

# *Reliant Kitten Register*

## **NEWSLETTER 52**

**May ~ June 2003**



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 52**

**Rebel alternative parts**

**Kitten alternative parts**

**Fox alternative parts**

**Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme**

**Mewsletter pictures**

**Mewsletter comprehensive index and cross reference guide** for all 51 mewsletters available from R. F. Goodall,

**Our Electric Kitten man** is Peter Lingard

**The Register is a member of the FBHVC, which monitors UK & EU legislation and lobbies on our behalf to protect our freedom to use vehicles of all ages on the roads.**

Our front cover is graced on this occasion by a rare Rebel indeed. There are to my knowledge only three Rebel pick-ups in the country. This very neatly done one belongs to Trefor Edwards, Trev looks after Gari Jones' Liege, and also finds time to tinker with fibreglass hulled model boats. The Rebel is his daily runabout, so if you live in north Wales, keep an eye out for him. To those of you who have sent in pictures for the magazine, and have yet to see them, don't despair, it was 20 months ago that Trev sent that one it ! Ed!

web page :- <http://www.uk-classic-cars.com/kitten.htm>

or have a look at <http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk>

## INDEX

<b>Page 3</b>	<b>Contact details and cover story</b>
<b>Page 4</b>	<b>Index</b>
<b>Page 5</b>	<b>the Registrar speaks</b>
<b>Page 6</b>	<b>and continues to speak !</b>
<b>Page 7</b>	<b>Rebel Round Up &amp; Foxes Den!</b>
<b>Page 8</b>	<b>An advert of sorts</b>
<b>Page 9</b>	<b>Liege Page – the last one?</b>
<b>Page 10</b>	<b>Readers</b>
<b>Page 11</b>	<b>Letters</b>
<b>Page 12</b>	<b>Continuing</b>
<b>Page 13</b>	<b>Readers</b>
<b>Page 14</b>	<b>Letters</b>
<b>Page 15</b>	<b>for this</b>
<b>Page 16</b>	<b>edition</b>
<b>Page 17</b>	<b>Some</b>
<b>Page 18</b>	<b>Pictures</b>
<b>Page 19</b>	<b>Continuing</b>
<b>Page 20</b>	<b>Readers</b>
<b>Page 21</b>	<b>Letters</b>
<b>Page 22</b>	<b>Last of the Readers Letters!</b>
<b>Page 23</b>	<b>Getting</b>
<b>Page 24</b>	<b>Technical - John Box</b>
<b>Page 25</b>	<b>With drawings!</b>
<b>Page 26</b>	<b>Rear Brake cylinder removal tool</b>
<b>Page 27</b>	<b>By Alan Shaw</b>
<b>Page 28</b>	<b>With Drawings too!</b>
<b>Page 29</b>	<b>Ignition Timing</b>
<b>Page 30</b>	<b>By Roger Goldthorp</b>
<b>Page 31</b>	<b>SU carb parts, and something else!</b>
<b>Page 32</b>	<b>A Recommendation</b>
<b>Page 33</b>	<b>Sales &amp; Wants</b>
<b>Page 34</b>	<b>Epilogue</b>

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

Welcome to the eagerly awaited early summer edition of your favourite bedtime reading. As you may recall, I sent reminder notices out instead of magazines to those who I thought had not renewed their subscriptions. I was even generous enough to include an s.a.e. with them to encourage a prompt response, and at the time of writing, a month after they were posted, only half of the recipients have bothered to reply! Oh, and yes there was an "I do not wish to remain on the mailing list" question for them to answer.

What am I to do in the face of such lethargy? Well, I'll tell you what, I will simply look to the future, and move forward. Having said that, of the half who did reply, the vast majority renewed, and half of those who are not renewing were able to tell me what happened to the car, so the exercise was well worth doing.

The FBHVC with whom we are now associated, have a renewal date of the end of May, we first signed up with them at the end of last September, and do you know, by May this year we had as many paid up subscribers as we did at September last year, so I am not going to bother too much about the stragglers.

That said, the extra work involved, not to say postage, does lead me to thinking that I will in future follow the lead of another club I belong to, and impose a late renewal penalty. As some of you will be aware, there is now a £3 joining fee, has been for the past couple of years, and it is my intention to impose that £3 charge on late renewals in future. I will remind everyone at the appropriate time.

I remember when the matter was discussed at the other club's AGM, that not only did I support the idea, but I suggested the charge should not be £3, (actually £4 in their case) but £100, knowing as I do first hand, just how much extra work, and more to the point frustration, is created when folk do not renew on time!

Right, current frustrations vented. What's happening on the car front? Well, the Rebel's ex Regal engine now resides in another Rebel in the south of England, and, as I write, the problem I have is in deciding which engine to put into the car! Look out for that story later.

Brian Millar has decided to part with all of his Reliants. Brian is working abroad, and cannot see that situation changing for a number of years. Realising how cars deteriorate when not used, he has made the decision. Look in the adverts page. Me, I am struggling with the NO word. One of Brian's cars, the only one "on the road", is a Kitten estate that I sold to him a few years ago. Since then it has enjoyed a refurbished chassis, shot blasted painted and re-bushed wishbones, a fully reconditioned back axle, you know, £300 plus for the parts alone! Brand new Mini brake drums backplates (machined to fit) and wheel cylinders and all new pipes, complete with silicone brake fluid, well, I must be silly to be telling you this, I should just go and get it right now, and tell you nothing about it at all!

All that and it is taxed and tested, has a high capacity oil pump, oh the list is almost endless. Even better, Brian has a trip to make to England in June, (he is actually getting home for almost a whole month!) so it could be delivered to your door! Brian, if it is still with you by the time you come south, remember that you can get to England by way of Renfrew ! I am sure we can have a conversation that will avoid both the yes and no words, but that will enable to me once again become the car's custodian! Ed.

Right, change the subject Marshall, if she who does the proof reading gets to hear of this, there will be trouble!

Moving swiftly on then, ball joints, at the time of writing Reliant have yet to take delivery of their order for new lower ball joints. Happily thanks to people like Jim Spence, Ron Dark, and in particular John Wardle and Ian Evans, who between them dug up over a dozen old units, the refurbishing operation is under way. That said, with 4 hours work involved in doing each one, they will not be any cheaper than new ones! However we can now offer reconditioned, greasable lower ball joints on an exchange basis, so don't be stuck.

As you may be aware, there is no difficulty with the supply of top ones.

Right, a belated apology to Richard Moulds who was the innocent victim of my disorganised ways. Observant readers will recall from issue 50 page 21, that I cut short a letter, presumably I was interrupted, and then lost the paperwork – well, it, along with too many others to mention, was recovered last Sunday when Moira decided that I really did need help! So, my apologies Richard, I did get most of your letter in edition 50, one thing I missed completely was your desire to locate a tow bracket for your Kitten, so if anyone can help, please ring the man

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### **Rebel Round up**

My green Rebel estate car is currently languishing in mum's garage minus an engine!

It was all part of a plot, an effort to motivate me plan, which, sadly, has yet to bear fruit.

I have long sought to get better economy, and indeed better oil pressure from the Rebel. An 850 would be the obvious choice, and indeed, as you may remember, John Blagburn found me a good engine last year, admittedly it came in a Robin which we not only dismantled, but told you the story at the time. John Johnstone then had a loan of that engine for rather longer than I had intended, and I got it back just as winter approached. However, sadly, it would not be fair to solely blame the winter for my lack of progress with the engine. I did dismantle it, and with a lot of help from Grant Coull, fitted new big ends and mains, even oversized thrust washers, but I was beaten by the oil pump! Nothing wrong with the new pump, but I made a real meal of cleaning its support mounting, I just could not get the remains of the old gasket off, and was scared of damaging the joint face. Lethargy took over, and it has sat there for weeks, nae months now.

Jim Spence has removed a good 700 engine from Sarah's new Rebel, to fit an 850, so his old unit was one possibility, especially as it already has an SU carb fitted, and has a dynamo, which would both keep the car more original, and save me having to modify the electrics, then there was the possibility of a newly rebuilt top rate engine... Hmmmm, let me think about this.

Tell you what, I'll get back to you next time. Ed.

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## Foxes Den

Not a lot from you guys this time. Duncan Bradford keeps me busy with deep and meaningful questions, to which I seldom know the answers, sorry Duncan, I'm not ignoring you, honestly. The one recent question Duncan asked was "Do Austin A30/35 wheels fit the Fox?". Well, I took so long to respond, than Duncan found out for himself that, in the case of one Fox at least, they do. There was a question about the meaning of the abbreviation P.C.D. I think that refers to the Pitch Circle Diameter of the studs, and obviously it is pretty important that the wheels match the hubs / drums from that point of view. Wheels are an oddity in this day and age in that we still, in these metric times, talk about 12" wheels, or 15" wheels, but many of the PCD's are metric now, all potentially very confusing. Especially since we used to be able to fit Mini wheels, where, like the Reliant, the PCD used to be 4", then, a decade or so ago, Minis went metric, and no, 100mm is not the same as 4"!

Duncan has in interesting web group for those into such things, it is :-  
[foxandkitten@yahooogroups.com](mailto:foxandkitten@yahooogroups.com)

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As you know, I stopped putting adverts for events in the mag last year. The following however I felt might be a special case, and so you can decide if you want or are able to be involved :-

Newton and District DIAL-A-RIDE  
Old Brewery House, Ladywell Centre  
Newtown, Powys SY16 1AF

Please can you help? We are a charity based in the heart of mid Wales, and wondered if you would be able to give us some support with this event.

We are the only transport system in mid Wales for the elderly, disabled (young and old) and for people with mobility problems. We are trying to get 150 classic cars in the main street of Newtown on Sunday 17th August 2003 for charity.

We are inviting clubs, hospitals, and children's hospices to attend, and much more. We would very much like you to come along and exhibit your vehicles on the day.

Prestigious motor show  
Sunday 17th August 2003-05-08  
Why not book this Sunday for a great day out in the heart of Wales  
From 10:00am till 3:00pm  
Great prizes to win

The event is for the whole family and at the same time you can see the beautiful hills and countryside.

The event is all for charity and has only 150 places for your cars. The location is 90 minutes from Birmingham and Manchester.

Have a look at [www.santarun.info](http://www.santarun.info)

We are asking entrants to pay a £5.00 registration fee, and for this you get a wonderful plaque to say you took part in the very first car show in mid Wales, and a goodie bag full of items, and much, much more.

The whole town will be blocked off to the public, and you will be able to drive your car or motorbike round the town.

For more info please call 01686 622566 or e-mail [newtowndialaride@btinternet.com](mailto:newtowndialaride@btinternet.com) and ask for Julia or Dougie.

Oddly enough, I discovered that there is a Reliant connection here, Julia runs the very last of the Sabre's, and her man has two Scimitars! Small world!

Plans for the future! Dave Price has kindly offered his services as regards the matter of planning something by way either of a meeting of our own, or possibly even something in conjunction with the Reliant Owners Club, to celebrate the Kitten's 30th. So, Dave is "happy to help" talk to the man please.

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### **Liege Page**

Now that the Liege Car Club is up and running, and producing their own magazine, I do not feel the need to continue this page in here. That said, I would hope to be allowed to share with you some of the tales of their exploits over the years ahead.

Anyway, the people to contact if you are interested are John Swale and Melanie Brown :-

Liege Car Club  
Beacon Cottage Farm  
St. Agnes  
Cornwall  
TR5 0NH

[melbrown@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:melbrown@ukonline.co.uk)

Tel 01872 552347 or 01872 553491

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*Oh, and I just thought, before I file it, that I'd let you read this:-*

Dear Brian,

22.2.03

Loved the front cover of the last Mewsletter (No. 50) I'd love a close up look at a Liege.

Could you also put a 'Wanted' advert in the magazine for me for a Liege? I am approaching the end of my studies and fancy treating myself!

Regards, Rob Walker - Iffley, Oxford



## Readers Letters

Dear Brian,

21 February 2003

Thank you for your kind letter and for putting my ad in the Mewsletter.

I got a phone call from Dave Smith the day I received the Mewsletter, but had to tell him that I had already got some Kitten bits on order. I went to the Bristol Classic Car shop a couple of weeks ago and got talking to Jim Harvey, who is on Peter Davis' list of suppliers of bits. During our chat he told me he was breaking a Kitten, so I got my bits from him.

The Rialto is growing smaller in size as I strip all its body off, it is more difficult to strip a body when you want to retain the wiring loom intact!

Hopefully I will have the Liege chassis in the Autumn which will give me time to get the engine sorted and ready to fit in. I did think I had no reverse gear, but found it was on the left hand side, not the right as the gear lever indicated.

Best wishes, Bill Smith - Cardiff

Dear Brian,

22 February 2003

Thank you for the registration form and letter. I am sorry for the delay in returning the registration form but I had hoped to be able to give photos and some details of most of the Kittens that have been through the family's hands. However, I am in the middle of a bathroom refurbishment and cannot easily find time and gain access to possible locations. I will do so in the future.

My wife and I together with our three boys (34, 31 and 23 years) have all owned Kitten estates, 4 runners and one to scrap. All the boys learned to drive on them.

I find the Fox far better built than the Kittens which obviously suffered from a hangover of weight minimisation arising from 3 wheeler requirements. Provided that such items as front suspension ball joints (why on earth did they not choose a readily available one?) can be obtained when required then its life may be well extended. Incidentally after the thick end of Vi million miles of Reliant 4-wheel experience I have found that grease application to joints does not guarantee longevity of the same.

I enclose photos of both our Fox and those that accompanied an article in the Saturday Telegraph of April 19 1997 about high mileage cars. As with almost anything found in a newspaper they did not get the facts straight, my car on the right had done 240,000 miles and Mr Evans 205,000 miles at this time. Mine had a chassis failure in 1999 at 245,000, then being used by my youngest son who has little interest in cars and so it was despatched to Rossefield Motors of Bradford where after some work was sold on to collector living near Geneva. He already had a saloon and was happy to acquire an estate. My son achieved peace of mind upon the purchase of a Skoda Felicia.

My eldest boy used to commute weekly between Huddersfield and Prestwick to attend flying school and has often remarked that the difficulty with the Kitten was the uncertainty as to

when or whether the journey would be completed. Fortunately he was competent to deal with roadside repairs and often had to. Incidentally he won every auto-test he entered whilst a student at Salford University, groans of dismay greeting him by other competitors when he arrived in the Kitten!

Thank you and best regards John Wardle - Huddersfield

Dear Brian,

March 2003

Like many I believe that there is more interest in constructing a car for yourself. The Tempest in the enclosed photo was part built by me. Well, I did less than half the work to be truthful. Quite a bit less really. Well, I fitted the chrome plated tyre valves. My 'Oppo' did the rest and we worked out several interesting bits between us. I am, at this stage, refusing to identify my oppo because he isn't too keen to build many more.

Whilst the assembly took rather longer than anticipated (but less than a year,) this was mainly due to component delivery problems. Otherwise we had expected, rather like 2CV rebuilds, that a month would suffice.

We started with a 3,000 mile old new Reliant (BN1) which had been written off. That gave nice new reliable components for the most part. The chassis came from an old Fox and was fibreglass and wax-oil painted. The fibreglass mouldings needed some improvement to satisfy us and the pedal mounting was a bit of a problem. The windows were redesigned from 1/8" sheet perspex or polymethymethacrylatc. These, as the substrate, gave a much improved view. Lynch wire wheels and spinners were expensive but they suit the line of the wheel arch much better and look good. All the trimming chrome bits were obtained from suppliers advertising in Practical Classics. The engine wasn't messed about with. (Not yet anyway) because it was so new. Seats were standard Reliant seats which had been 'narrowed', were covered in oyster coloured leather and these seemed pleasing with the black and chrome finish. The inside of the doors were covered in the same leather. A four branch manifold was fitted as we had done with several other Reliant type cars. We were very interested in achieving a very good looking usable car that wasn't intended for show, more for owners pride. To this end the 4:7 rear differential had to be used and the heater had to be effective. We also incorporated a servo system on the brakes which makes them very effective.

For the future we will be looking to use either twin carbs with a special coil and distributor. Alternatively we are thinking of a 'light' turbo. We would like to achieve in excess of 65bhp. And achieving 5000 to 6000 rpm. Our thinking had gone along the lines of a 4 stroke 1000 to 1300 motor cycle engine, but we went away from this due to the envisaged difficulty of a reverse gear.

Finally, the number MOI 2409 came from a Kitten which I bought by going over to Northern Ireland to part with money and return to north Wales with the car.

We intend to use the Tempest (anno domini permitting) to tour Ireland and Europe. Whilst we have no specific objection to using the Tempest in the rain, if it can be avoided we take steps to do so.

Yours sincerely Peter & Pauline Morton - Penmaenmaur

Dear Brian,

1st April 2003

In response to my rather long diatribe of 16th Nov – 02 (Mewsletter 50 Page 29 - ) in regards to my “Puny” brakes on my Kitten, I thought that I would let you know the outcome of 8 months of squeezing the melon to find the fault.

I have at last, finally, cracked it. After replacing all, yes all wheel cylinders, brake shoes, springs, rubber hoses (all 3) and removing all copper pipes and fittings to no avail.

The culprit was – the front wheel snail cams on the brake adjusters. De-adjusting on both front wheels.

Behind the snail cam there is a thickish domed spring washer that keeps the cam tight against the back plate. Over the years it naturally loses its spring tension and allows the cam, under pressure from the brake shoes, applied by the return springs, to de-adjust.

The brakes will work, but the pedal will go to the axminster before they activate, and possibly cause an accident!

New back plates are expensive, and were not available to me, but a “Moprod” snail cam repair kit was. These were for very early Mini’s and are as rare as rocking horse teeth - *which is precisely why the Register carries them in stock – Ed!* But I managed to track down a set.

I now have brakes on my pocket rocket, and have stopped pulling out my hair – figuratively speaking.

I would like to thank Mewsetter readers who telephoned me offering their help. Many thanks.

Yours sincerely - Len Gardner - No. 614 - West Wickham

*Thanks for keeping us informed Len. Delighted that you were able to persevere and solve the problem. I seem to remember that in Mag 50 Page 30, 3 or 4 lines from the bottom, I was suggesting that very thing, Ed.*

Dear Brian,

24/04/03

I have sold my Kitten, last year as it happens. It went to another Brian in Wales. I passed on your address and some magazines. The car was the superb and immaculately restored one with a full leather interior painted in Bug orange. It was badged as a Kitten GT, I sold it for £1850 reflecting its condition.

Regards, Alan 476

*Thanks for keeping us informed Alan, I have seen pictures of the car, and it looks really great, but I wonder if mechanically and chassis wise it could hold a candle to Brian Millar’s estate car – hmm, let me see..... Could this be as new trend, two kittens selling for well over £1,000 in a year, sounds like progress to me. Ed.*

Dear Brian,

24-4-03

Please find enclosed s.a.e. for copy of mod for inlet manifold, sounds interesting.

Recently I acquired a portable fire pump engine from Dorset Fire Brigade, powered by an 850 Reliant engine. It came complete but had not been used for years, lying forgotten in a store.

The starter motor is a Webber Mareli item about half the size of the Lucas item fitted by Reliant, and a motorcycle battery is used, it has pointless ignition, anyway, there was still petrol in the tank, so having charged the tiny battery, surprise surprise, it started first time.

So, over Easter I have fitted this engine to the Rebel and have only driven about 20 miles since, it seems a very good motor having done very few hours as a fire pump.

Regards, B. Sill- Beaminster, Dorset

*Thanks for keeping us up to date Ben, please let us know how you find the mod., Ed.*

*Back in March of this year I received an e-mail from a chap representing a group of guys who worked for the Building Consultancy section of the Dept. of Planning and Environment in Leeds. They were wanting to learn more about the Register with a view to finding a model they could present to their colleague upon the occasion of his imminent retirement. I could not help with a model in the time available, but they elected to treat him to a years subscription to the Register, so I sent them some back issues, and an application form.*

Dear Brian,

28-4-03

On my retirement I was presented with copies of your previous Newsletters and an application form for me to send in the details of my car.

I therefore enclose the details with a brief history of my car.

The car will now only be used for my personal transport so I hope to keep it running for as long as possible.

Kitten Estate RWT 466R

Bought new in March 1977 to replace my Regal 3/25 saloon. The chassis was immediately sealed against rust.

It has now done over 180,000 miles used all year round fro my job and domestic purposes.

Modifications over the years are: Clutch release pressure pad changed to a release bearing. Cylinder head and valves replaced to allow use of unleaded fuel. Due to recurring problem of gear jumping out when holding car on hills in certain gear, gearbox finally replaced with new style reconditioned one. Roof light fitted. Due to bad handling in snow, a set of snow tyres were fitted to the rear, which solved the handling problem, for winter months only. Colour finally changed from turquoise to green.

I have often been asked why I do not have a new car, my reply is why buy a new vehicle when the Kitten still runs very well and has proved very cheap to run. Its present condition indicates more years of useful life.

Best wishes, David Aikin - Leeds

*Still on the recently joined up people, I received the following from Ben Crouch the other day:-*

Dear Brian,

1-5-03

Many thanks for all the info, I find it very interesting. Nice to know others enjoy Reliant tinkering.

Most people wouldn't give them the time of day. I read with interest the sad story of Dave Nyman's under bonnet fire. History now I know, but the worst thing you can do in such a situation is open the bonnet. You should squirt the extinguisher either through the grill, or up under the sump with the bonnet down. That way the fire will go out a lot quicker.

I bought my Fox 10 years ago with only 600 miles on the clock, it now reads 34,000, but it is a second car, and I also use a motorcycle.

I will send you a picture of Pongo, as I call it. It now has a soft top back as we use it open a lot, and a cut down MG grille to replace the ugly man hole cover that Reliant used.

It only takes me two minutes to remove the workman back as it now has over centre catches and handles. It also has a very quickly removable front seat as I sometimes carry my tandem in it. I also sleep in it when touring – in Kent. I don't trust it out of the county.

I am now 66 and I spent the first 20 years of my working life in garages, so am quite able to tinker with the Fox.

I think that's why I like the Reliant, it reminds me of 1950's / 60's vehicles.

My first car was a 1929 Austin Seven, much the same ride.

Please send me details of the back issues when they are available.

Best regards, Ben Crouch - Herne Bay, Kent

*You may remember John Forbes from the last edition? Yes well, he is a member – of the other club for which I am membership secretary!!! I must try to be more careful in future.*

Dear Brian,

30.4.03

When reading Mewsletter 51 member 157 (whoever they are) said in their letter that they had fitted an exhaust bracket which they made themselves.

The member said it was not worth painting the bracket as it would burn off with exhaust heat.

I sprayed a new exhaust with an aerosol of heat resistant paint bought from a car accessory shop and by now my exhaust would be rusty, but it is still the grey colour which was used except for close to the manifold, which also can be painted with heat resistant paint, but of course will not last as long as the exhaust pipe, and it saves money for new pipes.

Yours Norman Schofield - Dunkinfield.

*Right, thanks for that Norman. Two points your letter does bring sharply into focus, I was of a mind to make a similar comment at the time when typing up edition 51, but felt that I say quite enough as it is. I use hammerite, or smootherite (which are good for up to 300 degrees centigrade), for things like exhaust pipes and brake drums, and it works fine if you don't use the middle pedal too hard or too often, which I don't these days, saves fuel don't you know.*

*Secondly, and perhaps of much greater importance, your comment about member 157, "whoever they are". Well, I may have failed here, it is very easy when you know something, to assume that others know it too, and it would appear that in this instance either I have failed miserably, or someone was not paying attention. Member 157, who, wonderful chap that he is, will insist in using that American trend of using a hash symbol to denote a number, is our teller of Tore Tales, Dick Goodall. Tore of course being the village north of Inverness where he lives, Dick now has three Kittens, two estates and a saloon, which keep his Jowett Bradford company. Dick, as regular readers will recall, is the man who has taken the time and patience to index every edition of the Mewsletter for us, and also to compile a cross reference guide. A copy of these can be yours if you send Dick a large s.a.e. and a fivers worth of stamps to cover copying costs as well as the postage.*

Hi Brian,

Membership no- 0365

Thursday 01/05/03

Hope you and yours are all fit and well, we plod on down Manchester way, despite the Kitten's drivers side door falling off into the roadway a few weeks ago, quite amusing and not at all embarrassing by our standards. This was entirely my fault, with a little help from Reliants design team!, I tend to use the door as an aid to get in and out, don't we all?, I won't any more though.

Any way I've re-enforced it and repaired the glass fibre, the door needs repainting now that's all, I'll do that when my finger gets better?, "never look up when you're hammering a door hinge shim flat", no matter who wants to talk to you.

So why have I written to you?, "waffle waffle", get your head together Bill, oh aye, that modification to the inlet manifold, could you please send me some details on it, I enclose an s-a-e for you to use,

I'd like to "fly this mod and see", I still have a bit of occasional tick over trouble with this 'wee beastie', it comes and goes which is most odd, so I can kill two birds with the one stone and match the manifolds up at the same time.



Above – Mike King's Tidy Rebel Estate, Love those wheels Mike.

Below – Jim Lugsden's Fox – Too many mods to mention here.





Above – Bob & Judith Riches' Liege on tour in Scotland 2002

Below – Douglas Philip's Kitten at a wind farm in Cumbria





Other than that the little cars not doing too bad, the m-o-t man informed me last year that I'll need a new offside rear spring for this years ticket, "it's flat". Bye the by Brian, a fellow 'lunatic' has given me the address of a local Reliant spares contact, don't know if you've heard of him, but his name seems familiar somehow , is he the Tempest man?

Now this man may or may not be any good, I haven't tried him out yet, but I thought you might want his contact details, I get the idea he operates mainly from home, part time and by appointment weekdays, 9am to 12 on Saturdays, he does a postal service too. "John Copestake" Carwise Reliant Spares, 25 Sheffield Road, Pennistone, Sheffield, S36 6HH Phone 01226 766039 or 07890 156327 Mobile, Web carwisereliantspares.moonfruit.com I might give him a go for these new springs, I gather he's second hand and new parts, also he's reputed to have scrapped a few Kittens, "SOB SOB !" I'll bring you up to date when I've actually met the man and done some business with him, I'll leave you in peace now, take care up there.  
Regards Bill & Hazel Starkey - Hyde

*Well of course I sent off the manifold picture right away, do let me know how you find it., I mean to try it myself, but my Rebel does not actually have an engine in it at the moment, so there are other priorities ! Yes of course you could argue that is an ideal opportunity to do it, but how then would I be able to determine if there was any improvement or not ?*

*Yes, I believe I have heard of your Reliant chap John Copestake, but can't remember anything about him, sorry.*

*He is not the Tempest man however, John Box designed and built them, then sold the project a decade or so later to Steve Campbell, who is currently getting help with the project from Hans Kirimaa of Rebel Racing fame, the very man who gave us the inlet manifold mod ! Small world indeed.*

Dear Brian,

30/04/2003

Apologies for failing to renew my subscription (I received your final reminder some days ago). Please find enclosed my subscription form (rescued from a 'safe place' where it 'wouldn't get lost') and my subscription along with extra for spares donation. I offer the excuse that I have been rather busy since last June when I became a father again for the fifth time. A daughter this time, after four boys. I also bought, on a crazy impulse, a Reliant Scimitar which has occupied some time but is now on the road on a daily basis. I also have a series IIA Landrover (1966 vintage) that is also less than trouble-free! It's a great life if you don't weaken.

So what about the kitten? Well...The original chassis has been successfully repaired, including the near side front suspension turret. As is often the way however, no sooner had this been completed than an advert in the 'Loot' promised a chassis, engine and other bits for a small price. I didn't strictly need the chassis, but on stripping down my original engine had found it to be not worth repairing; oval cylinder bores, warped cylinder head, irremediable crank, water in the oil due to badly corroded liner seats, blah blah... So, I went along and bought the lot! The chassis was pretty good. However, the replacement engine also turned out to be scrap! This halted me for a while until late last year when I happened to find an engine in a scrapyards which I was assured was a 'good runner'. Initial inspection threw up no obvious signs to the contrary so I negotiated a price and bought it.

In the meantime I had reorganised the workshop (my interpretation) or 'been skiving in the shed' (my wife's interpretation). For many years I have wanted to build a test bed for engines in order to work on them in the dry and warm whilst seated with a cup of tea. And now, while the inside of the house was uninhabitable due to the new baby, I succeeded in building one with a nice hole in the wall through which to run the exhaust along with changeable attachments to accommodate different size engines. Once I got my 'new' engine home, in a flurry of enthusiasm and disciplined action (alright then; to escape household chores) I mounted it on said test bed, connected battery and starter motor and turned it over. Alas! Miniscule compression - best cylinder 15 psi. The usual tests revealed the cylinder head as the probable culprit. Fine and dandy, except that I ran into the oft-repeated problem of the head being reluctant to be removed. Usually, judicious use of mallets, wooden wedges and WD40 solves the problem, if rather tediously. This time? Not a chance. Hero slinks off, temporarily defeated.

Some time later I decide to build extraction tool. I won't bore you with too many details, just to say that it bolted on to the rocker gear and manifold studs, was of welded construction with thick angle iron and utilised 10 cm long high-tensile bolts with the end rounded to fit into a corresponding cup cut into the top of each cylinder head stud. I just wound each bolt down in sequence to start with, needing between 10-15 pounds of torque on each one to get the cylinder head off within ten minutes. Well chuffed! The engine turned out to be good. The lack of compression is due to the valves and seats being badly damaged. Will fit reconditioned, unleaded head. I have also started to go through all of the parts I have accumulated over the years including all the bags and boxes bought with the last engine and chassis in order to identify the best bits to use on the rebuild.

So the situation is - I hope to have the engine running in the shed pretty soon, and with the better weather, hope to start reassembly of the vehicle within a couple of weeks. Such optimism!! Oh, there was the little matter of the wife's Fiat Panda MOT which I... eventually got through... sort of... but that's another boring story... I have learned that if I leave any significant gap between the original MOT fail and picking up a spanner, then I will in future always, always check everything myself instead of blindly adhering to the original fail list. 'Nuff said.

Anyway, cheers for now. Bill Callaghan - Liverpool

Hi Brian and fans,

31st March 03 (St. David's day)

I feel it is time to set a few records straight from Mewsletter 50 Jan/Feb '03. For a start the mystery car on the cover is not the FW7 prototype. The FW7 was an 850cc mid engined two seater that looked a bit like a Lotus Esprit or a Fiat X19. The FW7, last I heard, was in the Tamworth area.

I had the chance to have a good look at it (the white one you featured on the cover) at the National Rally back in 1975/6. In those days it was in prime condition, not the wreck it is now, what has happened since? Also, why does it have the same registration number as the second 4 wheeled Bond Bug produced by Reliant in 1970? GBF 473H.

I spent a lot of time on research on this with ex-Reliant staff, and found it just turned up at Tamworth. Ogle's records are misty. I think it was assembled at Ogles workshop in Stevenage,

and Reliant just don't make any more, maybe they thought they would not sell, or just the wrong car at the wrong era.

Any questions, phone, email or write Bob Neal, Reliant Historian (and Kitten Register subscriber).

*There follows our technical section, and Alan Osborne did supply me with a page, in time, but I have run out of room, double next time I promise, sorry Al.*

## **Getting Technical**

*On the Wednesday after the May day holiday, amongst the mail there was an envelope with the following cryptic note on the back of it - "My mum went to school with Amy J." Well, I wondered if Amy J. was one of the spice girls, no? Perhaps an Atomic Kitten even? Whatever, then it gradually dawned on me that the stamp on the envelope was one of those 2" wide ½" deep ones with a picture of a bi-plane and a girl in a pilot's helmet, and I began to realise who Amy J. was. No wonder it takes me so long to process the mail some days !*

*Anyway, it was John Box's mum who went to school with Amy Johnson, so now we know !*

*And the word from Stable Cottage is :-*

Hello Brian,

1st May 2003

I am being quoted in the Mewsletter, so I must clarify things a little as regards the front suspension. As mentioned, there are two types of Fox tie bars. Type 1 with a 3/8" thread and a ½" shoulder, and the modified one with a ½" stud and no shoulder. This latter is properly aligned when the split pin will just enter the hole in the stud. The best method is to run up the castellated nut then gradually back it off until the pin is a push fit into its hole in the stud. Fox tie bars are a heavier gauge material than Kitten ones and have the distance piece in the jaw welded in and are fitted with a 3/8" diameter pinch bolt.

There is a problem with the L/H inner wishbone bolt, in that it can undo itself due to the ratcheting action of the suspension movements. This first happened to me in 1976 on a Kitten, and was caught just before the bolt dropped out with exciting consequences. I was pretty cross with Reliant who were a little off hand at the time.

A second instance happened on Vantique No. 2 in 1990 when Reliant were in limbo, so I issued the enclosed mod. to all my Tempest and Vantique customers to cover myself.

Obviously this will not happen to cars that have been in service for years, but could be a problem with newly fitted parts. The moral is, however you do it, lock the bolt head.

Another tip is to lightly grease all the suspension bolts before fitting them through the silentblock bushes to prevent water ingress and ease removal at some future date. Before refitting Kitten wishbones, weld a washer on either side of the jaw, on the lower wishbone and redrill them to fit 3/8" diameter pinch bolts with a heavier distance piece.

Have just returned from the Lands End trial where I had an interesting conversation with a Liege competitor, and also met the present owner of Tempest No. 3 who was not competing. I understand that Tempest No. 2 the yellow car, has passed via Dave Smith to a new owner, and D.S. has also obtained No 2 conversion kit, originally supplied to Mr. Curtis. At this rate D.S. will end up making more Tempests than me!

Kind regards, John & Jackie.

p.s. I know it's the first of May, but I'm too busy to go out protesting.



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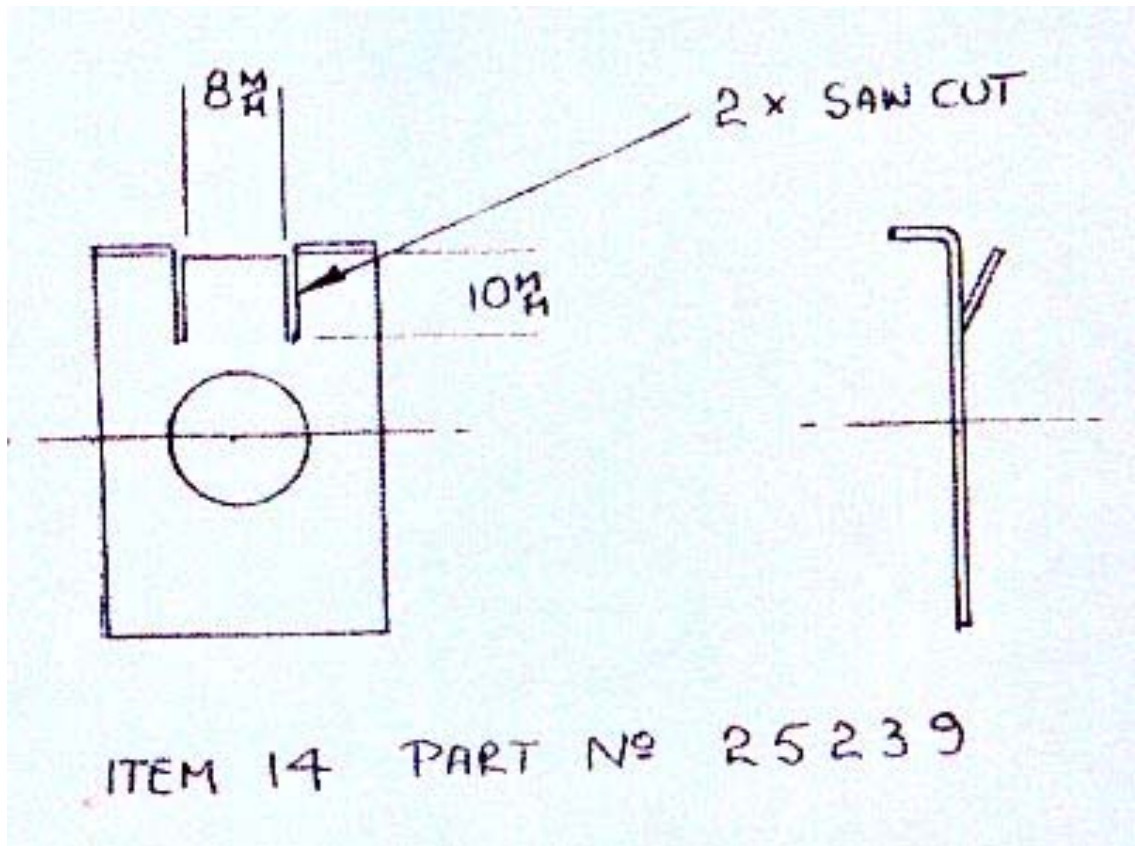
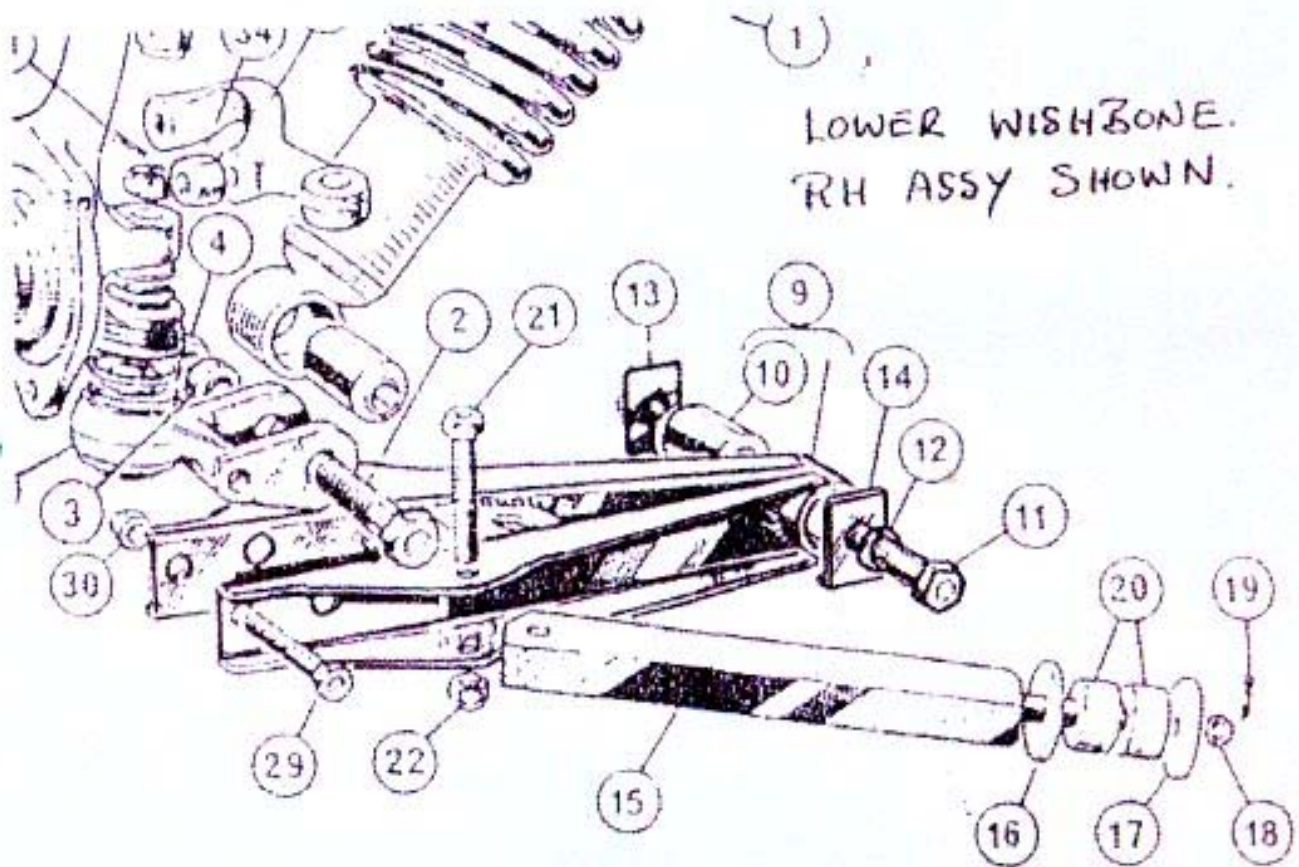
##### LOOSENING OF LOWER WISHBONE FULCRUM BOLT.

It has come to our attention that the lower wishbone fulcrum bolt of the Reliant Fox chassis can come loose despite being correctly tightened up upon assembly. The L/H unit is more prone to become loose due to the 'ratchet' effect of the suspension movement.

In order to overcome this problem we suggest the following modification is carried out:

Place the front of the vehicle on stands and remove the front wheels. Referring to the enclosed diagram, remove bolt No. 11, mark out tab plate No. 14 to dimensions shown and make two saw cuts. Pull tab thus formed forward and shorten to dimensions shown. Refit bolt, spring washer and tab plate as before. Make bolt tight and align flat of bolt head with new tab on plate. Flatten tab against bolt head with suitable punch. Refit front wheels.

NOTE: If your vehicle has already covered a considerable mileage this problem is unlikely to occur due to the locking effect of road dirt, corrosion, etc. but we nevertheless recommend carrying out a torque check on these bolts.



*Many many weeks before the first of May, the following arrived, and promptly got lost in the mass of papers on my desk. Recently recovered thanks in no small way to my beloved's assistance, you will finally be able to learn from the experience of another truly talented engineer who actually showed me the tool working earlier this year :-*

## **Reliant Kitten rear brake cylinders**

*Ref. Reliant workshop manual, Section L P.4 Haynes P.105.*

Maintenance. The spring clip and Mills Pin do not prevent small movements of the cylinder relative to the backplate, and some fretting takes place. While oiling the brake mechanism, cable, adjuster and pipes, anoint the spring clip and Mills Pin also. It will fret less if you do

Stripping. The stripping tool drawing also shows the spring clip, larger than full size. It is evident that trying to pull the clip off in the direction of arrow 'A' will attempt to distort it by dimension(s) A. Pulling in direction 'B' is obviously less damaging, the extractor enables this to be done.

Method. Having screwed the fulcrum into the brake cylinder, use the extractor to lift lug 1 onto the 11/16" diameter. You may need to wedge it there using a screwdriver blade. Similarly, lift and wedge lug 2. Finally, use the extractor on lug 3 to detach the clip. It will not have its original shape, but it will be very near, and a very small squeeze in the vice will make it reusable.

Assembly. This elaborates an idea first proposed by Dick Goodall. The drawing is self explanatory, and the operation quite painless. Even if the gasket is included.

Comment. One has to admire the simple geometry of the spring clip, where all angles are multiples of 22 1/2°

What does the gasket DO besides increasing the bending moment on the Mills Pin?

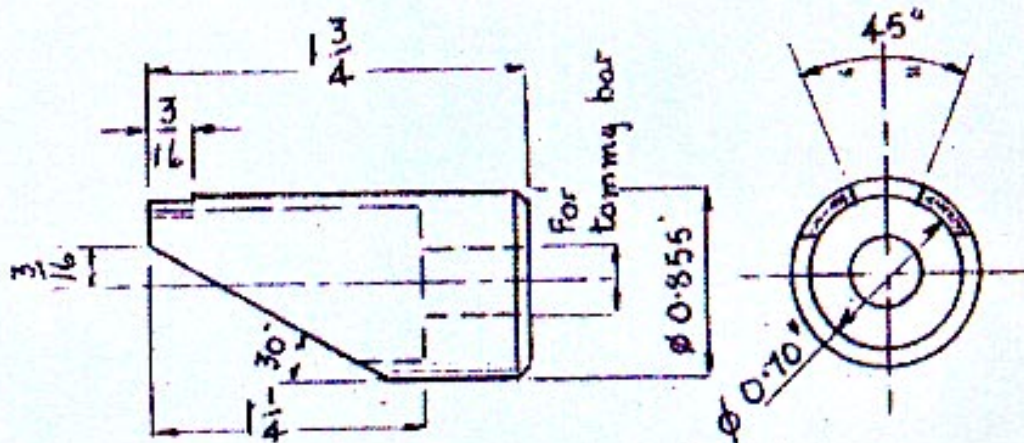
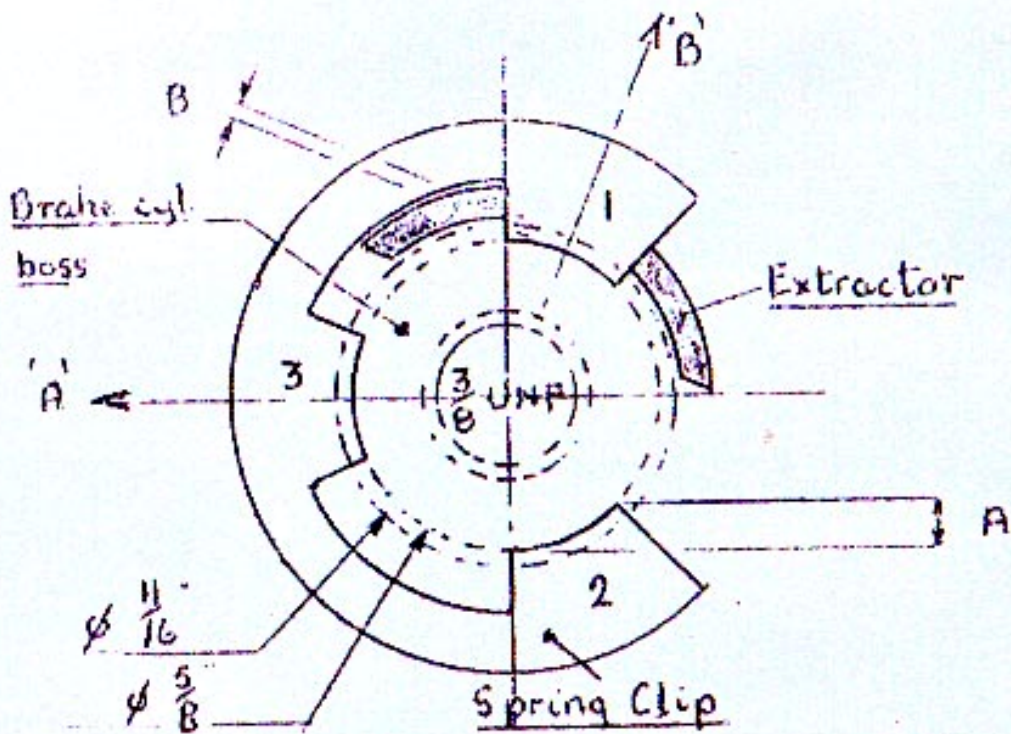
Dear Brian,

As you know, we are running three Kittens. After more than twenty years of furious mangling of these clips (which I'm sure are assembled using a press at the factory), I've decided to do something about it. The tools shown and method above work well.

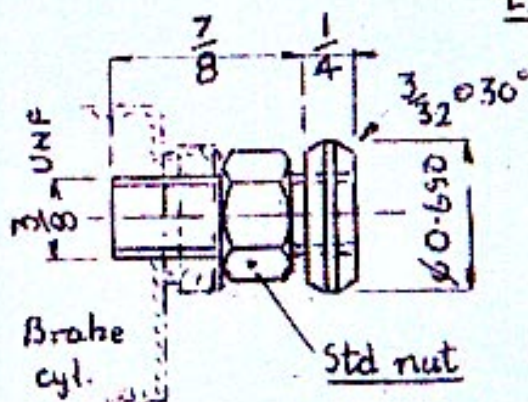
Alan Shaw.

Stripping tool.

Kitten rear brake cyl. clip.



Extractor. Mat<sup>l</sup> S.S.



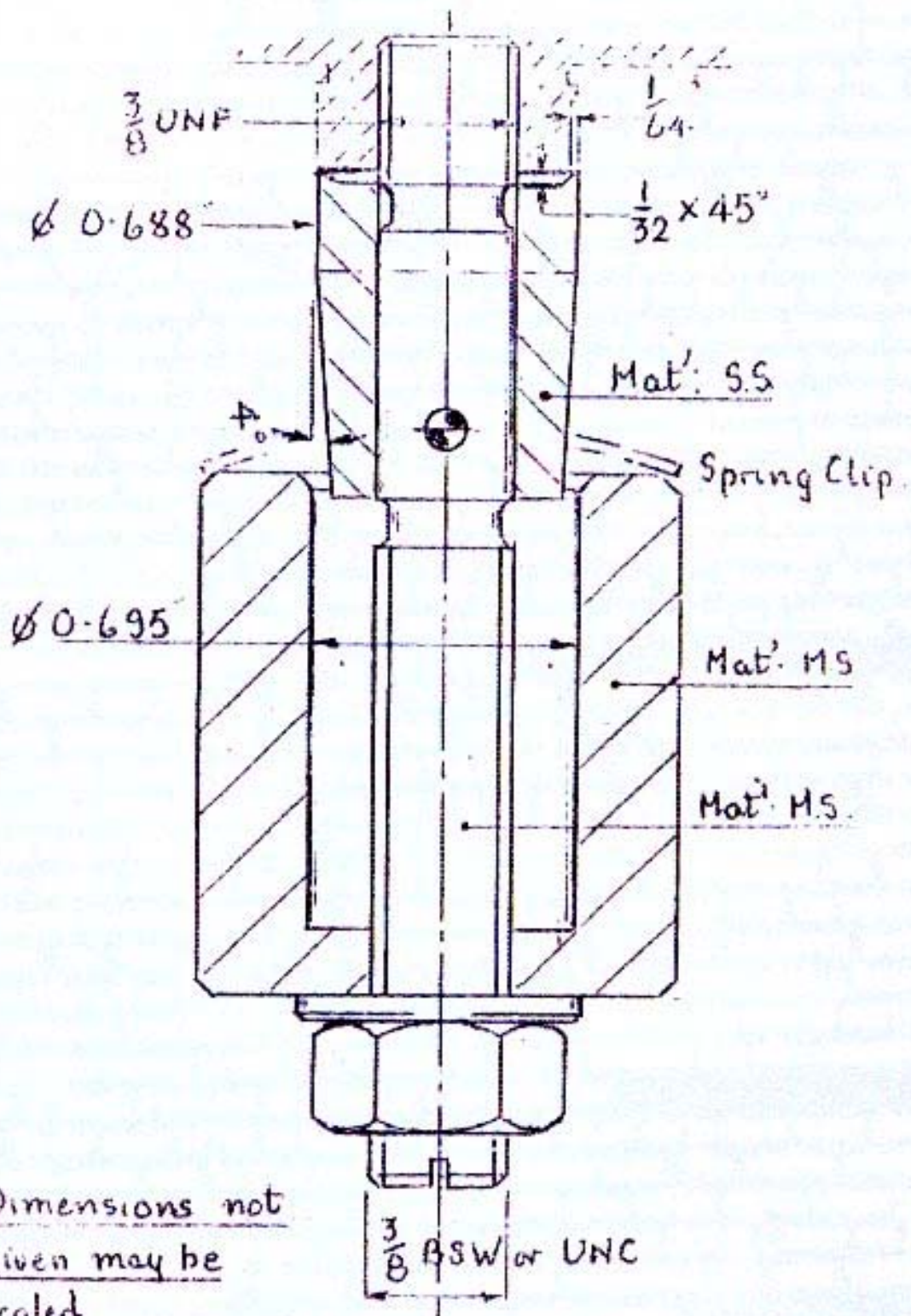
Fulcrum  
Mat<sup>l</sup> M.S.

Scales  $\frac{2}{1}$ ,  $\frac{1}{1}$ .

21.21-2-08

Assembly tool.

Kitten rear brake cyl. clip.





## IGNITION TIMING

Paul Wheatley in issue forty-nine asked the question why the ignition timing should differ between 750 and 850 engines. Harry Darby suggested that the carburettor may be the reason and gave a technical explanation as to why this should be. In the same issue I quoted the settings from Reliant's Technical specifications and if one looks back at these it will be noted that the carburettor is indeed the differing factor, confirming Harry's conclusions. Reliant will have arrived at a setting for the ignition timing, which will give the optimum performance for their engine. All things being equal we should be able to set the ignition timing to their recommendations and that should be the end of the story. However as we know all things are never equal and it is the variable factors which then come into play. These variable factors, without getting involved in the many disciplines of science, change from one moment to the next. What is sucked in via the carburettor, what is expelled through the tail pipe, what happens between and what differences there are between cylinders are virtually impossible to quantify. Paul having skimmed the cylinder head and fitted twin carburettors to his Liege has departed from the engines design / specification, this will have changed what will be happening between the air intake and tail pipe. At the present time he is experimenting with the ignition timing and will eventually arrive at a setting, which will give the best result for his particular 'set up.'

When sprinting my Triumph Twin in the 1960s I would set the ignition timing very carefully using a degree disc, wire and bulb and feel confident that I had got it right. At one meeting however the distributor clamp became loose and the ignition timing slipped to such an extent that the engine would barely run. Without the aid of degree disc, wire and bulb I had to resolve the problem there and then. With the engine running and someone (girlfriend, now wife) holding the throttle open I turned the distributor back and forth until I was satisfied with the running of the engine and then secured the distributor clamp. The time improved from my previous runs and so I adopted this method for setting my ignition timing from then on. My Triumph was highly modified and what I had unwittingly carried out was to set the ignition timing to suit my modified set up. In addition this also compensated for wear although I was not conscious of this at the time.

In the early 1970s an engineer and friend asked me to draw some sketches to illustrate some text he was writing about engine wear. The section relating to wear within the distributor is very relevant to our cars, which are no longer young and puts another variable into the setting up of ignition timing ( even we Liege drivers run old engines). Rather surprisingly he considered that wear within the distributor might have the most effect on engine performance.

Wear can occur at several points but the bearing supporting the main spindle, which carries the contact breaker cam is the most critical. The contact breaker gap can be easily set to the specified gap but, if there is slackness in this bearing, with the engine running the gap will be constantly varying due to the cam " flopping about." Not normally being a balanced item, and as the revs increase, centrifugal force will pull the cam spindle to one side of the worn bearing. A constantly varying gap will result in a constant variation in timing on individual cylinders and each thou of variation can effect the timing by as much as three degrees. In some cases with the combination of a worn bearing and a wide gap it is possible to press the cam sideways and be able to open the contacts when the heel piece is on the flat face of the cam. When the distributor shows signs of wear the contact breaker gap can be reduced to a minimum gap of say .006 / .008. Even with this reduced gap burning of the points doesn't seem to occur, the rate of opening perhaps being more important than the gap. The design of a distributor necessitates that the

bearing is located below the cam and therefore any side movement due to slackness in the bearing will result in this being amplified at the cam.

Most distributors have an automatic advance mechanism combined with a vacuum device. The former should be checked to ensure that it is operating by trying to rotate the distributor rotor in the direction in which it runs. When the resistance of the control springs are felt the rotor should then return to its original position when the pressure is released. As for the vacuum control, this is really an economy device and has no effect on performance, therefore this can be dispensed with and blanked off (Jaguar in their booklet on preparation of the E-type for competition say "the vacuum advance/retard mechanism should be disconnected and the pipe blanked off").

To state the obvious, if the distributor is badly worn then a new one should be fitted. Whether a new distributor is fitted or one makes the best of the old one the timing will have to be reset, so disconnect the vacuum pipe, slacken the distributor clamp screw, prop the throttle so that the engine is running at 2500 /3000 rpm, move the distributor body round until the point is found where the engine speed is at a maximum and tighten the clamp screw in this position. It is advisable to work at the retard end of this range, i.e. retard the timing until a fall in revs is just detectable and then advance it again very slightly until the revs are recovered. It all sounds rather crude, but this method worked for me when I was sprinting my Triumph and it may be more scientific than it appears.

An engine even when running in neutral must still be developing a certain power output. This power however is being used to overcome internal friction. If the throttle opening is constant the point where the revs are at a maximum must be the point where maximum power is being developed, an elementary form of brake test, with internal friction forming the brake.

So there we have it, science or black art ?

Roger Goldthorpe - Driffield East Yorkshire

### **Parts for S. U. carburettors**

*I should mention, did I say this before? Anyway, Malcolm Rush has obtained a copy of the catalogue for SU carburettor parts available from Burlen Fuel Systems, over 200 page he tells me ! So, if you want to know more, or obtain your own copy, talk to Malcolm, you can ring him on 01948 840896. He has even offered to sort out which of the 200 odd pages are relevant to us, and arrange to provide anyone who would like to know, that specific information. Thank you Malcolm.*

*Speaking of suppliers, or more to the point recommended suppliers – I am determined to get these bits of paper off my desk ! Pat Collins has this to say about "Think Automotive Ltd" of Isleworth, Tel :- 020 8568 1172 <http://www.thinkauto.co.uk>*

"I recently used these folk for an oil pressure switch, 'T' piece and pressure pipe. They also do other engineered parts. Worth 'phoning Jeff for their brochure. "100% service for a change."

Every best wish, Pat Collins.

*And now for something completely different !*

*My good friend Bob Flockhart received the following e-mail from a friend of his in Australia the other week, and I simply couldn't resist sharing it with you.*

A frog walked into a bank in Western Australia and marched up to the teller's position where a plaque introduced the teller as one Miss P. Wack,

"Good morning". says the frog, "I'd like a loan to pay for my holidays".

"Oh" says Miss Wack "You'll need to tell us about yourself and family before we can do that".  
"Well", says the frog, "Mick Jagger is my father". "And you'll need to provide security." Says Miss Wack.

At this point, the frog takes a tiny, perfectly formed pink elephant from his pocket, and lays it on the counter, remarking that it was his security.

A puzzled and exasperated Miss Wack goes to find the manager..... "There's a frog out there..... He wants a loan. And he offers this thing as security.... What is it anyway?" She asks, holding up the pink elephant.

The manager smiles.....

"Why it's a nick-knack, Paddy Wack..  
Give the frog a loan.....  
His old man's a rolling stone!"  
Right, moving on.....

Dear Brian,

2 April 2003

Re : Kitten Clutch cable repair

By Mr. Krooner, Birkby Motors, Unit 1, Stroth Place, off Birkby Hall Road, Birkby  
Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD2 2UZ - Tel :- 01484 531264

I would like to let your readers know about all of the kind, courteous, prompt, professional service I received at the above garage today when my clutch cable suddenly failed as I was driving through Huddersfield – all at a very reasonable price!

To come and find me, drive my broken car back to the garage, and then spend several hours adapting a Robin clutch cable to fit my Kitten (they are NOT the same in any way!), was not only beyond the call of duty, but also beyond the capabilities of many garages!

Birkby Motors may not be one of the biggest Reliant dealerships, but it is surely amongst the best. From a very satisfied and happy customer.

Yours, Graeme Shaw. - Glossop

## Sales & Wants

For Sale :- Reliant Rebel saloon, Tax exempt, and M.O.T.'d, great wee car, yours for just £500,

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten Estate DL 1980, Brown. MoT till mid-December 2003. No Tax. Engine not working, big end / main bearing failure. Average condition. Now the good bits: Recently fitted new Lucas sports coil / ballast resistor. New Weber 32ICH carburettor with K&N filter (£180). Also has Kenlowe electric fan and five alloy wheels minilite-style (CTS) with Yokohama 165/60R12 tyres. Rear springs were replaced about a year ago, as were the front dampers / springs. Some parts available. Over £1000 spent on this car. Looking for good home for the complete car. Offers around £500.

For Sale :- 1976 Turquoise Kitten saloon. 106,000 miles. Much time and money spent over the last 8 years. Now a presentable and reliable little car. £475 or nearest offer. Ring Stan Cheadle

For Sale :- Kitten Estate, The number of new and recent parts is too big to list here, but include new front dampers and springs, new 12" tyres, stainless exhaust, rear wash wipe. Tax & test till July '03. Ring John

For Sale :- Kitten Estate, no MOT good chassis working engine and gearbox contact Ros Sterry

A variety of Kittens, see separate sheet enclosed for Brian Millar's cars for sale and free to good homes

For Sale :- Rebel estate, no engine, please phone for details

For Sale :- Two Reliant Rebels, one with Japanese engine, other almost all original with rebuilt gearbox. Both need attention £75 each, ring Trevor

For Sale :- Rebel Parts book and workshop Manual, ring Bob Neal.

Free to an appropriate custodian. Steven Gadsden has generously offered his set of new Kitten black carpets. All you need to do is pay the carriage.

Wanted :- Kitten heater trunking, you know, the 4" diameter thing that runs from the fan motor over the rocker cover to the bukkhead. Contact Brian Radford if you can help please

Wanted :- A Liege, if you have or know of one of these cars that is for sale please contact Rob Walker on .. Ahh, no number, ring the Editor & I'll put you in touch.

## Epilogue

Well, that is the first time for a while that I have started and finished an edition of the magazine in a couple of weeks, 9 days actually! I decided this time, against the usual method of simply deleting text from the last edition, and then adding new stuff. I started afresh, page 3 and the index page excepted, and began anew, hoping to put recent software problems behind me.

So, here we are. Moira deserves a special mention, fed up with all the boxes of paper which had gradually been taking over the hall, the natural overflow from the 'office', she kindly offered to help, that was Sunday the 3rd of May, and I could write a book about the previous week, and the one that followed. Suffice to say that my faithful old Citroen let me down, and is in the process of being dismantled for spares, and an automatic version of the same has now joined the Marshall fleet. Sorry Alan (Melmoth). I have not been brave enough to suggest the Salamander – I fear the Divorce word would have come into play!

The shredder, normally emptied three or four times a year, was emptied and refilled three times that Sunday. Several bags of re-cyclable paper were moved on to the appropriate destination, and a lot of filing was done. Even a trip to "Office World" to buy new folders and box files! Since then a minimum of 10 letters a day have been sent out in an effort to clear the backlog. This has meant typing away till midnight on a few occasions, not to mention creating this edition, which in itself cleared a number of bits of paper from the 'to action' pile.

Where am I now? Well, desperately trying to get organised for the May trip south. As to the paperwork, I can confidently say that there are less than 1,000 bits of paper in the last two boxes, I almost wish the men in white coats would come! Hang on, update on that, just the 1 box left now 15/5/03!!

Oh, Steven Green, you, well AMA 174S at any rate, was spotted parked just east of the A1 about 10 miles north of Doncaster on the 8th of March, so if you need an alibi, I saw the car! Ed.

Now you may have noticed that I used more of your letters in this edition, and did not interrupt very often at all, John Wardle's letter on Pages 10/11 however really does deserve some comment from me, so you will get that next time!

Finally, it would not do for me to fail to thank my brother Alan, for his help in securing the colour centre spread at an exceptionally reasonable rate. I realise the picture quality is not up to our usual standards, but nor did it cost anything like what the single colour picture inside edition 50 did. A compromise I am sure we can all live with quite happily on this occasion. Thank you Alan.

My apologies again to Al Osborn, I did ask for some input, he did respond appropriately, but by then I had found other bits and pieces. Next time, Al, honestly.

Have a really great summer, enjoy the cars, and the shows if you are into that kind of thing. Talk to you again in a couple of months. Oh, and don't forget the beer - well I had to mention lubrication, didn't I?

**Brian**

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**PLEASE TELEPHONE THE FACTORY FOR DETAILS OF SPECIAL OFFERS ON KITTEN PARTS. REMEMBER TO QUOTE YOUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBER.**

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**REMEMBER THAT WE ARE HERE ON THE END OF THE TELEPHONE TO OFFER WHATEVER HELP AND ADVICE WE CAN.**