuild, with some modifications. The car had by then covered 65,000 miles. Since its rebuild, completed in January 1998, the car has been in daily use commuting 46 miles a day. It is powered by a 2-litre fuel injected Ford engine from a 1992 Sierra GLS, with 5 speed gearbox. The car is cooled with a Metro radiator and electric fan, with a Cavalier header tank. Bob uses the original Kitten axle, with special mountings. The chassis was powder coated after modifications which were welded by Stevend Engineering of Marlow, and the shot blasting and coating was carried out by Hankoe Stove Enameling Ltd. of Slough. The front suspension is original, but stiffened, using AVO dampers. The rear has Bob's own design of multi link system, again using AVO coil over dampers. The original Kitten steering rack is used, but with a longer column, and a Mountney 13" steering wheel. Fiesta discs up front take care of stopping, with the aid of a servo. Finally the car is shod on Minilite 12" alloys using Yokohama A510 165/60 R12 tyres. The car can be seen around Castle Coombe race circuit from time to time, though you have to be quick to catch a glimpse. Thanks Bob for the pictures and details of what sounds like a very interesting project.

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Well, here we are at last in (I hope !) the new A5 format, and I must thank Brian Millar for his help in making the typing of it a lot simpler than I thought it was going to be, by providing me with a suitable template.

That said I will need to see what the finished product looks like before passing judgement, but do feel free to let me know your views.

Thanks as ever to John Pearce for our cover, and indeed for the extra work you now do John in printing both sides of it for us, which is effectively 4 pages of the magazine. Yes I must try to make them standard if possible, just bear with me please.

We will all by the time you read this, have taken advantage of the new lower rate of road tax with the aid of the V901 form which that nice man (or was it a girl?) in Swansea sent to us in May. Making my previous comments quite irrelevant in the process!

I see from the factory's recent price list that new Fox windscreens are available, all I need to do now is negotiate a sensible price!

As seems to be the case with more things in life these days, well my life at any rate, the parts list is not broken down into a list for each vehicle, just a numerical list of parts covering everything, Robins, Rialtos, Scimitars of all types as well as our beloved vehicles. But at least we have a June 1999 price list. It runs to 30 pages with about 65 items to a page, which if my arithmetic is any use at all, has to be close to 2000 parts. Does raise the question of just how many parts are there in a Kitten in the first place? I know, that becomes complicated when you start asking questions like is a water pump 1 part, or is it in fact 15 or more parts, depends whether you include the fan and its attachments I suppose!

As usual, after the last edition I was looking at the Register more closely, 77 Rebels at the last count, but still missing pieces of information here and there. One day I will find more time to try and do something about the gaps, but it is not a top priority. One thing it did make clear is that almost 10% of our readers are associate members, that is to say they do not actually own one of our fine little cars yet. Which does suggest to me that there will be a market out there.

Dealing with new enquiries, and producing this magazine are the top priorities if you were wondering, and I really must stop this, it is Saturday morning, the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, and I have had a fax lying on my desk since Wednesday that I really must reply to - our first enquiry from New Zealand. So please bear with me for a while.

Another first occurred today, 7/6/99, I had put through my letter box with the rest of this morning's mail, one of the magazines I had sent out the previous week - the problem is that I have no idea whose it is, because the address label had come off! So if it was you who did not get edition 28, the one with the black and white picture of a Kitten van on the front cover, please get in touch, and I will send it on. That is the first time that has happened, don't get me wrong, I have had magazines returned in the past, marked "Addressee Unknown" or whatever, but never before to my knowledge, has one of my address labels come off!

Another thing, as Brian Millar was pointing out the error of my ways, in as much as I had made reference to a watermark which you have not seen, and so in fact that bit of his letter really should have been edited out, and so it would, except that at the time of typing it I had harboured delusions of letting you all see it. But in the event I didn't, and so Brian was quite right I should have gone back and edited

his letter accordingly – where was it again that that well intention paved road led to? As I have been known to say before, one day I'll get it just right, but do not be breath holding in anticipation!!

Moving swiftly on, Dick Goodall has been reading some of the back numbers, and my writings have come back to haunt me. This time it is early Kitten chassis numbers that are causing the confusion – did I really say that Dick? I know that the fourth digit is always a zero, I suppose it depends which end you count from, I was reading left to right, the 14 after the / refers to the vehicle type, the Kitten was a FW14, we believe the FW stands for four wheeler, (I know that some of the chassis plates are engraved FW14A, but that story must wait for another day !) and the 2 or 7 or 9 or whatever, and I guess I ought to sort this out clearly, but meantime the first digit after the 14 tells us if it is saloon, estate or van, DL or standard, and right or left hand drive, but then again that lot might need 12 different categories, or perhaps they only exported DL's which would reduce the number of derivatives a bit.

Still on Kittens for a moment. John Pearce now has two of them, both saloons, (better keep an eye on him Susan, that's how these things escalate !) and he has noticed something I have not spotted, and that is the manner in which the rear dampers are mounted to the chassis. Apparently some models have a neat alloy bracket which attaches to the rear chassis cross tube, to which the damper attaches, while others ( all the ones I have had ) simply have the damper bolt straight on to the cross tube, no alloy bracket involved. This might explain why some Kitten rear dampers are longer than others, I have met both long and short ones in the replacement damper front. Speaking to Dave Smith about this, he has seen more than most, Dave tells me that in his experience there seems to be about a 50/50 split between the two types. The short ones are Mini front ones I am told, though the front of a Mini must weigh at least twice what the back of a Kitten does, however, John tells me that his Kitten's handling has been transformed since he fitted what we presume are the right ones. Well the right combination at any rate.

Oh, imagine me getting all technical at the beginning of the magazine!

Back to non-Reliant related matters just for a moment, I have been fighting one of these summer cold things this last week or so, it is now the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, or Independence day if you happen to live in Scotland. I have in my old age become somewhat suspicious of almost anything I read in the newspapers or even see on television, of which I am ashamed to say I watch rather a lot these days. But there I was, watching the great event, live they would have had us believe, and at quarter past 12 there was a fly past over Princes Street in Edinburgh, of the Red Arrows led by Concorde, the commentator mentioned that they had come up from England and were off to Glasgow – well I thought, if that's true they should fly over here in a few minutes. So some quick mental arithmetic together with the sort of speed I would want to be flying in formation with Concorde at, and I decided that it should take them about 8 or 9 minutes to reach here, so I set the buzzer on the cooker, ( you always get interrupted in this house ! ) and watched the end of the programme. Then the buzzer went off, and I casually said to Moira, who had just returned from walking the dog, that I was just popping out to see Concorde and the Red Arrows fly over, well it just happened to be our old neighbour Rita's 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday, so it only seemed fair that we should have laid something special on for the occasion. And what do you know, within a minute there they were, right over the high school that Arleen attends, about 50 to 100 yards north of our house, Concorde and nine of the Red arrows, four on one wing, five on the other, two of whom promptly broke off and did some aerobatics, a nightmare for the air traffic controllers at Glasgow airport less than three miles away I shouldn't wonder. Rita did hear them, if only able to catch a glimpse ( she is pretty blind these days ), but impressive stuff I must say, and it did refresh my belief in stories told, and claimed to be told live, on the television. So I guess we now have our own Parliament after all ! Not only that, but I was right, not only can Concorde go at twice the speed of sound, it can also go at twice the speed of a Reliant Kitten!! (and this without the use of flaps either !)

While I still have your attention in these now numerous pages, I would just like to share the following communication with you. The following Fax arrived at the beginning of June, I did reply to it a few days later, and sent off a large package the following week, but have yet to hear from him again.

“I have seen your details on the Kitten Register web site on the Internet and think that a car that doesn't rust in New Zealand would be a brilliant idea. We have MOT's here every 6 months, and the rust finally gets the older cars.

I've seen a couple of Robins here but would be really interested in finding a Kitten to restore. Do you know if any were imported to NZ? or if you currently have any Kitten club members here or in Australia?”

Drop a fax or e-mail when you have a moment.

Glyn Pickering, Green Bay, Auckland NZ

*Well Glyn's comments about rust and older cars makes me wonder how it is that so many Jowetts still survive over there, and the youngest of them are now over 45 years old! His comments also make me furious at myself for not keeping better details of non-members whether of the R.O.C. or the Register (I keep telling myself that I have quite enough to do looking after subscribers, without spending time on folk who cannot be bothered to subscribe !) because I was involved in helping export a Rialto to Australia earlier this year, but have lost the contact name and telephone number !!*

*Anyway, if you have any relevant comments or information please let me know and I will pass on the relevant fax number / e-mail address as appropriate.*

Peter Terry deserves a special mention as he is one individual who I think I have messed about due to my not being as organised as I like to think I am. Peter, I wrote to you today, 5/7/99, and then realised when filing your letter that I had not read the back of it, on which you were asking my opinion about a “Power Plus” device which you had fitted to your Kitten. The answer is that I have no experience at all of the device in question. As regards valve seat erosion, our engines are a lot less susceptible than most, and I do not think that we will experience any short-term problems running on unleaded fuel.

I do tend to lean towards the theory, or is it a belief?, that the current 4 star fuel is not at all like the 4 star of a few years ago, indeed perhaps not even of a few months ago. I will say no more about that now, other than to mention that our other Glossop resident correspondent has noticed some change, but then again he recently modified his Kitten ‘Tigger’ to have the Reliant fuel overflow mod. So we are not comparing like things in his case!

## Important Notice

Dear Brian,

13<sup>th</sup> June 1999

It is with regret, but I feel I have to resign from my position as the Fox Alternative parts representative. I feel I do not have enough time to dedicate to this position to do the job justice, plus I am now in the position of selling my Fox having bought an Opel Manta, sorry.

I must admit I miss the strange looks I got from other road users while driving these small Reliants as you almost keep up with them on accelerating away from traffic lights, or by just out cornering them. I will always have a soft spot for Reliants as they have been part of our family for the past 15 years. I still have our original Kitten which my son is now in the process of restoring ready for his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday next year – we originally bought this car when my wife was returning to work after having our family of four children. After scouring the small ads for a cheap second car we eventually stumbled across an ad for a Kitten just a few miles away, which we ended up buying as it would be kept outside, and my wife Susan only had a few miles to go to her new job, this was ideal. After Susan used the Kitten for about a year, our family car, a Montego estate, developed an electric fault, and at times just would not start, something to do with the black box we were told. I eventually managed to talk Susan into swapping cars as she could always get a lift to work, while I worked shifts and worked 13 miles away and needed a reliable car. This was supposed to be just until the fault on the Montego was found, but turned out to be a permanent move - the more I drove the Kitten, the more I appreciated what a marvellous little car it was. We eventually bought a second Kitten estate, for what reason I cannot remember, then a Kitten saloon which I used until I ran into an electric light pole! I then moved onto the Fox. Unfortunately this accumulation of Reliants plus the children now driving and having cars of their own congested the drive plus a large part of the garden as I had also collected a 1973 Regal E21 which is in the process of a long restoration, just the interior plus doors to go, and a Rebel estate plus a Regal estate (I believe some of the large Reliant garages in London used to convert the van into these estate cars and called them tourers – perhaps a long time before BMW called their estate cars tourers) plus another 1963 Regal, all waiting in the wings for attention. So 2 Kittens plus the Fox are having to go, along with another Regal and Robin that went earlier.

As for the alternative parts situation I have had a couple of phone calls from people about Fox problems which I hope I have been able to give a little help to, but the only thing I have come across so far are the wheels which I believe are the same as the old Viva or HA Bedford van which the Post Office had hundreds of, but you see very few about these days. Also the steering rack may have come from the same vehicle. While I ran the Fox I had a broken windscreen, I rang the local windscreen firm thinking the worst, that it would be impossible to obtain a new one, while trying to explain to them that Reliant did make small four wheeled cars as well as the three wheeler, he eventually came back saying that two were listed, so he sent for them both to be on the safe side. The first one I believe turned out to be for the Kitten, the second one being the Fox's which I believe he said was the same screen as that fitted to the old Austin / Morris 1100. As for the exhaust I had mine go while running the car, and was able to acquire a new one, but I later adapted the Kitten one to fit by cutting a large round hole in the rear valence of the car for the exhaust to pass through, plus remove a small amount of pipe from the new tailpipe. The only other alternative parts I have come across are most of the brake parts, shoes, cylinders, back plates, adjusters, hand brake lever and drums are all the same or similar to some Mini ones – just like the Kitten.

Notwithstanding all the above, I would still like to remain a member of the Register!

Yours sincerely Robert Nash - Norfolk

*Well Bob, what can I say? obviously am sorry that you do not have the time to continue as our Fox alternatives parts information man, and am sorry to hear that you are selling the Fox, but I am delighted that you still want to be with us, and of course you are most welcome to do so. The Fox windscreen situation does bring to mind a 60 page report I received from the factory the other week, a parts price list, and I noticed Fox windscreens on the list, so they are readily available from the factory as well as other sources.*

*So just let me take this opportunity to thank you for all your time and effort on our behalf for the past year or so, and wish you well with the future.*

**Brian**

*Lying on my desk for months I am ashamed to admit, is the following communication from Tiddles – sorry Tiddles, better late than never.*

## READERS LETTERS

Dear Brian,

About three years ago I sat unwanted and unloved in a garage. My owner had spent hours and hours tending to my needs and getting me back to a healthy condition, and then once achieved – got fed up with me! Then just before Christmas a man came to have a good look at me, and said I had a very nice sounding ‘purr’ to my engine. He said I would be the ideal Christmas present for his DOGS!!! Me! A little Kitten and I was being thrown to the dogs! Well I naturally started screaming out for the nearest RSPCA telephone number at the top of my voice, but he just said my revs sounded o.k. and he would have me.

I got to my new home and just as I thought, all the 4 dogs flew at me, ran round me, jumped in my back and I was taken down to the woods. My tappets were racing, this was no teddy bears picnic, I thought they were giving me to the wild animals. (Little did they know that the ‘Fox’ is a relative) But no, they left me in the car park and they all went off for a walk. (A minor adjustment to my tappets and I was o.k. again)

The dogs now think of me as the next best thing to a lb. of dog biscuits. They really protect me, and won’t let anybody come anywhere near me, and all set off barking if anyone tries! So really I am pleased with my new home, the big dog, Ben, thinks so much of me that he sleeps with me at night so I won’t get lonely.

I have also been taken on holiday! Twice I have been up to your part of the country Brian, Scotland! It was mentioned that we might call on you, but you had a lucky escape, we ran out of time.

That is all I have for you at the moment, Purrrrrrrringley yours

Tiddles Dwyer - 249

*Well Tiddles, thank you for letting us know how things are in England, I hope that the dogs continue to serve you well.*

*The following letter arrived this morning, it raises a number of points, and I will try hard not to interrupt!*

Dear Brian,

8<sup>th</sup> June '99

Further to my recent 'phone calls to you – one mentioned in Mewsletter 29, I should broadcast my recent experiences to the converted as a warning.

Firstly the track control arm (1) that snapped whilst braking heavily, had indeed rusted through just where the 'U' channel almost joins the bush's housing.

Fortunately living in the village next to mine is Kitten fanatic Tom Wardley, who came to my rescue, once again, with one of his many spares. I am indebted to him for that, and his amazing in-depth knowledge of the marque. Thanks Tom, for all your help and invaluable advice.

Tom and I removed the broken remains by grinding away the bush housing as the bolt had rusted within it. It is a wonderful rust trap, and in my opinion worth redesigning.

For those unaware of its role – the arm prevents the front wheel from traversing fore and aft under acceleration and braking. The 25-mile journey home was, therefore, quite exciting as I only dared use the handbrake to arrest progress.

I 'phoned many 'localish' Reliant dealers for a new spare part and drew a blank. One told me that a skipful of the arms were dumped when Reliant moved factories! that, and other stories heard, especially within the R.S.S.O.C. arena makes me wonder why Reliant enjoy any customer loyalty at all. At least the R.S.S.O.C. has sufficient numbers to warrant some traders re-manufacturing once obsolete parts. I have fears as regards our little cars in that respect.

My Kitten failed the M.O.T. on a wheel bearing – (easily obtainable) and a top ball joint. Eventually I bought the latter, a new one, at £38, but was also quoted £56 elsewhere for the same item (2) Last year I replaced a bottom ball joint, costing me £70, I'm now quoted £100 this year ! Just supposing both needed doing on both sides, that's over £300 – probably more than most cars are worth, when you include labour. (3)

I think the whole suspension needs re-designing and incorporating disc brakes. The initial outlay may be expensive, but peace of mind and ease of replacement would possibly far outweigh that. I've completely replaced my braking system, with new drums etc, and I'm at performance. If time permits this year, I'll have another look at stuffing a K-series engined Metro sub-frame, complete with 5 speed gearbox, disc brakes etc, onto a Kitten chassis. It would probably need a one-piece flip-front, ala Triumph Herald (4) for easy access – and think of the fun!

Incidentally, the track control failure has made Tom Wardley think a bit – he often pushes his Kitten along in the low 80's. Mine snapped braking hard, from around 20 mph! Do please, check this vital component, NOW! (5)

Once I've sourced another sound example of this arm I shall send it to Scimitar trader Andy Vine, who advertises a lot of stainless steel parts and pieces in 'Slice' let's see what price he can make them for in that material. By the way, I had made enquiries regarding stainless steel studs for cylinder head – apparently the metal's expansion rate differs from the normal steel studs and could become a problem in itself, How sad. (6).

The other near-miss, still makes me shudder just thinking about it, I've recently had an engine transplant, picked from a 56,000 mile rolled Rialto – a bargain at £ 50 – found after phoning 12 breakers. Journeying to work one morning I noticed a strong smell of petrol, I thought, incorrectly, from the overfilled petrol can from the night before. After 20 cross country miles I entered town and noticed white smoke creeping from the bonnet plus the normally stable voltmeter was flickering wildly despite the electric cooling fan being switched on (7). I shot into a side street, switched off and lifted the bonnet – the petrol pipe had split at the carburettor and had been pumping fuel everywhere – onto the hot exhaust manifold and into the alternator – hence the voltmeter flickering. Why the car didn't explode (alternator = sparks) or just catch fire, I'll never know (8) – but there's no doubt that I'm exceedingly lucky to tell the tale. What is annoying though, is that I had recently replaced all the petrol pipe from the tank to the pump, and from the pump to the carb, but the pipe that split was that fitted to the donor Rialto, of course the mechanic wasn't to know that it would become a potential hazard.

I have installed an expansion tank sourced from a Mk II Granada – it's square, has two easily accessible brackets and has a low level warning switch (yet to be wired up, ditto the otter switch for the electric fan that is used on Scimitars) It has helped the cooling as has the removal and rodding through of the heater matrix and radiator core. This expansion tank is the best that I've found, indeed I bought 2 more – one for my 5A and one for my girlfriends 6A Scimitars, both suffering similar problems! ill not happy with its Tom W. has been admiring my Minilite wheels. The original alloys fitted to my Kitten were leaking badly and I wasn't happy with the angle of the valves using inner tubes. The Minilites came from a Mini and are fitted with low profile tyres. The rolling radius is about 6% larger than the original tyre and has necessitated the removal of the mud flaps for the moment. I also needed spacers to fit between the wheel and the brake drums to give the required clearance. According to those in the know, I'm told that the drums fitted to Minis that sported such wheels as standard have an integral spacer – so that's another possible route to take.

I've updated the rear lamps, once again. These I have sourced from a Montego estate and are almost the same contour as the Kitten estate corners – you have a look. My Kitten body now looks a tad butchered as the previous updated rear lamps were a different profile. I've managed to get both corners cut from the donor Montego and will be making fibreglass moulds on them so that I can make a better job of the fit. Even so they look a lot neater and give me a reversing light (yellow switch on the dashboard) and a rear fog light (red switch on the dashboard) and tidies up the back end a treat without any tacky bolt on afterthoughts to spoil it.

The Metro fan keeps the radiator temperature under control in traffic, but I still encounter overheating at 60 mph plus, unless the heater is turned on.

A worthwhile addition has been to fit a multi-switch from the column of an Ital. I also fitted the Ital's wiper motor at the same time – it's a two-speed effort with a flip-wipe function. I've changed the drive gear to a 90-degree wheel, but it doesn't have the self-park bit, but I'll find a wheel that does. I've fitted my rear window wiper in the hole vacated by the front wiper switch so all my controls are near to hand now.

I've taken some high-backed seats from Fiat X-19 sports car. They need recovering but look narrow enough to fit comfortably into a Kitten and are fully adjustable. Again it's another job to do when time permits and, hopefully, this year, I may be in that lucky position when I do have a lot of time. Mind you I've also bought a V8 engined Scimitar with a 5-speed box and a Jag axle to which I intend grafting my current 6A's body. Isn't life exciting when there's so much to do.

Yours sincerely, George Sampford – Dunchurch

*Thank you George, you will have noticed that I did not interrupt, but entered a few reference numbers in brackets, just trying to improve my technique, just hope I can remember now what I was going to say about the points in question, here goes anyway:-*

- 1) I can't remember now! see item (5) below.
- 2) I am curious to know who was quoting £ 56 for an upper ball joint, a reasonable price for a bottom one, but way over the top for a top one.
- 3) I do tend to agree that the prices of some parts is too high, much too high even, but the fact is that the cars are also too cheap, much too cheap even. Quite how we rectify this situation I do not know. Perhaps we could all agree not to sell a Kitten for under £1,000, ( £1,500 even ) that would certainly help, especially if we all stuck to it. I do know of two Kitten saloons, one without an M.O.T. and they both actually sold for £500 recently, one in the south of England, and the other in Wales, so perhaps things are looking up on the price front after all. Also there is one, a body off rebuild job carried out for one of our subscribers over the last year, which we are in the process of agreeing a value of £7,000 for. Against that I know of one estate car which changed hands for under £100 in running order, and because I would not take less than £600 for the white saloon last year, so I ended up selling it in bits to get my money. (with hindsight it was hardly worth the work, but fortunately I was able to delegate much of that to the three main purchasers).
- 4) Talk to Jim Spence and or what's his name from Croft near Leeds who did it, what I am talking about is your front hinging front section, Jim's Fiat 1600 powered beast works like that.
- 5) I know I've said this before, and do beware the dangers of dismantling them completely, at least until we have sorted out suitable replacements, and please note that the Fox chassis is different here, the only difference between the Fox and Kitten chassis, apart from the radiator mountings I think, is that the Fox uses a completely different track control arm, and so the chassis. at the front, is also completely different to accommodate it. But do have a look at them, clean off the loose dirt and paint or grease them, or do something to slow the corrosion process down a bit and give them some protection. They were almost a full eighth of an inch thick when new, and I'll bet not many of them are half that thickness now!
- 6) George, if you are still looking for a good template for the track control arm, and I have not been in touch with you before you read this, I still have a brand new one in stock, it is really my pattern, and not for sale, but you could borrow it if you like. Also, on the matter of stainless steel as a material for cylinder head studs, I have had an engine so equipped, and it worked just fine. I realise that there is this fact of different expansion co-efficients, but in practice, and my experience, it does not affect the Reliant engine detrimentally, and does make future head removal a joy! (the Kitten Register's K & B department strikes again !!)
- 7) Ah, the down side to not making the comments at the time of typing, I'm now not sure what my point was going to be! I suspect it must have been to ask what the cooling fan had to do with things?
- 8) Proof yet again that petrol does not burn, petrol vapour does. I had this friend when I was younger, he is still alive as far as I know, who used to take great delight in proving that petrol did not burn, by throwing a lit match into a petrol can full of fuel – he was never brave enough to try it when the can was empty!

And I am not sure that we need to know about your V8 Scimitar, other than to realise that you clearly have a divided loyalty situation to resolve, unless of course you complete the Kitten first!

*Anyway George, many thanks for your letter, and good luck with both projects. Ed.*

Dear Brian,

14/6/99

The car is taking up all my time at present, the roof and front now have two coats of paint on and the rest has a first coat, it is looking good compared to what it was, but has a long way to go. I am starting to make it a bit more respectable, the scars and marks can be sorted at leisure.

The paint I am using is a brushing enamel, and a stick seems to be the best way of applying it! But I have sussed it out and hope to try a thinner mix on the door frames, and if that works I shall use a paint pad, as it is proving difficult to apply the paint evenly and without marks – I will be an expert by the time this is finished!

At last the thing is nearly all the one colour, and the trying to fit a front spoiler from a bygone age to a car of a different shape. I started off with a pair of scissors and some card to get my templates and all went well until gravity got in front of the fibreglass setting, resulting in the bottom part becoming thick and the top part transparent, still tomorrow is another day!

I hope this finds you well and I will keep you updated on progress, it is looking good, but sadly it could not have looked any worse to start with, so I will end here and get this in the post to you.

Kindest regards, Robert MacNeilage - Glasgow

*Thank you Robert for keeping us up to date, just to let you all understand the situation regarding Robert's W registered Kitten estate. He had for a number of years been running a black Kitten saloon, and when I rescued the black estate car from near disposal to a fate that would not have been at all appropriate in Edinburgh. It had lots of new parts fitted, but an electrical fault had caused its previous owner to lose faith in the car. As soon as I saw it, being black, an estate car, and in better condition than Robert's saloon, I just knew that there was only one home for it. Well that must have been 5 or 6 years ago, and I don't know how many thousands of miles. But the reason it had been painted black, with an interesting broad stripe along the side, was in fact to cover up some badly done repairs, which, now that Robert has decided to strip the paint and re-do it, has given him a lot of work. Keep up the good work Robert, perhaps a picture when it is all done?*

*Ed.*

*Our man in Rotterdam, Rienk Koopmans, writes with the following sad but interesting tale. Thank you Rienk for keeping us informed.*

It's there - It's gone!

I once have been the proud owner of the little blue Kitten sedan which was once the Rally-car of the Dutch Reliant main dealer Waayenberg (43-RE-67) and that was pictured in one of the former Mewsletters. She took us years around Holland, and attended many club events. I handed her over to my brother in law about two years ago. His intention was to "skalp" her and shape her into a convertible or pick-up, and thereto she was quietly waiting at a parking place in Amersfoort. BUT, unfortunately, in March this year she was STOLEN from that spot and, although the event was reported to the police, weekend was spent never heard of again until this day. We presume that she has been slaughtered

and used or sold as parts, so this seems to be the end of a remarkable Kitten with an interesting history. Wishing you all success with the much appreciated magazine.

Rienk Koopmans - Rotterdam, still owning Reliant Kitten estate FF-50-PF

Dear Brian,

4/7/99

So here it is, the letter for which the whole world has been waiting with baited breath. That's right Kitten people, Blagburn has sorted out the old typewriter, replaced the ink thing and even managed to find a way of retrieving all the letters which had been written, stored, then lost when smoke started appearing from deep within the brainy bit of the machine some months ago. I even managed to make the "Accu-Spell Plus" (Panasonic came up with the name, yet try to type it, and the machine informs me that "occulist" is the word I really meant to type!) function as intended.

Enough of my Luddite ruminations, darn it, I meant "ramblings" but the machine won that round. To the point, J.B. has another Kitten, which is fortunate as this machine always had a problem with the word "Rebel" refusing to let me add it to the spell-checking list with a capital R. Anyway the Kitten in question is KMP 368P, the car which for many years past was run by Tony Araniello's wife. I will not disclose here how much I paid for this rather fine specimen, but a third of the car's cost was in the fuel tank, and that was only half full at the time of purchase! KMF has an utterly sound chassis, but I always was lucky that way. That said, I shall be spending some time underneath with a wire brush and some decent paint, as the Hammerite (sneaked that one past the spelling thingy, and it probably shows!) which was applied only three years ago and is not really doing much any more. On the credit side, the oily bits are all fine and the wee thing pulls like a horse (or 40). A new steering rack has recently been fitted along with various other goodies such as a rather fine little Mountney steering wheel, lots of new tyres (only one of the ten or so wheels which came with the car has a tyre on it which is not quite up to scratch), handbrake cable, etc. The oil pressure is erratic at times rather than being generally low, so a relief valve job is on the cards. Guess who let his new oil pressure relief valve go when he sold the Rebel? The gearbox in KMF is fine, as is the back axle, which neither leaks nor makes any noise, before anyone asks, yes there is oil in there, but it stays there unlike in some Kittens I have owned / abused over the years.

The interior, although suffering from some incredibly minor scuffs and rips, is generally good, the usual sagging driver's seat having been well repaired at some time in the past. The carpets are in great condition and the car is unusually quiet, having been fitted with some effective sound deadening measures.

Even the very original beige paintwork came up like new with cutting compound and polish. All in all it's a nice one, and it even has a decent sounding stereo radio/cassette player which can be used on AM radio without the usual interference, useful for the cricket. (For the Scots folk among us, that's a game involving bats, balls and silly terminology, played on days when it's too hot to play football!) on BBC radio 5.

For information, the speedo cable is the same as a Robin or Rialto one, so that's only £8.00 from G. Scott Cars (formerly Penguin) in Gateshead. Speaking of whom, they have occupied the neighbouring railway arch to Penguin for some years now. All of a sudden, although the Reliant bods appear to be the same people, the new, big premises are brightly decked out in yellow and blue, and among their stock of used cars is the best Rebel estate I have seen. GJR 11L is red, looks perfect, and is offered for sale at a shade under – wait for it £1,200. That's one thousand two hundred pounds! A lot

of money for a Rebel, but it is an exceptionally good-looking car. - *Good to see someone at last beginning to appreciate the value of a Rebel, Ed.*

So that's me behind the wheel of a decent motor again, after a brief encounter with a Fiat 127 (whose windscreen will do for a Fox I believe) and a very pretty but sluggish, noisy and uncomfortable Morris Minor (Good little cars these, but I was torn between re-designing the seating arrangement and having the lower three inches removed from both my legs!)

Mr. Cox, if you are reading this, how's GUS coming along? I would love to see some pictures of the completed restoration, or is "cosmetic refurbishment"? a more accurate term perhaps, for the work which was needed to make the transformation from a sound, if scruffy in places, old car, into a top notch example of the breed ? I hope that you will derive as much pleasure as I did from the little workhorse in the two years and thirty odd thousand miles during the time we were together. That's all from me for the time being, must go, I've got a car to polish! Keep the faith, all you Rebel, Kitten, Fox, Cipher, Jimp, Tempest & any variation I may have missed, people.

John P. Blagburn - North Shields

*Thank you John, good to hear from you again, you are obviously running on more cylinders than I am at the moment! I look forward to seeing you at Doune in August.*

Eric Catt, one of our Fox owning subscribers, recently had some fairly major expense getting the trusty animal through the annual test, and was needing amongst other items, new front dampers. These were supplied, at very reasonable cost, by Mr. Maslin. Eric recently fitted a Flo Master in-line device to help his Fox cope with unleaded fuel, and reports that, so far, all is well. Of much more interest will be for us to see how his friend gets on, as he fitted one to his Mini at the same time, and they, Mini's, are many many times more susceptible to valve seat erosion, the problem caused by removing the lead from fuel, than our little cars are. Please keep us posted on both vehicles experiences Eric.

### **Sales and Wants**

For Sale :- Rare Rebel van, no side windows! V94/1052 contact Donald Gilchrist for details on 0115 9101 785 between 9:30 and 14:00. Nottingham

For Sale :- A pair of Kitten / Fox lower ball joints and a Weber 28 / 36 carb with adapted Reliant Manifold. I think Harry said £50 each for the ball joints, and the same for the carb complete with manifold. The carb has been re-jetted to suit the Reliant engine. Give the man a ring and negotiate on the postage, on 01446 760907.

For Sale :- Kittens and Kitten parts :- 2 Reliant Kittens, 1976 one in working order but minus battery./ The other one is partly dismantled, all parts available. Also brand new, not recon. works polished and ported engine with stainless steel valves and twin 36mm Delortos. Owner going abroad, £500 the lot Contact Simon Arthrell in Nutbourne Sussex 01243 574105 or 0797 0639595.

For Sale :- 1976 Kitten saloon, an abandoned restoration project, price not an issue, the car is in the Bristol area, contact Richard Gibbens on 01179 563081

For Sale :- A Reliant Kitten Estate car, interesting history, the car is in the North East of England, contact John Blagburn for details of this metallic Brown car with a different interior – 0191 2570053

For Sale :- 1981 Kitten DL Estate, with just under 51,000 miles on the clock, this car is on the market, having been orphaned earlier this year. Talk to Paul on 01733 332117 during office hours, or 01733 760606 in the evening – Peterborough.

For Sale :- Dave Smith has been neglected recently, of course he has not sold all of his vast stock of Kitten and Fox spares quite yet, give Dave a ring on 01525 404638 if there is anything you need on the secondhand front.

For Sale :- A beige Kitten saloon, only 24,000 miles from new, with its current custodian this past 8 years, contact Mrs Kerley on 01722 790615 – Salsbury. Offers in the region of £275.

For Sale :- Various spares for Kittens ( and Ants / Robins and Regals ) contact Bob Neal on 0181 924 7383. Just ask and he'll see if he has it. Essex.

For Sale :- 1977 Kitten estate in good fettle, unleaded head, contact Peter Churcher on 01303 873090, evenings ( Kent )

For Sale :- A pair of Rebel estate cars and a Fox. All with 850 engines, and a spare 850 engine. One of the rebels would seem to be road tax exempt, the Fox could be made to go quite easily, it does run but has front end accident damage, and needs a radiator. Available as a lot for £500, or negotiate separately. The cars are in the North East, contact John Blagburn in the first instance 0191 2570053.

For Sale :- A Rebel Pick-up is available. The car is in the West Midlands and needs an new custodian NOW ! Contact Dave Martin on 0121 745 1309

Wanted :- Drivers side door complete. For a Kitten. Contact Jack Whitlock on 01535 652035.

Oh, and while I remember, Dennis has some Kitten lower steering columns available for just £37.50 plus vat and p&p. don't all bite his hand off at once 01757 291699, and be sure that it is Dennis that you speak to.

Wanted :- For a Kitten, a first class condition driver's sun visor, and a set of the soft door pocket tops, the thick spongy ones. Contact John on 0191 2570053.

Wanted :- Kitten estate in excellent overall condition with M.O.T. Good price paid for the right car, contact Daniel Lockton on 01626 867392 ( Devon )

## Notes

I was recently asked, by a Reliant dealer no less, if I could supply Kitten wishbones and track control arms, as the factory could only supply a lower one for one side. Now I did think that was odd as I am sure that the lower wishbones are not handed – but I have been wrong before. The worrying thing is that they could supply upper and lower ones before their move last Christmas and while they have long told us that they can't supply track control arms, they did in fact have them, just without bushes fitted, (and they did have the bush in stock!) so, if you spoke to the right person, they were available. Sadly that no longer seems to be the case. I understand however that there are a number of containers of bits which have yet to be un-packed and catalogued, so they may be in there. The big problem is what do we do meantime for the supply of such parts, as there are no plans that I am aware of to do the cataloguing exercise.

What I should be doing, rather than writing this, is composing a suitable letter to the company, but a number of their senior employees are on the mailing list, so hopefully this will be sufficient to warrant some response, please nicely chaps?

There is a plan to have a batch of good quality radiator hoses produced, they may even come complete with stainless clips – talk to Brian Millar if you are interested, as the price depends very much on the quantity. 01779 471139.

Also, did I mention that we are again invited to Adrian's D.L.O.C. do at Ingatestone Hall, Station Road, Ingatestone, off the old A12, off the M25 on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> of July.

Just a couple of other things, Rocker covers, the alloy ones, we are about to have another batch made, so if you are wanting one send me a cheque for £20.00 by way of a deposit, payable to the "Reliant Kitten Register Spares A/C" along with a note of what yours has to say on the top. The total delivered price should be £44 complete with tube nuts.

The other thing, I know I am preaching to the converted here, but the factory are I suspect impressed at how many Kitten owners belong to the Register, and they are suspicious about some of the claims of membership, so much so that they have asked me for a list of subscribers. Brian Millar has kindly done me a version of the report which shows names, membership numbers and postcodes only, of currently paid up subscribers, which I will have forwarded to the company by the time you read this. The list is in membership number order, so it will obviously help them if you know your number, now I know that sounds obvious, given that you need your number to get the discount, but the potential problem lies with the fact that quite a number of us have more than the one wee Reliant, and so have more than one number. The report however only shows the number against which I record your magazine mailing details, and so, in this context, you only have one number, regardless of how many cars you have, or indeed how many numbers you actually have. The correct number is on the corner of the address label this came to you in, so if you have not flung it out yet, check it and keep a note for the factory's benefit.

I did have a call today, 11<sup>th</sup> July – D.C. rules O.K! – but you will at least agree that to have three British drivers finish in the points at the British Grand Prix was something special. As I was saying, I had this call from one Keith Pillinger, oddly enough not a great distance from that Kitten saloon that is looking for a new custodian in the Bristol area, and they both rang on the same day! Anyway, Keith is the chap with the Kitten ambulance (free road tax, but only on official business, of which he tells me it has done about 180 miles in the last 20 months or so!) Right, to the point, he has a friend, one Julian Stewart (or is it Stuart?) who runs a business in the States making handbuilt white metal model cars, do you know Durham Classics Jeff? (Jeff Sharrock is our man in Bangor-on-Dee who makes Pathfinder Models) Anyway, they are about to introduce a model of the Kitten, the ambulance in fact, it will appear, both the real thing and the model, at the Modelex show at the National Motorcycle Exhibition center, near the N.E.C. in Birmingham on the 16/17<sup>th</sup> October. I understand that you might be able to acquire one of these high quality models there for around £80, which I am told is a bargain as once they come on the market a few weeks later they are likely to retail at over £100 plus p&p. If you are seriously interested, drop me a line and I will see, if there is enough interest, if we can get a group discount. By the way, the entrance charge for the event is £3.50 for adults, with concessions and children costing £2.00. You take junction 6 off the M42.

So, that's it, I've done my best, and it only remains for me to wish you all the best over the Summer, talk to you again after the eclipse, hopefully before the clocks go back! Oh, and John

Blagburn was wondering what Ford of British Leyland or whatever, colour his Beige Kitten estate was?  
Can anyone help?

**Brian**

## MEWSLETTER 29 SUPPLEMENT

For Sale : Brown 1976 Kitten Saloon, scruffy but cute ! Unleaded head, new steering rack, new rad, set of original alloys. 4 months tax, 10 months M.O.T. £350 ONO. 0181 503 2725 and ask for Greg.

Wanted :- Kitten back axle in working order, contact David Heywood on 01289 382061

There is always something else that I forget! We will be fielding a team of Kittens, well perhaps contaminated with a Rebel or Fox ! at the Doune Classic Weekend near Stirling in Perthshire on the weekend of 28 / 29<sup>th</sup> August – camping is available from the Friday. Give me a ring if you are interested in coming along, we can get a car full of people in for £6.00 providing I know in time!

I have available at just a fiver a time, well actually £7.00 including p&p, some Kitten spare wheel covers, they are the light brown ones, brand new. So if you are needing one of them, just give me a ring on 0141 8866117.

Right, all of a sudden I have the chance to get this in the post before my trip to Yorkshire at the beginning of August, so if I have missed anything it is too bad!!

We are indebted to the following individuals who both give and receive information on the following subjects on our behalf.

**Rebel alternative parts** contact:- David Myers on 0113-2570144 or at Danagarra, 23 New Street, Pudsey, LS28 8AQ  
e-mail – [cvsdsm@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:cvsdsm@leeds.ac.uk)

**Kitten alternative parts** contact:- Brian Millar, 01779-471139 or at Fairview, Boddam, Peterhead AB42 3AD  
e-mail – [Brian@mogdog.demon.co.uk](mailto:Brian@mogdog.demon.co.uk)

**Mutual Aid Spares Scheme** – run by Phil Hallam, of 4 Greenhead Holding, Stevenston, Ayrshire, KA20 4JX tel:- 01294 462089

**Mewsletter pictures** – can be sent in via Brian, or direct to John Pearce, 22 Brook Street Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 8LH tel. 01525-758170  
e-mail – [john@atodini.com](mailto:john@atodini.com)

◆ The Register has a web page on the Internet at: <http://www.uk-classic-cars.com/kitten.htm> ◆



This is the picture I wanted to put on the front cover but unfortunately it was a litho print, not a photograph, so did not scan to a good enough standard to use. The picture shows our cover car, in action, at Castle Coombe race circuit.

This picture shows Mark Johnson's Kitten special. Based on a T-reg. Kitten van, the car now resides at Haywood in Gloucestershire. Mark has promised to send us a photograph of the finished article as and when it is completed.



Better late than never! The oft promised picture of Brian with The Princess Royal at the old Argyle motorcar factory located at Alexandria near the bottom of Loch Lomond. Amazingly this factory was once the largest car manufacturing plant in Europe! (before World War 1)