

Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER Thirty-Three

March/April 2000



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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The Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER No. 33

The following individuals have kindly agreed to give and receive information on the following topics on our behalf :

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Mewsletter pictures – can be sent in via the Editor or sent direct to John Pearce at 22, Brook Street Leighton Buzzard LU7 8LH Tel : 01525 758170. john@atodini.co.uk

This time we have decided to treat you to a Tempest. The car in question spent its early days in turmoil, possibly even tempestuous turmoil! Originally built, as they were, by John Box, it was sold to Stewart Halstead, yes, the same man who today manages Reliant. However, even way back then, Stewart did not have much spare time, and eventually the car was bought back to provide a chassis for a Vantique van which John Box was by then needing a chassis for. The Tempest body was then sold to Jack Williams, its current owner, who built it up on a Kitten chassis, and uses it in competition work to this day!

The Register has a, now fairly old, web page at :- <http://www.uk-classic-cars.com/kitten.htm>

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It should be noted that opinions and ideas printed in this publication are as expressed by our readers, and do not necessarily have the recommendation of 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 should problems arise.

Hello again, there are, as ever, a few things I want to get in print before I forget (Edition 32 went to the printers the other day, and there are only a few hours of January left!) I have, again, in spite of my best efforts, slipped behind a bit with the paperwork, so please don't be shy about reminding me if there is something outstanding from your point of view.

As you will be well aware, we are quite happy to encourage those wishing to build a Liege. It is quite acceptable to break a Robin or Rialto for this purpose, even in certain circumstances a Kitten. And I am quite sure that we will be able to supply the Kitten parts required in the construction of a Liege between those of us who from time to time find it necessary to be breaking the odd badly rusted Kitten. There is however no possible excuse for breaking a Tempest to build a Liege!! You will have noticed in the supplement with the last edition that there is a Tempest for sale, the ex John Box demonstrator in fact. It has been saved from a most untimely fate, when its previous owner decided that the best way to get better performance from his Dick Harvey built high performance engine, was to give it a lot less weight to push about. So he removed the engine, and gearbox, from his Tempest, and set about building a Liege!

Now there is a lesson here I believe, and that is that you can tune those wee engines to give a lot more horsepower, but when we get beyond a certain level, torque suffers, and you end up with a very high revving engine, that won't do much in the way of pulling below 3,000 rpm, which does not make it user friendly, or discreet!

One thing which I omitted to share with you in the last edition was the, I thought, very funny Christmas card that the Liege Motor Company sent – I may try the scanner for this, but in case I don't manage that, the card showed Santa, a Liege, and a reindeer, presumably Rudolph (or then again perhaps not, it would have to be a Diesel one if it was Rudolph – Oh, alright dear, Moira was, not for the first time, suggesting that I ought not to leave my warped sense of humour to chance, but of course you all knew that the guy who invented the diesel engine was one Rudolph Diesel didn't you?) at the wheel, and Santa lying underneath the car exclaiming "O.K., you're quite right, there is a Robin under here!" Anyway, my thanks to Peter and Geoff for the card – but it is still not permissible to break Tempests to make Lieges!!

As you will see further on in this edition, one of our advertisers gets a plug from a satisfied customer, and I begin to think that perhaps we should take a leaf out of certain other organisations books, and have a recommended list of service providers, i.e. companies that you have found to give outstanding value / service. I have made mention of some in passing in the past, but perhaps we should compile a list, what do you think?

While I have your attention, (there being no room left in the Notes page already, and it is only just the 10th of February!) I am having difficulty, yes, nothing new there I know, but the matter of difficult to come by spare parts causes me concern. I had found a source of Kitten lower steering columns for you last year, at a good price even, but the only person who bought one was the only one of you who happened to have his Kitten fail its M.O.T. on that particular part. This year I sold my only stock one of these to one of our new subscribers. Now that is a good example of the sort of part that will, at some point, put our little cars off the road. But can I get you to invest? Not a chance! As I have no doubt said in the past, I do not wish to run a business, but I would like to try and help to keep as many of these fine wee cars going as possible. I am sorely tempted to try and see if I can get an even better price, by buying say 10 of them, and putting them into stock for you for that proverbial rainy day. I have several problems here – how to pay for them, and where to keep them being the first two stumbling blocks. I really dislike making up parcels, and the lock ups are both a bit damp, so they would need to stay in the house, and we really don't have the room, plus I often lose things, very exciting when you find them

again years later, but infuriating as you have inevitably just found another solution to the problem the day before you find the thing!

So, you understand the problems. I have considered adding a, possibly voluntary, 'spares donation' to the annual subscription, say a couple of pounds. but I am very hesitant to go down that road as I have said, I really do not want the additional work or responsibility of keeping an ever increasing number of parts in stock.

What brought this to the front of my mind recently was the disappearance from stock of the most common Kitten anti-roll bar bushes, the ones with the big hole! Naturally I bought all I could on your behalf, they are small, and so do not take up much space, and 'only' cost a few pounds. Now that was just the proverbial knee jerk reaction to my discovering how many of you had bought a lower steering column. Together with the fact that it did not involve a huge capital investment. But by the time you add three lots of postage and packing (three different suppliers you see) and the dreaded vat. They suddenly become, relatively, expensive. That is they double in price from that quoted to me (because they still quote these things ex-vat, and postage, and of course we have incurred an extra lot of postage, because I still have to post them to you – eventually !) So, all I have to do now, is decide where to keep them, tell you, so that you can remind me when you finally need a pair, and we are in business – oh no! I don't want to be in business!.....

Seriously though, this does become a problem when taken on a full scale spares supply situation, even just the rare and slow moving spares situation, it could easily involve an investment of thousands of pounds for an annual turnover of a couple of hundred. I sold three reconditioned steering racks last year, and I try to always carry one in stock, but one lay in the lock-up for almost a year two years ago, and it was getting rusty by the time some one needed it! (Corrosion on the main outer tube is becoming a new reason for old unit racks being unsuitable for reconditioning now, as well as the other reasons we have encountered in the past for this!)

So, I think what I am trying to do, is seek guidance, help, advice even. What should I do? I have said in the past, and it is true, I don't like making up parcels, I don't like having bits about the house (and more to the point neither does Moira!) The odd anti roll bar bush is one thing, but the rear springs, it really hurts when you bash your toes against them!

As you will gather, I have a conflict of interests here, on the one hand I want to do all I can to help keep our wee cars going, but I simply do not have the resources in money, space, time or indeed ability when it comes to heavy things. So I have to choose between doing nothing, and trying to strike a suitable compromise, boy is that a contradiction in terms, how can a compromise ever be suitable? I was going to mention that elusive chap the proverbial happy medium, but not being one who attends seances I am not likely to meet him / her.

Right, they say a problem shared is a problem halved, and as those of you who have asked me for a priced parts list will be only too well aware, I do not even have such a thing! It's creation is on my 'To Do' list, but till after May or June, (The big Jowett Rally at Pitlochry) that is not likely to get even thought about far less actually done!

O.K., enough is enough, but you do now have an understanding of the dilemma in which I find myself.

REBEL ROUND UP

Dear Brian,

9th February 2000

In response to your comment in "REBEL ROUND UP", my Rebel Estate with, as you know, Ford Escort 1300 engine & automatic gearbox, is going well. If you are considering a similar conversion to yours, I would make the following observations:-

- a) It feels under geared, does the later Ford 4 speed auto box, on which I think the fourth gear is an overdrive, perhaps fit?
- b) It is still very uncomfortable on rough roads – could the rear part of a Triumph Spitfire chassis be fitted, to both provide a smoother ride, and offer a higher final drive ratio?
- c) There is a firm that does conversions to the ZF 4 speed auto gearbox to any vehicle, but that costs serious money, in the region of £ 3,000, and would the Reliant engine provide enough power?
- c) How do I stop the rear door rattling?

Yours, John Parker – Bristol – (New membership No. 0301)

Thanks John, that old song to do with outnumbered answers springs to mind! I do like the idea of keeping a Reliant power unit, but your comments about gearing are well justified. I have driven a Rebel with 14" Morris Minor wheels, and that got round the gearing situation quite nicely (with an 850 engine fitted for more power) I have to say that the Rebel looks fine on 13" wheels, an inch bigger than standard, but by the time you get to 14", it does look a little odd.

As to the matter of the Reliant power unit, even an 850, having enough power to cope with the losses in an automatic gearbox – well, if I ever have a spare £ 3,000, I will let you know! I know Minis were built with a 4 speed automatic box, and it did work, but was very thirsty.... Who knows?

As to the noise, ride, and back door rattle – is it too obvious to suggest that your rear dampers, or indeed even rear tyre pressures need checking? Oddly enough (we have just 'enjoyed' a new kitchen floor being installed, yes, you heard me correctly, floor, not floor covering, though we did replace it as well) but the actual floor (we had wanted to replace the floor covering, but on lifting the old stuff, discovered a dampness problem.....) as I was saying, oddly enough, when Moira was emptying the bottom drawer of the unit in the kitchen, she asked me what 'this' was ? and it was a Rebel estate rear door striker plate ! The plastic (or is it nylon?) white part, that attaches to the car frame, and is located with two bolts, and catches the appropriate part of the door catch mechanism, and holds the door shut (firmly enough that it ought not to rattle!). So, the question, apart from the potential solution to the bumpy ride, is, to tighten the catch, well, adjust the catch so that the door is held more firmly in place. Then again, what is the condition of the rubber sealing strip? Tee hee, still more questions!. Oh, sorry, almost forgot, the Triumph rear end, well, without looking at them both fairly closely I don't know, but we have the technology, the question has to be how many more Rebels do we want to modify so far from original spec?

Dear Brian,

February 2000

Update on G.U.S.

GUS is now on the road and in daily use. Over the past nine months I have :-

- . Replaced the headlights with original sealed beam and pilot light units (contrary to popular belief, I consider the light from these to be good)
- . Replaced the square spotlights with period Lucas units from a local scrap yard.
- . Replaced the interior lights with period units from the same source.
- . Set the 'reversing light' in a chrome bezel (*the 'reversing light' in question is a round headlamp set into the back door of the Rebel estate – Ed.*)
- . Installed a clock and radio.
- . Replaced the radiator grill.
- . Re-sprayed the car white over blue.
- . Re-upholstered the front seats.
- . Refurbished the sun roof
- . Renewed the headlining.
- . Replaced the carpets.
- . Placed an additional silencer in the exhaust system.
- . Re-lined the inside of the doors.
- . Renewed all interior door furniture.
- . Overhauled the rear brakes, and replaced the front brakes with discs.
- . Renewed the outriggers.
- . Converted the clutch mechanism back to hydraulic control.
- . Renewed the clutch, timing chain and chain tensioner.
- . Replaced oil seals in the engine and rear axle.
- . Overhauled the propshaft.
- . Converted the engine to unleaded petrol.

Installed intermittent windscreen wiper control.

I still have a few minor jobs to do, but the car is pleasant, if still noisy to drive, and it handles well.

I hope to be able to send you a photograph, next time I put some film in the camera.

Regards, Paul Cox - Merseyside

FOXES' DEN

Dear Readers,

16th January 2000

Regarding the mention (or was it a plea?) that the Registrar had in the November / December Mewsletter for some unwitting person to act as Fox parts co-ordinator, I quickly offered my services *As did a number of other folk, to whom my thanks as well, Ed.*

For Mewsletter readers, a bit about me. I am a member of the Newcastle Branch of the Reliant Owners Club, also Branch Treasurer and magazine Editor. With my wife Christine, our daughter Victoria, two dogs, and more recently a parrot, we attend several R.O.C. rallies each year.

Christine owns Fox B322 BOV, which took part in the Le-Jog of '98, and has been at several R.O.C. rallies since then. She owns it, I maintain it! The Fox has had major internal surgery, mainly after Le-Jog, with new (unleaded) head fitted, reground crank and new shells, piston rings replaced, new water pump, and more recently new radiator *Oh, that reminds me, do not let me forget Simon Chisholm's observations on radiators, Ed.* The seats were replaced prior to Le-Jog, the donor car was a Honda Civic.

Now I will ask for readers help. If you know of any other vehicle components that are compatible with the Fox, please let me know. I will gather and collate any information that I can, and make it available for any subscriber of the Kitten Register. If you have made any modifications to a Fox that have worked, or for that matter that have failed, and you are willing to pass the information to other readers, please let me know. I will try to write a regular piece for the Mewsletter, and I will give full credit to you for any suggestions supplied.

For readers who wish to contact me the details are on page 3!

Peter Hayton - Hetton le Hole

Thank you Peter for your time and enthusiasm. Peter did give me details of a number of R.O.C. rallies, (camping weekends), and if you would like to know more about them, and are not already a member of the Reliant Owners' Club, I am quite sure that he will be pleased to hear from you. Given that you are all aware of the R.O.C. I have assumed that if you are interested you will be a member, and so there is no need for me to advertise R.O.C. events in these pages, other than any, like Le-Jog, which might have a mutual interest. Peter has also provided me with a chart – 3 A4 sides, which details wiring colours used in vehicles built in the U.K. (before owners started making "improvements"!) which might be of interest – send a s.a.e. and a first class stamp to Brian if you would like a copy.

One of our other Fox, indeed small Reliant in general enthusiasts Simon Chisholm, does in fact write to me from time to time, with pretty interesting articles, and I fail to publish them for a number of, what seem at the time, perfectly valid reasons. So when his latest offering arrived, and I realised that I had failed to use his previous article on chassis numbers, I thought, just do this one now Brian, there's a good lad (Simon was one of those other volunteers I mentioned as far as Fox alternative parts guys goes, but he would only have got involved if I were desperate – does he not think I am desperate, oh well, there must be hope yet!) Simon can be contacted on 01764 653557 if you would like a chat about Fox related matters, do give him a ring.

FOX - problems and solutions.

I have been enjoying a love-hate relationship with several Fox's over a period of three years now. I got the first because it was different, and I didn't have one. I got the second because the first was knackered at 46K by 6 careless previous owners. I have Kittens, a Robin van, a Rebel, a Rialto and a Regal MK2. I don't know if that's a fetish, or just over enthusiasm for all small Reliants. I plan to convert the rialto to a Pick-up.

If only I could win the lottery. I would get them all restored. M.O.T.'s taxed and insured and lined up outside my house for the cost of the insurance for a year on some Italian super trash!

At 21 I was about 5'11" (180cm); now, some 35 years on, I am round shouldered, about 5'9" (175cm) and stiff in all the wrong places. I find my Robin comfortable, but the Fox, with better quality seats, is better suited to the vertically challenged. I have a 31" (79cm) inside leg, yet with the seat fully back it offered no support between the buttocks and the knee, which lead to early fatigue. Fortunately the steering wheel is set 3" (7.5 cm) higher than in a Kitten, so raising the front seat mounting by 1" (25 mm) solved that problem, at the expense of making it harder to exit the car.

The final solution came in the form of a pair of seats from a Subaru Justy, which have totally transformed the car at a cost of £ 25 for the seats from my local scrap yard, and some ¼" strip steel for the mountings, which are a little involved. These seats are not suitable for Kittens as they are 5" (13cm) narrower than a Fox.

Those of you who have A1 vision just do not know how lucky you are! I am quite short sighted – a tea spoon without glasses looks to me the same size as a dessert spoon with glasses – *You should try living in our house Simon, none of the spoons wear glasses!* and as things look much smaller to me, I need more light to see by. I find the headlights fitted to the Fox – Kitten, early Rialto – Metro, to be rather poor. The original lamps protrude through the bumper / grill on the Fox, and in touch parking, they get broken before the bumper is touched. Bumpers are repairable, headlamps are not!

Simon Chisholm – Gilmerton by Creiff

Thank you Simon, and my apologies for cutting your letter short, but I am out of space in this edition (and it is just the 12th of February!)

READERS LETTERS

Not that I would wish to dwell on those who are leaving us, but I thought the following worthy of note, though I am quite certain that there must be a story or three that our Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons could have told us:-

Dear Mr. Marshall,

18th January 2000

Thank you for the continuity that you have provided which I shall no longer need.

I had a 'Kitten' new in 1981, which was in daily use until December 1999. Latterly, increasing electrical problems due to ageing insulation, caused doubt about continued usefulness. Certainty arrived with a blown cylinder head gasket. I did cover over 315,000 miles in the car before giving it away.

Yours sincerely Giles J. Romanes FRCS FRCOphth

So, can anyone out there beat 315,000 on an original engine? Yes, yes, I will try and find the time to write to him, both to thank him for keeping us informed, and to ask if he could be coaxed, even at this late stage, into telling us more about his 18 years with the car. And of course, just who has it now.

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Dear Brian,

18th January 2000

First "A Guid New Year" to you all. A bit late I know.

At last the usual financial disaster of the so-called festive season is left behind us, and I dare write a cheque for renewal of my Kitten Register membership. Here's looking forward to the next issue, the last one was as good as ever.

How is the Kitten? Well, I went out and turned the ignition key today. To my delight it burst into life after about 3 seconds, having stood for a long time. So I left the engine idling for a while with the heater fan blowing in an attempt to dry out the condensation inside. A vain hope I fear! Once warmed up, a quick spin up and down the farm road showed that the engine and transmission work O.K. The brakes are a bit dull. No doubt there is rust in the drums. The lights all work, a quick wriggle of the switch got all the indicators going. In view of the warnings re 'track control arms' I shall be removing them and inspecting them when possible. Luckily I have come by an insulated boiler suit. All the best – Dick Goodall – Tore, Muir of Ord

*Thanks Dick for keeping us up to date, **but don't rush to remove those front suspension struts.** You could be giving yourself a lot of effort and expense which could be unnecessary. Just inspect them on the car, and clean them and give them a lick of paint / Waxoil / Dinitrol or whatever. Only get involved in removing them if they are cracked or badly corroded or loose, we have yet to source new ones, and supplies of good secondhand ones are getting thin on the ground, indeed, until I source the bushes from a better priced supplier, they alone will set you back the better part of £ 20 a pair (Triumph Dolomite Brian, go and find out which one it is and give Brian Millar a note for his records – oh joy, more things to do ! (Stop moaning Marshall, and get on with it !)) And you wonder why I sometimes take a while to reply to things.....*

Dear Brian,

8<sup>th</sup> January 2000

Here is my cheque for another year's subscription of the Register which I look forward to most eagerly. The A5 format is ideal – especially as it can be filed in the same way as Slice. Perhaps the biggest problem is trying to remember which issue has some vital piece of information that I want to recapitulate. I wish I'd started an index from the beginning. Fortunately the R.S.S.O.C. have published such an index in both hard copy and CD formats.

A month or so ago I had the tracking reset, and the whole of the chassis checked and wire brushed and well oiled. Fortunately there were no other problems.

My current Kitten (*we really ought not to use that phrase too often, it can inspire a certain lack of confidence, a bit like 'my current wife (or husband)' if you see what I mean Ed!*) project is stripping and refurbishing a used set of alloy wheels – dirty hard work it is too, especially in a cold garage as you can well imagine (*Yes indeed, but it does save the better part of £ 100 to get them blasted and powder coated doesn't it?*) They have to be finished and fitted quickly now as the M.O.T. is due in about 10 days! Our almost continuous wet weather leaves little inducement for wheel changing too! However 'needs must when the devil drives'.

I'll let you have more details when they are finished, fitted and driving evaluated.

Yours sincerely – Peter – Newquay

*Thanks for that Peter, yes, your comment re indexing is quite valid, and a major failing of mine – must either try harder, or delegate. Someone had started to do a comprehensive index for us a couple of years ago, and my ever unreliable memory can't remember who it was! But then he got a new job and didn't have the time, any volunteers?*

*On the binder front, I am looking at having some made up, I thought they could say on the spine simply "My Mewsletters"! What do you think? Price would be very dependent on quantity, so if you are interested, drop me a line please.*

Dear Brian,

January 2000

Many thanks for all your sterling work in keeping the Register and publishing the Newsletter. May I say how much I approve of the new format (*A5 now rather than the old A4 ones*) and congratulate you on the appearance and content that you manage to achieve with each edition. *Well, yes, of course you may, but I do have a lot of help, in spite of all my interruptions I am sure that less than a quarter of the magazine content is actually down to me, and as I have mentioned in the past, the colour covers are down to John Pearce, and the layout greatly helped by Brian Millar, but I accept that I have been the catalyst, and it is gratifying to know that the effort is appreciated – just as well that I am retired mind you, because each edition takes me about 100 hours, between typing, printing off the masters (usually several times!), checking the adverts, proof reading, taking to and from the printers, addressing envelopes, packing envelopes, putting stamps on envelopes, recording their despatch - must learn to type faster, and at the same time more accurately!* I will now be able to file future copies in the RSSOC hard covers that I have not had the courage to dispose of since parting with my Scimitar.

May I humbly make a suggestion, that the inclusion of an index will be greatly enhanced if the title for each article or item reflects the technical content. This will be of considerable assistance to those of

us who can remember vaguely reading something a few months ago, but have to rely on lists and post it notes to reinforce the remaining grey cells!

*Yes, yes, I suppose you may, see my comments after the previous letter, are you Scimitar guys ganging up on me or what?!? No, fair comment, I am far from perfect, and will try to try harder in future. (See this index as a start)*

I enclose my subscription for this year, with best wishes for the New Year for you, your family, and all those who help keep our classic little cars on the road,

Yours sincerely – Bob Bridger – Plymouth - Fox custom A217 KIT

P.S. I can endorse the services of P.F. Spare for insurance purposes, they arranged a very creditable deal for the Fox on its return to service after a year's sabbatical leave.

Dear Brian,

29.12.99

Just received Mewsletter No. 31, for which I thank you and at the same time return my compliments of the season.

I have been in the club under a year and joined as a result of bumping into Bob Keene at a rally. His splendid Sierra 2.0 litre engined Kitten was featured on the cover of Mewsletter No. 29 you'll remember.

I am, and always have been, a 'special' builder' at heart, and over the years have enjoyed many interesting sports cars, mainly of the Lotus marque bought at rock bottom prices and requiring total rebuilds. In more recent years, in fact since I retired in 1992, I have been building E-type Jaguars, not real ones, but fibreglass replicas. I so love the shape and design of the "E" types that I find them irresistible. In '92 I bought a JPR Wildcat 'E' type kit car, and, working 6 days a week, had a beautiful open roadster after 9 months solid work. This car took me to Europe on several occasions and to all the kit car shows and the only thing I found to spoil the fun was the excessive 'windage' in the cockpit at motorway speeds. I sold the car 4 years later, but had already started another. A close friend had bought a fibreglass fixed head coupe version of the 'E' type in rolling chassis form, and I was allowed to take moulds off the body. I also welded up a similar chassis to the one on the Wildcat, and, after 3 years of dedicated work, had an even better Rover V8 engined replicas than the professional Wildcat kit.

The above will give some idea of my engineering background, but I have a problem when it comes to Reliants and beg your help. On the cover of each Mewsletter we see that there are, besides the Kittens (saloon, estate and van) many other Reliants such as Rebels, Foxes, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, Jimps and Asquiths, not to mention the Liege that I well know about with my kit car connections.

Photographs of each of these vehicles have not by chance been featured in your Mewsletter whilst I have been a member. With the exception of a Rebel, and the recent Jimp photo, I do not know which car will be of most interest to me. As shape is a very important consideration be it as a basis for a standard car, or even a modified one.

I heard that for £25 I could get a publication that would cover my needs, but that seems a little dear when all I want to know is what is a Tempest or a Salamander etc. For starters, the Jimp, as a cross-country vehicle, is not what I require, but a Cipher may be. Do they all have a common chassis incidentally? It would be most helpful to me, and possibly other newcomers to the Club, to have a photo

of each vehicle and a brief specification so that we know what is being referred to in the Mews. It would be a basis for selecting a suitable model from the Reliant range of what is undoubtedly fun motoring.

What I shall have to do is visit your Club summer outing. Where is it to be held? Meanwhile I will thank you for your interesting magazine efforts, and wish all members some great motoring in 2000. *(No events planned, yet! Ed)*

Yours sincerely Derek Argyle - Camberley

*Right Derek, thanks for your letter, I accept that the idea of a set of pictures of all the models the Register represents, with brief descriptions would be no bad thing. It does raise in my mind the question of a joining fee, as the costs would have to be met somehow. Also, at the moment I do not have the time – perhaps after the Jowett Rally 2000. The £25 you mention I am not sure if you are referring to the book “The Scimitar and its forebears”, or a full set of Mewsletter back numbers, either of which I would argue is good value – see notes page for more of Mewsletter back numbers.*

*As regards your question about chassis, the Rebel is quite different from the Kitten, but the Fox, Tempest, Salamander & Jimp ones are all (apart from a few early Kitten ones) interchangeable, (with the Kitten) though the Cipher is a very modified Kitten one. (The Cipher uses bolt on fibreglass body panels, and so a huge box section frame is needed to support it, and the rear is extensively modified, see the picture in the book The Scimitar and its Forebears) you don't need to spend lots of money, get it from your local library! ISBN 0 9512873 0 3 And I have to give full marks to Ken Macdonald for being able to put his hands on his copy and read me off the number at very short notice on a Saturday afternoon, thanks Ken.*

*I do not print every letter that I receive, in fact probably less than half of them actually make it into print, then again just looking at the folder somewhere between a third and a quarter might be more accurate. Do not let that discourage you from writing to me please, and, while I honestly do not want you to think that I prefer modified vehicles to original Reliant ones, I thought that I'd let this one through, in spite of the obsequious comments at the beginning!*

Hi Brian,

January 2000

Enclosed subs for the Kitten Register. Quite simply the best value for money there is! The Mewsletter is excellent. I was going to say it was a big improvement, but I then realised that was not fair comment – *Oh, I don't know, Ed* - on all your past efforts, but I'm sure you know what I mean!

We continue with the Kitten rebuild, but after almost three years we are going to ease off a little and try for the longest rebuild ever recorded (*Sorry Peter, but you have a long way to go, Drummond Black took three decades to rebuild his Jowett Jupiter!*) I think we pretty much have a full set of reconditioned pieces now, and it is simply a case of assembling a big Airfix kit.

Quite a lot of the last 12 months has been spent helping a friend build a trials car by putting a Metro engine, sub-frame, suspension etc., in the back of a Rialto estate. It was finally on the road about a month ago and its competition debut is in the Exeter Trial next weekend. By Saturday evening we should know whether we have wasted 11 months of our lives! Fortunately the Metro engine sits below the window line, so it all looks fairly standard from outside.

Unfortunately this has led to us going back to plan A with the Kitten, which was to put a Fiat 126 engine and gearbox in the back. I bought my first Fiat 500 – *Oh dear, confession time coming methinks – Ed* in 1967, and have barely been without a 500 or 126 ever since. The Kitten is about 70 Kg lighter

than the 126 in standard trim, and I reckon the 126 engine and gearbox weighs considerably less than the Kitten engine, gearbox, propshaft and axle. We've got pages and pages of drawings, measurements and sketches, so who knows?!!

Best wishes – Peter Faxon - Illogan

*Yes well, what can I say, if it's not Fiat 1600, becoming Fiat 2.0 Litre power, it is Fiat 126 power – what is wrong with the Reliant unit will someone please tell me?? But thank you Peter for keeping us up to date, Ed.*

~~~~~

Dear Brian,

21-01-00

I bought my first Reliant, Regal 3/30 back in 1982, looking for winter comfort with a motorcycle licence. The chassis had completely rotted away within a year which was sad, but I passed my driving test and graduated to a 'proper car'.

Last year I was becoming increasingly frustrated with rip-off Britain, and started looking round for something with rather meagre fuel consumption. Scouring the free ad paper I found "Reliant Kitten DL, restoration project.' The owner had dumped it next to a reservoir when more space was needed in his garage. Apparently the head gasket had blown after 92,000 miles. He'd whipped out the engine and gearbox and tried unsuccessfully to remove the head. Damaging various bits in the process. All the bits were then chucked in the boot and forgotten. I handed over £100 for this lot, and set about rebuilding.

A rebore, +20 pistons, crankshaft polish, unleaded valve seats etc., etc., has produced a really decent wee vehicle, and rare too – so far I've only seen two others on the road, one of which is a very tidy van.

To complete my project (although it is already in constant daily use) I require a full set of window seals and some footwell carpets – otherwise it is in good nick..

Incidentally I have my own photo-processing business and can offer any 'Mewsletter' reader a 20% discount from our prices, available on request, just ring 01737 763373 between 11:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday.

Many thanks for your prompt service, and a great mag. too!

Eddie Kemp – Dorking

GETTING TECHNICAL

Dear Brian,

January 2000

Mewsletter 31, page 19/20 asks for any information on how to rectify the Kitten throttle linkage. The straightforward way to kill off this problem (*Where moving the pedal less than a quarter of the way to the floor gets you more than three quarters throttle*) would be to disconnect the throttle spring, remove the pivot bar from the butterfly lever on the carb. Remove the throttle cable. Remove bracket / linkage from carb / manifold bolt. Remove lid from dustbin, and deposit all parts mentioned therein.

Replace above with parts used on a Reliant Robin, i.e. fit cable stop with throttle spring plate and fit to butterfly lever on carb. (Cable stop nearest to carb split pin to the outside). Refit throttle spring, fit slot plate to carb / manifold bolt. Fit Robin cable to both throttle and carb stop. Place outer cable over holder in slot plate. Bolt up to give correct tension on pedal.

The above mod stops aggravation from broken cables where the cable stop crushes the cable. Also I have had the clip holding the pivot bar into the carb come off, allowing the pivot to disconnect itself. Over the years I have replaced the standard Kitten set-up with the Robin one : also use this set-up with my current Fox without any problems.

While writing I thought of a mod I have used on Kitten Saloons. Most Kitten saloons I have owned have rear parcel shelves which have become detached, or have just disappeared.

A replacement can be made from a Robin (or modified Kitten) bonnet.

Take one bonnet. Mark a line 3" from the windscreen end and jig saw off. Save this piece.

Reach inside the car, measure the distance from the rear of the back seat to where the shelf would normally finish, subtract ¼" from this dimension, and note it.

The idea now is to remove another section from the bonnet so that when the first piece you removed is overlapped with the remaining bit (with the hinges mountings (holes in the lug on the sides,) not like the Kitten, which has external hinges, though the Kitten ones do have the lugs, you would need to drill them to use a Kitten bonnet – the carpet would cover the Kitten hinge mounting holes for you) What you are looking for is between 1" to 1.1/4" of an overlap, and the final thing giving you the dimension that you noted earlier. Pop rivet the two pieces together, and add body filler to smooth out the joint.

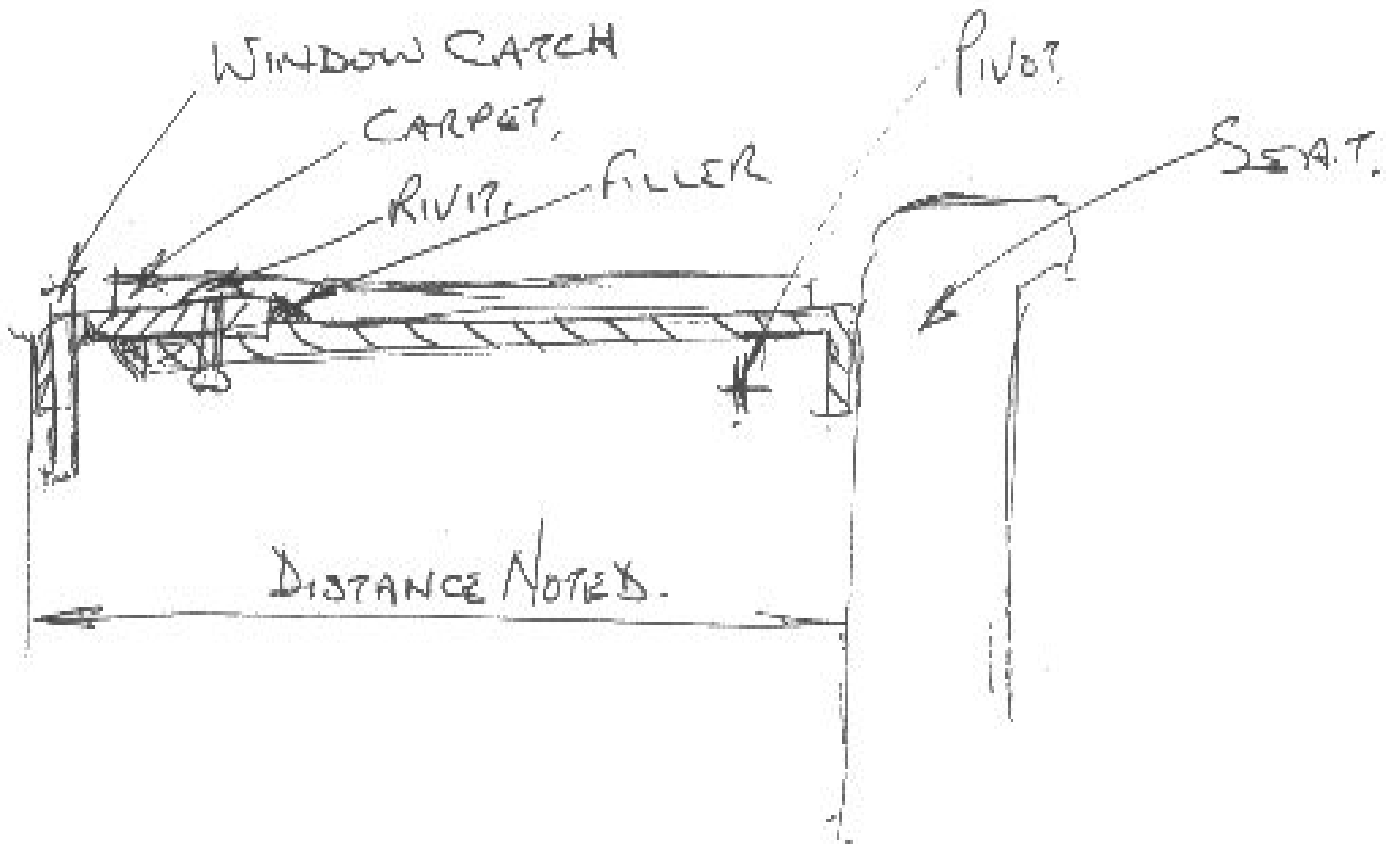
Two bolts, one long and one short are bolted into the original pivot points for the hinges (nuts to the outside).

Place the assembly over its finished position in the rear of the car, transfer the pivot points, where the bolts are, to the remaining glass fibre parts of the original shelf, and drill holes to accommodate the bolts.

The new shelf can be test positioned. Place the long bolt into the pivot hole, then the short bolt in the other side, finally centralise. A few jobs still remain.

Cut out a hole for the window lock catch plate, reinforce this with a metal plate pop-riveted in place around the hole. Paint, add three pieces of carpet to the top of the shelf, and glue them in position.

I also position my radio speakers, the type which are mounted in a box which I secure on top of the shelf, and by positioning them well forward, the weight of the speakers will balance the shelf such that it will stay in the open position without the aid of a stay or prop.



Thank you Keith for those hints and tips. I must confess that a saloon rear shelf which does not mount on the back of the rear seat sounds like an attractive idea to me. As for the throttle mod, I can't actually visualise it, I must look at a Robin more closely the next time I am near one, but I have long been meaning to do something about the original Kitten arrangement. I suspect that it was an attempt to make the Kitten's performance seem better than it actually is. Remember that, compared to the Robin, which had the same engine, the Kitten is a good deal heavier, and so would need more power to go as well. And giving you a lot of throttle for a small amount of pedal movement would, on the face of it, give the illusion of having more power!

Dear Brian,

16 Jan. 00

My Liege (No. 16) is coming on, albeit slowly now, as I am still waiting for a body shell. The engine has been reconditioned by EMS of Worksop, it has been completely re-manufactured and now has the following:-

- Nitride hardened / reground crankshaft
- Rebored to +20 thou (862cc?)
- Unleaded and ported head
- Full dynamic balance
- Reground / uprated camshaft (15 thou more lift)
- Stiffer valve springs
- Block modified to take Mini studs (apparently the standard longer studs get corroded at the lower thread and bring alloy block metal out with them!)

On stripping down the donor car (C reg. Rialto), I was dismayed by the poor design of the exhaust manifold. I can see why it has to turn through almost right angles almost immediately (on such a narrow nosed car as the three wheeler) but it certainly doesn't help the gases flow if the manifold ports are a quarter of an inch smaller than the head ports! Any work done by Kitten owners in that department should see a great improvement in power and economy. *Yes indeed, we have touched on this matter on more than one occasion in the past, but it does bear repeating, the factory's build quality has been variable over the years, Ed.*

My engine will have twin SU carbs on separate alloy stubs, and a proper 4 branch exhaust. I intend to fit electronic ignition to the standard distributor. There will also be an electric fan and an oil cooler to be on the safe side. I may put anti-surge baffles in the sump as suggested by the book "750 Racer". I don't intend to rev mine to 9,000 though, as some obviously do! *Aye, you say that now, but if the balancing has been done properly, believe me, keeping it below 8,000 will require real willpower! Ed.*

I think the mods will be well worth it. I drove the factory Liege, and even though I was very impressed with it, it cried out for more power. (Perhaps I should have gone for the supercharged option?!?).

Thanks for all your hard work on the magazine, I always enjoy reading it.

Yours sincerely, Paul Wheatley – Shireoaks

Well Paul, thanks for keeping us up to date. I don't think I have heard of many Reliant crankshafts being nitrided. I had that done to my Jowett Javelin's shaft many years ago, it spent almost a week in the furnace, and it took me ages to polish the needles off the bearing surfaces. I suspect it should not have been in the furnace for quite so long! I have written to EMS, they had approached me about an advert some time ago, and I have asked, in view of the recent articles on cylinder head studs, just what the Mini ones they use are like. Anyway, it all sounds pretty good, do let us know how the project proceeds – do I need a "Liege Page" now I wonder?

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### **Sales and Wants**

For Sale :- Fox body parts. Everything except the floor pan. Van hardtop, rear tailgate, window, doors, screen, bonnet, all exterior panels. Tel George on 01946 813611 – Cumbria

For Sale :- A set of 5 wheels, complete with very good tyres, believed to be original Mini's with the stainless steel hub covers (*did Mini's ever have stainless hub caps ?*) anyway, any offer considered – ring Angie on 01674 673142 ( Montrose – north east Scotland )

For Sale :- Complete Kitten estate. Running till left front end collapse in August. £ 150 o.n.o. Bewdley Worcs. Tel :- 01299 403337 Please leave message. Mr. M. Nock

For Sale :- Kitten "V" reg saloon. Taxed and M.O.T., used daily. Spare engine & gearbox. £ 550 o.v.n.o. Phone for more details 01244 531536 Chester area

For Sale :- 1975 P registered Kitten estate. M.O.T. June 2000 tax just expired complete with as many spares as you can get in the car and then some. A very sound car in original condition. Needs head

gasket, but engine otherwise sound, i.e. excellent oil pressure £ 350 for a quick sale. Contact John on 0191 257 0053 or 0774 7614830.

For Sale :- Reliant Rebel estate car, chassis number E94/1180. No engine, and chassis badly corroded, but otherwise complete. Contact Alan Peck on 01892 655560 ( Fax and telephone ) ( East Sussex )

For Sale :- Tempest 850. Body Jig ( Includes new Fox chassis frame ) Wing and body moulds ( GRP ) Parts and assembly drawings. £ 500 Also :-

KITTEN KLEAROUT ! New parts :- Fan belts £ 2.00. Fox choke cable assy. £ 4.00. 7 off 750cc exhaust Valves £ 15.

2<sup>nd</sup> hand parts :- Kitten saloon windscreen & back window £ 10. 3 bumper rubbers £ 7.50. 2 steering column assys. with indicator switch £ 7.50 each. 3 steering wheels, £ 3 each. 1 front damper with spring, good for M.O.T. £ 10. Undamaged front grill / headlamp surround £ 10. Box of headlamp parts including 2 R/H dip light units with yellow bulbs, , 1 U.K. light unit, 3 plastic bowl assys. & 5 light unit clamping rings £ 20. Box of assorted parts including rear lamp assys, indicator switch, indicator light lenses etc. £ 10.

For all of the above, or more details, ring John Box on 01524 781841

For Sale :- For spares or repair, could be yours for as little as £ 50, and he will even help you break it where it sits if you like. Andrew Norman still has the blue Kitten saloon, and feels that it is time that a new future for the car was organised, one way or the other. Give him a ring at Nutley on 01825 713551 This is your last chance for this one, it will be scrapped otherwise.

For Sale :- 1976 Kitten Saloon seeks new home, unleaded head, new steering rack, set of original alloy wheels, new radiator. M.O.T till June 2000, Tax till May 2000. Ring Greg on 0181 503 2725 - North London

For Sale : 1968 Rebel estate. Needs an engine. Last MOT expired November 1999. Various spares thrown in 01323 722735 - Andrew Rideout Eastbourne

Wanted : Cobra Supa Slot 12" alloy wheel ( to take a 145/70 R 12 tyre ) for a Kitten with a disc brake conversion. Contact Sheila Sherwin 01403 891615.

Wanted :- A late model Kitten estate. Contact Jim Mitchell on 01556 504789 ( south Scotland )

Wanted :- Kitten estate Tow Bar. contact Peter Swan 01704 893966 Lancs.

Wanted :- Solex carb for a 600 Rebel ( a BZ 28 ? ) ring 0121 7839543

Wanted :- One ( or Two ) Dunlop or similar 10" alloy wheels. - I have four and punctures are a bind with a steel spare ! Tyres not needed, but wheel nuts desirable. Contact Jeremy Gibbins on 01286 673696 if you can help

## NOTES

The subject of Mewsletter back issues needs to be aired, unless I want to be tripping over this box for the rest of my life! It used to amaze me how many folk took up the offer of a full set when

joining, but as time goes by, yes yes, I know, more song titles ! the collection gets bigger, so does the cost of mailing them, and so each year about a fiver gets added to what I charge for the back issues. I seem to have reached a point however where they are no longer seen as good value, only two people took up the offer last year! (Compared to 15 to 20 or more folk a year till then)

On another front, John Pearce has been pressing me to get together with him and reproduce all the back issues in the A5 format, and offer them on CD. The A5 idea would reduce costs (use less paper) and so also save on postage. However, the drying up of sales of the back issues does make me wonder if rather than produce more, even in a more useful format, I should instead do a 'special offer' in an effort to both move some of my stock back issues, (save space) and raise some cash! (The main reason that the Register almost runs out of money each December, apart from that fact that it is not a profit making organisation, is that I carry far too much stuff in stock!!)

This gives me an opportunity to make the point that I do keep records of magazine mailings, and I am pretty sure, though do not have the time to look and see, that some of you may be owed a back issue or two, and if so, let me know, and I will rectify my shortcoming in that area. Also I think now might be the time to offer you any that you do not have (and were not entitled to) at just 50p each plus 50p p&p subject to a minimum order charge of £2.00 (for 3 editions, £3.00 for 5, £4.00 for 7 – any more than that the postage is getting too great, so let's leave it in the values & numbers mentioned. That is if you would like more than 7 editions, work out a number of parcels based on the above e.g. 12 editions would be a parcel of 5 and a parcel of 7 and would cost you £7.00 if you see what I am getting at).

Talk to you again in the summer, probably very late in June unless I get better organised with the Jowett Rally 2000 between now and then! I am considering asking for your help with the Jowett Rally 2000, and, if a certain insurance company take up the arrangement in time, and so I am into the next postage band, at their expense, I was considering including a couple of books of Jowett Raffle tickets, and asking very nicely if you would be so good as to either sell them for me, or buy them yourself. I will need to see what happens re postage, so it will be a last minute decision – "Wait and See" was an old Jowett slogan!

*Brian*

## NEWSLETTER 33 SUPPLEMENT

This is getting to be a habit, I would say a bad habit, but in the circumstances – where the magazine has been ready for some time, but is only getting printed now (20<sup>th</sup> March), it is useful to be able to include some late adverts, and talk to you nicely about these raffle tickets I mentioned at the end of the Mewsletter! After what I was saying in the mag about magazine back numbers, two of the new subscribers have this week taken up the offer!!

For Sale : Reliant Kitten Estate, Red, 1977 only 4 owners, complete and in good condition, runs well, no tax or mot. Could be used as a runabout or for spares. £100 ono. Phone 01284 787794 or 07747 625240. Suffolk area

For Sale :- 1983 Beige Fox van hard top. Engine & gearbox removed for new clutch plate ( included ) good simple summer project £150 buyer collects. Dave butler Cornwall 01736 350735.

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Wanted : Reliant Kitten Tow bracket, contact Andrew Marr on 01524 851590

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Right, the raffle ticket thing, a cheek I know, but as you know I am very involved in the Jowett Rally 2000, and I could really do with some help. The prizes are really quite good, and a pound spent on a book of tickets has to give a better chance of winning something than you do in the lottery! (There is also, not mentioned on the tickets, a weeks self catering holiday for two in the north of Scotland as one of the prizes) If you can sell them, or even buy them yourself, it would be much appreciated, and would let me get on with the business of organising the event with minimal distraction – which will then leave me the time to do our next Mewsletter, and that has to be important! You can either return them to me, or to John Johnstone, whose address is on the tickets. I will not be at all offended if you can't help here, but, as I explained in the magazine, Footman James were paying the extra postage, so it was not costing the Register anything extra to include a few books.

As I said, I will quite understand if you can't help (if you could just return the tickets in that case please – envelope enclosed) But it would be a great help, and much appreciated if you could – I won't make a habit of this, honest. The Scottish section of the Jowett Car Club have only hosted the rally three times, including this time, in 1978, 1990, and now 2000, so it will be a decade before I am so involved again – and by that time I will be able to claim that I am past it! (or at least have mastered the No word !!) Cheques should be made payable to "JCC Rally 2000" and returned to me c/o John Johnstone.

Right, that really is it for now. I sent reminder notices to almost 60 people at the end of February, and over 30 of them have since renewed their subscriptions. We have enjoyed 15 new subscribers since Christmas, so things are still moving along nicely.

Mind you, seeing the quality of the cover picture, I guess he won't want any of my pictures again, at least not until I get a digital camera! Well done John, keep up the good work.

Talk to you again towards the end of June, enjoy the longer nights, and grease those ball joints, please !

*Brian*

As ever, delays have let time past, and things have moved on: So

For Sale: - 1978 Kitten estate car, m.o.t. & tax for a couple of months. This car is a runner, with high mileage, (240,000, engine just done 120,000) used daily till last month. Well maintained. Has been with its current owner for 17 years, but his circumstances have changed, and the Kitten has to go. Contact Vincent Griffiths on 01785 814660 Stone in Staffordshire, offers around £250 for a quick sale.

Looking for a new home is a Kitten Saloon. This sounds like a real bargain, it had £500 spent on it for its last M.O.T., and has covered less than 20 miles since then ! Yours for he collecting – I believe that you will need a trailer. Talk to Richard Fallows on Derby on 01332 271057 during the day, or 01332 380006 of an evening.

~~~~~

I have just received the flyers for Footman James (March 29th) still, this is the March / April edition, so we are not far off the mark. So much for my hopes of getting this put behind me early in March!!

See these raffle tickets, I really will appreciate any help I can get selling them, but don't feel obliged, just please deal with them within a week if you would – even if it is only to return them unsold. I really need

to press ahead with the Jowett Rally 2000 plans, and some of them depend on availability of funds – if you don't buy / sell them, I will need to, and the sooner I know the position the better – thank you.

Just reading the other side of this over – I printed it two weeks ago! I realise that I have managed to get them to provide me with return envelopes, and so what I should have said was please return the tickets in the envelope provided – neat logo, don't you think? Thanks again, talk to you again after the Jowett Rally 2000.

Oh, while on the subject, if any of your good people happen to be within a few miles of Pitlochry that Saturday in particular, I am still short of Marshals for the scenic run, just give me a ring on 0141 8866117 if you can help. Equally well, you will be welcome to come along and see us in the field on the Sunday, it will be well sign-posted, and advertised in local shops.

Oh how I look forward to our next magazine (which is already 10 pages long !!)