

Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER Forty-One

July/August 2001



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. 41

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That Vantique magic has me in its spell, that old Box genius that he weaves so well, that lively engine up and down the gears, the burbling exhaust ringing in my ears - O.K. its not perfect, but it is a while since I've treated you to my musical whimsy is it not? This time our front cover features another, yes another of John Box's vehicles, well it's really Michael Bentley's, you know? The one that adorned the front cover of the Christmas edition - yes Michael had it painted. Didn't he do well? As to the John Box connection with another cover picture, what I had forgotten was, that the Fox you saw last time, was in fact John's workhorse for a number of years, indeed it used to tow Fox chassis all over the place, well from Tamworth to Burton in Kendal mainly!

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 recommended by our readers, and do not necessarily have the approval 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.

Welcome to the summer edition. By now we will have forgotten about rear screen heaters that do not work, de-misting systems that are less than perfect, and will be enjoying the milder weather, won't we?

Moira's wee red Kitten suffered a gearbox failure in July, which was a bit unfortunate, but these things happen. Lack of oil I think, I'll possibly know more by the time you read this.

So I was faced with the question, who do I ask to change it for me? Or do I attempt it myself? I mean I know exactly what to do, just not as able as I used to be. Then again there are such things as garages, but the average quote, yes, I asked, was about £200 - yes, just to fit a gearbox, which I would be supplying. Well I am afraid that £200 is such a major part of this households annual motoring budget that it needs referring to the steering committee, and they only meet once in a while, so ..

Anyway, enough of my car situations, the Mewsletter has again proved to be too small, it is now the 8th of July, and this edition is already over 9,000 words long, full up in fact. Yet there are four or five headings which have nothing in them at the moment! What am I to do? Delete the more interesting - I think - part of my Rebel story? Make the mag bigger or more frequent? I don't want to make it more frequent because I am in no doubt that it would then become a millstone I can well do without. Making it larger is a possibility, over the years the number of A4 sheets in an edition has varied quite a bit, but there are cost implications both in production and distribution - leave it with me. More decisions...

My desk was getting me down recently, a summer cold thing had kept Moira and I out of sorts for the better part of a week, and I decided that enough was enough - no I didn't actually sweep the lot off the desk into a box, (as I have been known to do in the past) I actually counted the papers as I put them in the box, just over 170 if you don't count stapled together sheets individually. Well, that was very early on Friday morning, it is now Sunday evening, I have not had a lot of sleep, but the box is empty, many letters have been written, cheques too I am afraid, and the Thistle Branch of the R.O.C.'s summer magazine finished as well! Your turn next time John! (Johnston).

Then again, if I could get it to you early in August, those of you who I know were meaning to make a contribution might feel spurred into action, and that would mean more from you and less from me the next time, now there's a thought! Quick call to John about the covers, and we're off!

REBEL ROUND UP

I was asked the other month what a Rebel saloon was worth these days by an owner who had noted that the Miller's Price Guide from the early '90's values a saloon at £2,200 - does this mean that they are worth nearer £2,500 these days, and estates being more sought after than saloons, would they be worth £3,000 yet?

Well, I know that if you came to my door with £3,000 I would be very hesitant about parting with my Rebel estate. I simply do not have the physical ability to get another one up to that standard, and the cost of having a Classic Vehicle Restorer bring one up to that standard would I know be a lot more than £3,000, twice that at least I should imagine. So, just what is a good Rebel worth?

Well, that all depends on whether you are talking replacement value, or market value. Jim Spence, whose somewhat modified Rebel saloon is, he tells me, one of the most rewarding vehicles to drive that he has ever owned, and yes the 115 B.H.P. that the fuel injected Vauxhall engine puts out, does make it a very relaxed vehicle to drive. The fact is that with so few of them being built, not many folk have had the experience. They really are wonderful wee cars, much roomier than the Kitten, a lot

easier to look after, and, even with about 30 B.H.P., a delight to drive, though I will be the first to admit that even the installation of a good 850 engine transforms the car.

FOXES' DEN

Not a lot in here this time, but I do know that David Leslie has had new front struts made for his Fox, machined from the solid I believe he said! Anyway, his man is prepared to make more, so let me know if you are interested and I'll put you in touch.

Brian

Operation Phoenix - Part Two

There is much history to this story, which I did bore you with in the last edition. As you know, by the year 2000 I had a nice Rebel estate car with a galvanised chassis on the road, which left me with the 'project car' which I was never going to finish. So when I was approached late that year by Ian Johnston, who was looking for a Rebel estate car, a deal was eventually struck, a deal which included the merging of the good Rebel estate body with the refurbished chassis as part of the delivery operation. A task I volunteered to organise as an incentive to help clinch the deal. Why I can't ever just sell a car I don't know, but it seemed like a good way to both move the project to a new custodian, and at the same time get it well ahead, and so we did, with a lot of planning, and a lot help from some good friends.

That weekend!

So, the scene was set. Ian had rung me up to discuss Rebels - Rebel estates in particular. His parents had had an early Rebel saloon, and much later a Kitten, but his fondest memories were of a Rebel estate his mother had had. OGB 757M it had been, and oddly enough my brother Alan owned it a while ago, before passing it on to me.

Anyway, Ian arranged a day with me to go and look at the car, and the chassis. I offered him the choice of travelling in a nice warm and quiet Citroen, it was February after all, and we did have 140 odd miles to cover that afternoon, but no, he wanted to travel in a Rebel for the first time in a while, so the Rebel it was.

I met him in Glasgow, just off great Western Road at 12:30, and we left his Triumph Herald on its own for a few hours. Off to pick up the motorway, and headed by way of Stirling to Crieff where we saw the body hiding under a vine in my friend's back garden there. The journey took almost an hour, and the inspection about two minutes!

We collected the Triumph, home to Renfrew for a coffee, and round to the lock-up for an inspection of the, almost buried, refurbished chassis. As with the body it only took a glance for its condition to be obvious, and a price was agreed.

Ian told me that he was generally off every other weekend, and that he stopped on a Thursday evening till the following week. He had, strangely enough, leapt at my offer of the possibility of having the body and good chassis mated as part of the delivery operation - surprise surprise!

I checked with a few friends, and it would indeed be possible to tie it all together over a Friday and Saturday, so I wrote to Ian making him aware of the options, and heard nothing for three weeks.

Then, just as I was losing hope, Ian got in touch to say that he had been away, and was keen to proceed, the weekends of the 16th / 17th or 23rd / 24th of March being good for him. He also confirmed that he was keen to buy John Johnstone's Rebel saloon, which I had told him was also for sale.

Who should I contact first? I wrote a letter to about a dozen people, and rang Mike Cowie to see if his wee trailer might be available, which it was - thanks Mike. Checked with Phil, at whose home we would be carrying out the body transplant, (Phil has a certain expertise in that field, not to say a method of working which gets things done quickly) and that was O.K for the Saturday.

The main problem was that I did not know just what was involved in collecting the Rebel from Crieff. It had sat there for the better part of a decade, and had since had two or three cars abandoned in the drive, blocking it in. I did not know how many of these cars we would have to move, two certainly. I did not know if their tyres held air, or if the wheels were free to turn, all manner of potential problems. Also it was possible that one or more of these cars might want disposing of, and two of them were big heavy estate cars.

At the other end, we did know exactly what was involved in removing a Rebel body from its chassis, we have not inconsiderable experience of such tasks. And while nuts and bolts can be rusty, there are only so many of them - or so we thought!

So, the plan had to be flexible, and involve plenty of people, so that if we had to manhandle the cars, that would be possible. I reckoned on half a dozen folk as being the desired number, more would be better, remembering that I would only be doing the driving, and taking the pictures.

Phil's house, where the transplant was to take place, is 27 miles from Renfrew, and so it was going to take me, and a helper or two, about three hours to drive with the trailer from Phil's place, to Renfrew, load the good chassis, and get it back down to Phil's. Not a big problem, just use two smaller teams. But then again, If I could get the chassis nearer to Phil's before Saturday, that might be a good idea, and save a couple of hours on the Saturday morning.

Things worked out well, I had a call on the Friday, inviting me to come in and sign the new missive, and collect the keys, to a 'new' lock-up which the Council were moving me to. I am deeply indebted to George Anderson and John Johnstone for their help that day. George completely cleared the Rebel chassis, and to prove the point, rolled it outside for the first time in a couple of years or more, and I had the temporary use of a 'spare' lock up for two weeks.

The Rebel chassis had no steering, it did have suspension and wheels, but no track rods, drag link or steering box. When George came walking out of the lock-up with a grin like a Cheshire cat on his face, clutching a Kitten anti-roll bar, I said to him " No George, that belongs to a Kitten", and all he said was "Got any tie wraps?" (a tie wrap is what we call these plastic things which are straight, but loop round and through a small rectangular hole they have in one end, and then tighten quickly, locking automatically in the process - the bigger ones make good handcuffs I believe!) Well, that puzzled me more than a little, till I realised what he was thinking, it's strange how a new mind on a problem, particularly one that can't tell a Kitten bit from a Rebel bit, brings fresh ideas. All we needed were a couple of small blocks of timber and two tie wraps, and we had steering! Well, we had the front wheels linked in a manner that if you turned one, the other turned the same way - simple idea, I'd never have thought of because I was thinking - "that's a Kitten bit"!

John returned the following day and put a fresh coat of paint on the inside walls of the "new" lock-up to freshen them up a bit, and a new design of shelves was agreed with Mike Black, another friend and ex-kitten owner from Lochwinnoch.

So, the new plan became to effectively swap the Rebel project for some new shelves and plastic storage boxes in which to keep all the "useful" Reliant bits I have collected over the past couple of decades, and to have them catalogued, and so be able to easily find them when needed in the future ! Also to be able to get a car in the lock-up for the first time in years!!

It was by now the 14th of March, and the big weekend was approaching fast. More responses to my letter had arrived, Roger Brodie was one of the volunteers. Roger was on holiday that week, and happens to live in Kilwinning, just 3 and a half miles from Phil's place outside Stevenston. So, I spoke nicely to Roger, and he agreed not only to me keeping the chassis on the trailer at his house overnight, but also to give up part of his Thursday, as well as all of his Friday, to help me get ahead.

The idea was to collect the trailer on the Thursday, and to use it to take the chassis to his place. Like all good ideas it was interrupted by a friend of mine who asked me to take a Rialto for an M.O.T. test for him - O.K., no problem there. I'll just pick Roger up, come to Paisley and collect the Rialto, Roger can drive the Citroen, and follow me through the Clyde tunnel, to the M.O.T. station, and then we can carry on to Killlearn to collect the trailer, picking the Rialto up on the way back, no problem.

So, leave home, drive to Kilwinning, collect Roger, drive to Renfrew, fill the Citroen with fuel, I had quoted Ian £35 for delivery of the 'project', and was more than a little curious to know just what it would actually cost me! The Rialto was in fact in Renfrew, so that was fine, collect it too, and off to Whiteinch, where the M.O.T. testing station is. Drop the Rialto off, and Roger says "that clutch it terrible", now so it was, the Rialto's clutch was slipping quite badly, but I was very impressed that he had noticed - well, no, in fact he hadn't noticed, it was the Citroen's clutch he was complaining about! That cheered me up a bit, as I have always had bother with it, and put it down to my bad leg. However things had developed since I had last driven the Citroen, all of 20 minutes previously! The clutch would not disengage at all! Right, no problem, I can drive without a clutch. We are only half a mile from a friends house, I'll call in there and look up my Citroen garage's 'phone number in the book, and give them a ring. Better lift the bonnet and have a look. Bonnet up, oops, the cable is fine, but the crank it pulls on, which pivots on a bolt that screws into a hole in the crankcase, is hanging loose, the bolt having sheared flush with the crankcase! I guessed that the R.A.C. man would not be able to fix that at the roadside, so back to plan A; phone the expert!

Maurice was not in, no problem, it is only a few hundred yards from there to Danes Drive, and who lives there? None other than Douglas Gordon, the man who owned the very car we were going to move from Crieff the following day, his wife ran that car for 14 years before passing it on to me a bit over 10 years ago now! It seemed only appropriate that he should be involved in some way with the operation!

Well, I really don't know what it is about Thursday mornings, but he was not in either! This was getting us nowhere, so I decided to go and collect the trailer anyway. Off we went up through Anniesland cross, the most complicated road junction in Scotland, who needs a clutch anyway?

Then I thought, "How am I going to back gently up to the trailer without being able to disengage the clutch?" Never mind that, how am I going to get down that narrow lane at the garage with the trailer on the back, and no clutch, never mind reverse it out! Too difficult, even for a man of my talents. Stop! 'phone Moira and get the garage telephone number, ring them, Graham is not in, out on a breakdown, but back at two. They had met this problem before, knew exactly what I was talking about, had the

necessary parts in stock, but need the man to drill out the old bolt, and the radiator will need to come out. Oh dear, this is getting to sound like a very expensive bolt!

O.K., might as well get that trailer anyway, as we've got a couple of hours before the man gets back, so turn again, all U turns on a fairly busy main road without a clutch, well this time I was not so lucky, a car came round the bend a bit quickly, it was a 30 limit, but not everyone adheres to that, and this chap certainly didn't, so I had to more than dab the brake, and interrupt my turn, I was in second gear, and even that wonderful Peugeot engine just couldn't pull away again on a slight incline from 700 rpm in second, the resulting jolting must have looked comical, there I was, trying to explain to Roger that I didn't - want - to - stall - it - in - the - middle - of the - road - so - close - to a - bend ! Boy was it a relief when I finally pressed the brake again to put an end to that ordeal. Talk about Kangaroo petrol, Kangaroo diesel is a lot more violent I can tell you !

So, the old brain cells having been sloshed about in the cranium, I saw sense and did it again, another U turn, without the help of Australian marsupials this time, and abandoned the trailer idea.

Back to Renfrew, for a coffee and a bite to eat, then Roger took the Kitten over while I dropped the Citroen off for repair, and we collected the Rialto on the way back before I ran Roger home in the Kitten. Not a great day! 83 miles in the Citroen, almost as many in the Kitten, and short of an M.O.T. for a friend, which would only have involved 10 miles on its own, not a lot to show for the day. A gloriously sunny day mind you.

Credit where it is due, 'my man' (Graham is one of the few 'mechanics' I know, who has a degree in engineering!) did fix the Citroen that afternoon, a mere £60, and that included new antifreeze, which was really due for a change, as it was over three years old. And we were ready for the off again on the Friday morning.

This time I met Roger at Lochwinnoch, about halfway between his place and mine. I'd love to know how he managed that - we had arranged to meet there at 10 past 7, and I arrived three minutes early - I always like to be punctual. Then Roger turns into the car park just spot on 10 past, how do you manage such precise timing Roger? We left his car in the hotel carp ark there, and came back to Renfrew to meet John Johnstone at 7:30am. Though the 83 miles the Citroen had covered since I had filled it with fuel the previous day were really abortive, I felt that they still related to this trip, so I made a note of that, and reset the trip recorder. We made it to Renfrew 4 minutes early, and John was waiting for us.

We had 6 folk promised at Crieff, this in spite of Ian Johnston having to call off at the last minute due to unexpected work commitments. We called in at Mike Cowie's workshop just to say hello, and picked the trailer up from his house on the way. We passed the Little Chef on the A9 just above Dunblane where we had originally planned to meet up with Ian, a minute ahead of schedule, in glorious sunshine, and, because we were not stopping, were well ahead of time arriving at Crieff.

The guys, John and Roger, were keen to get started, so I let them, and by the time Ken and Mark arrived, the operation was well under way. The other John, the one who lives in Crieff, was just getting over the worst dose of flu he can ever remember, and so we had assumed that he would be of no help at all, but he was in the event well enough recovered to assist us, and to cut a long story short a bit, yes really! We had the Rebel loaded on the trailer ready to leave by 12:20, having tidied a major part of his drive, and taken with us 8 large bags of 'rubbish' and started a bonfire of garden waste. I had never before realised what a pyromaniac John Johnstone was, and I've known him most of my life!

There was the one groan, when John suggested that the Rebel body was in such good condition because the vine that had been covering it all these years had protected it, and I couldn't resist the temptation to ask if that was what they call "divine" intervention?!!

I did feel a bit guilty at having dragged Ken over from Dalgety Bay, and Mark from St Andrews, (Mark Hayton also runs a Rebel) in the event we could have managed without them, but I didn't know that at the time, and it was a whole lot easier, not to say quicker, with them there, thanks guys.

At this point we were well ahead of schedule, like about 3 or 4 hours ahead! This in spite of being a couple of bodies down, with Ian not being able to make it, and Alex Hellier, also from Crieff, assuming that it would have been an all day task, saving himself up for the afternoon, and so missing us altogether!

The sun was splitting the skies, and we set off for home. The one difficulty I did have was that with no engine or gearbox in the car, the trailer was in fact tail heavy, and so we had to drive at less than 50 M.P.H. the whole way - it uses less fuel that way!

At some point during the day, the bright idea of taking the car on the trailer to Roger's came up, and as Roger has an 8 by 4 foot trailer of his own, he suggested that I might care to leave the car on the trailer at his place for the night, and use his trailer to bring the chassis down the following morning, just the original plan in reverse really. So that's what we did. Though of course it was not quite that straight forward.

Roger had had a 'spare' Ford Granada in his garage for some time, and the local scrap man has been promising to come and take it away for some days. When we got there with the Rebel on the trailer, the Granada was still in the garage. So we elected to put the trailer on the patio, alongside the garage. It was quite tight, so the guys convinced me to un-hitch the trailer, and push it onto the patio. Now there is a small kerb involved, just about 40mm, an inch and a half to you, and we sort of decided to approach it at an angle, I don't know that we actually decided anything of the sort, but that is the way it happened. Unfortunately I felt obliged to try and help, I may have a bit of difficulty standing up these days, but I can lean on things! And I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. When the one trailer wheel caught the step, the trailer swung violently, and the jockey wheel caught my right ankle, and the chassis of the trailer hit me on the back of my right leg, no I didn't fall - I was pushed!

Yes, you guessed, the scrap man came and took the Granada away while we were having coffee and tending my wounds! (Its absence 10 minutes earlier would have let me back the trailer straight into the garage!) I still had the bruises a week later!

Roger kindly agreed to come back to Renfrew with John and I, to help load the chassis, and then John took him back to Lochwinnoch to collect his car, so I was the first of that group to finish that day, thanks chaps.

Total mileage today, exactly 200!

The chassis on the trailer fitted inside the 'new' lock-up nicely, and so all I had to do the following morning was collect it, and John came down at 8 o'clock to help me with that.

We arrived at Phil's at 10 past 9, and unloaded the chassis, and associated bits, like the axle which we had removed to make loading it simpler, and left Phil with it while we returned Roger's trailer, and collected the car.

We were back by 20 to 10, and Phil and John got stuck in. I had suggested to Ian that he might have met us at my place and followed us down, but he reckoned he could find his way O.K. In the event it was about 11:00 before he arrived, and we had to then go in search of a builders merchant's as he had not had a chance to get the flash band we were needing to separate the body from the chassis during the assembly process. By the time we had returned, Jim Spence and Robert Fairfoull had arrived, and Ursula, Phil's wife, had kindly made up the rolls I had brought down. (No I wasn't being lazy, I had had Moira make up the rolls for the Friday team on the Thursday night, but by the time I got home on Friday, the bakers was long shut, and so I only managed to buy the Saturday rolls at 7:45 on the Saturday morning, and there wasn't time to make them up before I had to get away - so there!) In the event the job was going so well, in spite of a cold wind, that the team decided to finish the job before lunch.

Oh, while it is fresh in my mind, the flash band, a tarry self adhesive builder's product, is, I believe, an ideal medium to use to separate the steel chassis from the fibreglass body. It is soft and sticky, won't absorb moisture, and helps sound deadening while at the same time preventing rubbing between the body and the chassis. It is not however, a product that you should consider using to separate a galvanised chassis from the body, something to do with an un-desirable chemical reaction between tar and zinc. Not something I would have considered, but a fact nonetheless I am reliably informed. You have been warned!

There was a bit of a delay, a situation I should have thought of but didn't. You remember a couple of pages back I was boasting about how experienced we are at removing Rebel bodies? Well, I forgot, you might also remember that I mentioned Douglas and Margaret Gordon, whose car this was for 14 years, did I mention that they had two daughters? Well, Claire and Laura were very young at that time, and so Douglas had very securely fitted rear seat belts, and do you know, it took almost as long to un-do these 8 nuts and bolts as all the rest of the Reliant's body securing bolts put together!

And yes, in spite of my supervision, we forgot to disconnect the handbrake cable, and so it had to be cut at the end, as there was not a lot of time with four guys holding the body up!

In true gentlemanly fashion, Phil even made the time to pressure wash the Rebel's body before we left, to remove the worst of the traces of that vine!

We did take some pictures, but it was very bright, and a lot of it in the shade, so they are not the best of photographs I'm afraid.

We were away from Phil's at 2:18, having eaten well. Ursula makes lovely cakes, so I'm told - I'm on a diet you see, and so can't offer a personal opinion, but the way they vanished off that plate, I could tell! Jim Spence came with John and I, and we headed off, skirting round Ayr, and south on the Loch Ken road to Old Bridge of Urr, where the Rebel's new home is to be. Ian went on ahead to put the kettle on.

We arrived there about 4:30, and unloaded the car, sorted out the business side of things over a coffee, (no milk, Ian having been working away from home all week, and I knew that, so should have been better organised - but you never seem to get everything just spot on, do you?) and were on our way again by 6:00. We had left Jim's car near Prestwick Airport. So we dropped him off there on the way back to Neilston.

That was the only bit of bad planning that day. John had left his car at my house in Renfrew, so it meant that he had to get down to Renfrew to collect it on the Sunday morning, but Judith dropped him off on her way to Church, so no problem there.

READERS LETTERS

Dear Brian,

I gave LBY 85P to the Liege man last year. I couldn't bear to scrap it, so maybe it will live again as a Liege. Now I am Kittenless! Could you advertise the remaining set of alloy wheels for me please.

Thanks and best wishes - Greg Savage - London

Dear Brian,

7th May 2001

Regarding your request for colour combinations of Reliant Kittens from 1976. I have amongst my brochures for year 1977 a price list and extras etc plus colour schemes. I enclose a photocopy of these for your use. Also I will mention whilst writing I have used a rear brake conversion using a Metro MKI back plates, these will fit, despite what people might say (I have done this modification on my Kitten) and they do work are a very cheap alternative, as they bolt straight on.

The little car is running very well and the more I use it the more I enjoy it.

Bye for now and happy Kittenning, Denis Jackson - Hull

Thanks for that Denis, I was very tempted to just copy the price list into the mag, but by the time it was reduced, I know that I for one would not be able to read the size of print! For the record on the 18th of July 1977 a Kitten Saloon cost £1670.76, a DL saloon £2138.76 a Kitten estate £1771.38 and the DL estate £2251.08 with the van coming in at just £ 1922.40. All these prices include car tax and v.a.t.! As Denis said the list went on to include the combinations of body and trim colour that were offered and these are as follows :-

Vehicle colour Trim colour Vehicle colour Trim colour

Desert tan Black April Yellow Tan

Turquoise Black Artic White Tan

Venetian Blue Black Tropic Green Tan

London Red Black Caramel Tan

Virginia Brown Tan

And the Kitten Van had black trim in all vehicles. So now you know -

Thanks Denis.

As you know I have been known to include within these hallowed pages the odd article not fully associated with our beloved wee Reliants, and, as I am sure I have also mentioned to you in the past, Dick Goodall writes to me more often than most of you. Dick often includes with each letter a thought for the day, and Moira and I often have a good laugh. Having noted my beloved's comment about the lack of laughter in some recent editions I thought the following words from Dick might in some small way redress the balance for a few lines at least:-

Are you lonely?

Work on your own?

Hate making decisions?

Rather talk about it than do it?

Hold a meeting!

You can get to see other people.

Feel important and impress your colleagues.

Offload decisions - sleep in peace.

Write and display volumes of meaningless rhetoric.

Bore people out of their minds.

And all this in work time!

Meetings

The practical alternative to work!

I have to say that after reading the first few lines I did wonder if he was having a go at me! Then on Saturday July 8th I had through the letterbox, along with a few other pieces of mail, an s.a.e. from Andy Morgan, also in the envelope was a scanned picture of one of his Rebel saloons body sitting on the ground behind it's chassis, with the caption "Why me?" written forlornly below it . Well I promptly answered "Why not you!". What Andy's request did bring to light is just how much more work I need to do. He wanted my list of Rebel parts, and of course what I have is a list of all parts - how did those Morris Minor tail-lights get in there anyway? One day I'll find time to go through it all again, the list I mean. Then I will identify just which bits are Rebel and which Kitten, though there is a colour coding system, which while not religiously followed, gives a good clue - More work!

Back to our friend Dick Goodall, as you know Dick is a frequent correspondent, Moira often asks why I don't use more of his stuff, save you all from some of my stuff I suppose, so here we go:-

Dear Brian & Moira,

30th June 2001

The 'A team have done it again Somehow I had felt lately that there was something vital missing from my miserable existence. What could it be? After all it's summer, or what passes for that season these days. Then our lady postie arrived, a local character with a definite view of things which, while irrelevant, can be quite refreshing in its honesty.

I opened the envelope she left.. And I had a new Mewsletter to read! Life returned to my frozen features. The 40th issue no less, at the age at which for us mortals life supposedly begins (?) I wonder for how many hours in total over the years our enthusiastic and estimable Editor has sat and pecked away at the keys to give us all 'the crack'? Lots of interest as usual, and the Fox pick-up was fascinating. One day, ah one day, perhaps the historical brochure with pictures and info on all the 4 wheeled models

Spyder. The 356 follows the time honoured method of taking a dead Beetle and replacing the body with a GRP replica. In our case we have modified the floor pan considerably to make the finished item stronger than the original kits to make them safe in today's traffic.

The 550 uses a purpose made space-frame chassis, very similar to the original Porsche (550A), and is much more of a replica than the speedster. All bodies are GRP of course.

Why do you want to hear all this I hear you asking? - Well, this brings me to my interest in Kittens. I have been a Scimitar owner on and off (currently 'on') for the past 20 years or so... I've had my share of V8 powered devices - including one drag racing machine with an 8 litre Ford V8 pumping out 850 bhp with nitrous oxide assist! When I was building the drag car I was amazed at just how strong the rolling chassis was - and the fact that it was crying out for a body swap (Cobra - Viper etc.) A donor car with a 'proper' chassis is not only a useful basis to start from, but with today's SVA etc is almost essential.

By pure coincidence, back in the early '80's, I was involved with the design and manufacture of a mid-engined sports car chassis to replace the ubiquitous 'Beetle' floor pan for kits. It just so happened that on the same trading estate where we were based - were a group of people making chassis and GRP parts for a certain 'Cipher' project!! This little car seriously impressed me - and when eventually Reliant brought out their own mini sports car - I was stunned at the decision to make that and not the Cipher - Ah well, however, the various denuded Kittens and the like stuck in my mind as potential donor material. I note in your Register profile that you say 'one or two Ciphers may have been built from kits' - well I can personally attest to the fact that there was at least one!!

That brings me more or less up to date - 2 years ago in fact when I came across the Tempest at the NEC show in Birmingham. After a long chat, I decided that we (Legend) would want to be involved in the project as an agent, distributor, whatever. The project stalled for a while and we lost interest as our Spyder was taking up all of our time anyway. My interest was rekindled when I learned of a BMW 328 Roadster look alike (not replica) based on a Scimitar chassis. (So where does the Kitten come in?) We had to travel up to Macclesfield to see the car, and it just so happened that in my then current Scimitar Club magazine there was a Kitten for sale not 20 miles from where we were going. A deal was struck over the phone, and the Kitten duly collected on the way back. The 75-mile journey only served to make us more aware what a terrific little package the Kitten was. Speeds of 80+ mph were reached, and we were truly amazed at the levels of road holding and handling. We weren't quite so impressed by the way the passenger door flapped around - the inner and outer skins having delaminated!

So it was out with the old sketches and drawings from some 15 years ago, and time to have a deeper look at what the Kitten had to offer. I had already drawn up a sort of mini Renault Spider open fun car in the early 80's that was to have a motorcycle power unit - on checking the dimensions - it was virtually identical to the Kitten chassis floor pan specs - spooky or what! in fact the Kitten dimensions are virtually $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Renault Spider!

Almost at the same time as this was being contemplated, Legend's German agent was enquiring about a low cost replica based on a true chassis donor car. The little fun car was not what he had in mind - more of a traditional 'English' sports car. Out came the reference books and the tape measure - hey presto - Frogeye Sprite, virtually the same dimensionally - and again very coincidentally - virtually the same spec, bhp, weight, wheelbase, track - even the size of the fuel tank and the final drive ratio as the Kitten.

Well, things are well in hand for the prototype and I am now at the stage where the combined knowledge of the Register could prove invaluable! Already we are being asked for upgrade options such as disc front brakes - larger engines - motorcycle engines etc. etc.

So, if any Register member feels they can contribute some knowledge on any of the above - or indeed ANYTHING that they feel would be of use, I will be happy to hear from them at some stage, I will also be requiring another dead Kitten - a rolling chassis would be fine. Preferably in the Midlands area, and preferably very cheap.

If there is sufficient interest in the project I will keep members informed of the progress.

Best regards, Terry Sands

Yes Terry, please keep us informed - Ed.

From the In Tray

Events we are invited to this time include:- The Classic and Kit car show on Sunday 14th October at Charm Park Showground, Wykeham, Nr. Scarborough North Yorkshire. Booking would be on a club basis, but within that they seem to be flexible, permitting individual bookings as well as club entries. Tel / Fax 01723 864505 for details if you are interested. Entry for car, driver and first passenger is free if booking is made by the end of August, so move it if you are interested.

GETTING TECHNICAL

Poor Heater / Demister performance

When working correctly, the Kitten has a very good heater. Air from the heater blower trunking enters the heater unit via the bulkhead hole. If the heater is set to cold the air blows straight through to the outlet ducts. When set to hot, the air-mixing valve (visible through the bulkhead hole) is fully raised, causing the air to be sent down through the heater core to the outlet ducts. At a position midway between these two, some of the air will flow over the valve, and some through the heater.

As the air prefers the path straight out, to get any flow through the heater, the valve must be nearer the fully raised (hot) position. The temperature control lever is not therefore a linear scale, and must be set about three quarters of the way towards the hot position for any appreciable heat output at all to the demisters.

However, on some Kittens the lever can't reach its upper 'click' stop, because it fouls the front escutcheon as the heater has been mounted too high up. It is sometimes not possible to lower the heater sufficiently as it usually sits on the bodywork floor above the gearbox. The length of the connecting rod could be adjusted to overcome this, but the valve would then not shut in summer, and you would get too hot! It is unlikely that the valve seals will have failed.

The solution is to lower the control lever assembly. Accuracy is very important, so first measure the existing position - Move the left hand air distribution lever to the screen click stop position. The top and bottom of the lever should match the top and bottom of the 'S' in the screen. If they match the controls are set up correctly and the following does not apply. If however, the lever is above the lettering, the control lever assembly will need to be lowered by the difference between the base of the lever and the letter 'S'. - This difference is the measurement required.

Remove the centre console assembly and scribe a line on the front of the heater box, along the top edge of the control lever assembly. Remove all the self-tapping screws securing the lever assembly.

Lower it by the measurement made above, re-drill the screw holes (this is a hollow cavity and you shouldn't go through the heater core) and remount the assembly at the correct height. It may now be necessary to adjust the length of both link rods to ensure the valves move by their full amount. This can be confirmed by moving both levers to their top and bottom click stops. Replace the consul and enjoy the heat!

In summer, coldest air can be obtained by moving the distribution lever to 'off' as well as setting the temperature lever to 'cold' as off in this instance also seals the heater unit at the bottom.

Yours, Graeme Shaw - Glossop 26th May 2001

Handbrake Horrors

On a gentle hill I stopped at temporary traffic lights, pulled the handbrake lever, as you do, and it went vertical without any braking effect whatsoever!

Having reached home safely, I put the rear of the Kitten up on ramps and looked for the cause. No, the handbrake cable had not snapped. But where the outer cable locates on the bracket on the back axle tube the cable ferrule had slipped through the bracket designed to locate it. Odd? Having wangled the cable out I looked at the bracket to find that the hole had worn oversize and was now 1/2" instead of 3/8" which is supposed to be. The cure was a modified plain steel washer for a 3/8" diameter bolt. Cut a 3/32" slot through it, file a 5/16" flat, and it fitted snugly under the ferrule shoulder. I had to slacken off the handbrake cable first, awkward job. Then I modified the other side before that also gave way. Now to adjust the handbrake cable. Finally the cable was greased while the car was elevated. Cost? 2 x plain washers from stock. Large sigh of relief.

TTFN Dick Goodall

Dick was good enough to include a drawing, but as you know sketches and drawings are not my forte, one day I'll graduate to a scanner, and learn how to use it..

Sales and Wants

For Sale :- Fox passenger seat, offers @ £10 contact Joe on 0161 4830692 also a pair of mint condition two tone blue bucket seats for £25 each, buyer collects.

For Sale :- New Reliant Rebel fuel tank. £65 Also 1968 Rebel engine, smoking, needs recon £30. Contact Mr. T. Edwards at Arofsa North Wales - check if he wants his phone no in the advert, or the address?

For Sale :- Fox stainless steel standard spec (very quiet) exhaust system £40 o.n.o. buyer collects from Joe 0161 4830692, Stockport.

For Sale :- A set of 4 original Kitten alloy wheels. No reasonable offer refused. Ring Greg Savage on 0208 503 2725 Buyer collects - London

For Sale :- Rebel saloon rear road springs, 1 pair, brand new, complete with bushes - contact Michael Bentley on 01969 623974

For Sale :- A very tidy 1976 Reliant Kitten Pick-up, only 37,000 miles from new. Yours for just £450. Contact Don Flight on 01635 42104 fax & phone, or e-mail him on don.flight@tinyonline.co.uk Newbury

For Sale :- The Hallam Kitten, yes Phil has finally discovered what we Rebel owners knew all the time ! So he is selling the Kitten and keeping the Rebel. The details of this extensively modified Kitten's body off rebuild was well documented within these pages about 8 years ago. Only 48,000 miles covered since rebuild completed. It can be yours for a mere £900, call the man on 01294 462089 - Ayrshire.

For Sale :- Reliant Rebel saloon for spares or repair Talk to Colin on 0161 962 3278 Manchester area

For Sale :- Kitten estate, white, 1976, perfect running order, much spent by current owners inc. total interior revamp, Suzuki seats, new exhaust, 10 months MOT, 4 Months Tax, body good, must be seen. Regretfully for sale at £400. Tel 01243 551544 Evenings - West Sussex.

For Sale :- A kitten estate, with a saloon for spares thrown in, and an extra spare engine plus other parts. Contact Helen Boggust on 02392 585160. Gosport Hants.

Wanted :- Rebel saloon, MOT preferred, contact Nick on 01908 640129

Wanted :- Fox front grill in good condition, contact Bruce Emery on 01702 421094

Wanted :- Kitten lower ball joints, secondhand but serviceable, contact Mark on 01723 513080

NOTES

It does occur to me that from time to time I discover bits of paper lying on my desk, not filed or binned, because I had intended to do something about them, in this instance it is a colour copy of Reliant Kitten saloon and estate colours that were available, you may recall that we mentioned them an edition and two ago. Well Tony Smith was good enough to take the time and trouble to arrange to have his list colour copied and sent to me with a covering note. Tony, thanks for your effort support and interest, I meant to write at the time, but I am sure you know how it is. Thanks again.

Right, I am on top of the paperwork at the moment - remind me of that when I next complain about it please. I had this situation recently, after a lethargic few weeks, when I would open the office door and look in, and I am sure that I could hear the piles of paper giggling to themselves, saying something like "here he is again, we'll see to it that he can't get near the keyboard, quick, shuffle about a bit so he can't find any of us!"

Well, as you will be aware from my bit at the beginning, I sorted them out - all it needs is a positive mental attitude, a strong will - and I am still in charge! It's OK, I've just looked - no men in white coats yet!

So, having been a couple of weeks later with the last edition than I had intended thanks to the Royal Mail, I decided to try and get this one out on time and catch up a bit. Talk to you again in October!

Brian

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER - Mag 41 Extra!

Right, a couple or three things, late adverts and a correction really:

Trevor Edwards, the advert in the mag where I was not sure if it was the address or telephone number that was wanted, and let it go to the printers without resolving the issue! 01824 704391 is the number you require.

Donald Jack has allowed the lovely Davina to drive the recently restored Lotus Elan - big mistake Donald! anyway, the result of this indiscretion is that their wonderful Kitten estate is for sale. This car enjoyed a body off rebuild a few years ago, and has been maintained to the highest of standards. Many new parts were fitted during the rebuild, and the chassis was shot blasted and properly painted - just as well for you that I've mastered the no word, mind you, I am wavering! Call Donald on 01563 820376. Ayrshire.

At the other end of the price scale Andy Hiles tells me that his family have a Kitten van, no side windows, off the road for some years, but is sound and complete he tells me, with a spare engine. It is looking for a new home. The car is in the Bristol area, ring Andy for details on 07968 372176.

Peter is needing a pair of brown elasticated type Kitten interior door trims, if you can help him, the number to call is 01704 893966.

Oh, and while I have your attention, The Wigton Motor Club have invited us to their 12th annual weekend event including the Cumbria Classic Show, and the Pennine Classic Tour, unfortunately too late to get into the magazine, and no doubt very short notice by the time you get this, the event is on the 18th & 19th of August at Dalemain House, by Ullswater Ring Graeme Forrester on 01900 825642 for details, or just go along and see what is going on (and let me have a report for the mag. if you do please). Keep an eye out for our very own John Graham while you are there. You can ring John on 01228 534483

Oh, just the one other matter, well two really. I have just got myself into another situation, (I know, no surprise there then!). Whilst trying to secure the modifications to a Rebel estate which has been fitted with the Robin / Kitten gearbox, along with a saloon, both of which were going to be scrapped, I found what I thought was a new custodian for them, but in fact when we went to collect them last Monday (6th August) it became clear that the chap who now has them stored in his mother's back garden, thought that his involvement was only to store them for me! I had thought that he was going to use the saloon as a spares car for his Rebel saloon, my old OYS 855F, but he reckons the one we collected is in fact not scrap at all, but a perfectly restorable example, (and OYS is a good one, which has needed very few parts in the last decade or so anyway) which it probably is, but I neither need nor want it. As for the estate, he took my conversation to mean that I wanted it saving, if not as a Rebel estate, then as a car which has had all the mods to take the later gearbox, and save it for those parts, either to use them as templates, or to pass on to someone who wants to make the change to their Rebel. And so I did, want it saving, but I didn't want to be the one saving it!

So, we, George Kerr and I, have two Rebels, which neither of us want or need, and which are fairly urgently in need of new homes. Give me a ring if you are interested 0141 8866117.

Failing any response, I'll have to organise a working party and break the two of them, which while better than them being scrapped and the parts lost, would be a shame. ACT NOW!

Brian