



# Reliant Kitten Register

**NEWSLETTER 84**

*September - October 2008*



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

Rebel parts stock held by: - Adrian Hanwell

New Kitten / Fox / Rebel parts stock held by Brian Marshall

Rebel alternative parts list contact: John Blagburn

Kitten alternative parts list contact: **\*\*Situation vacant\*\***

Fox alternative parts list contact: Duncan Bradford,

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme is run for us by Phil Hallam

Tempest Registrar: Martin Seymour

Mewsletter pictures – should be sent to John Pearce

The Register is a member of the FBHVC, which monitors UK & EU legislation and lobbies on our behalf to protect our freedom to use vehicles of all ages on the roads. Readers are invited to show their own support of this worthy cause by becoming members in their own right. Contact the editor for details.

Web page: <http://www.kitreg.org.uk> *or have a look at* <http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk>

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Our cover picture this time is a very recent one, taken in Renfrew in August this year. Peter Linfield will I am sure be less than pleased with me, he had just driven it over 110 miles to have lunch with us on his way to Ayrshire for an event at Culzean the following day, and I just know he would have wanted to tidy the car up if he had realised what I was going to do, but it looks just fine to me, he keeps it pretty well! Thanks Peter, it was great to see you and Jennifer again, not as far as Burford I know, but a good trip none the less, and 58 mpg to I understand, well done.

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Welcome to another edition. One of several responses to the last edition was received from Roger Brown, he tells me I missed one as regards the Engineer's funny stories, : - Ask a chemist, a physicist and an engineer to add 2 plus 3. The chemist says it's about 5, the physicist says it is 5 plus/minus 0.0001 and the engineer says its 5 but we had better make it 9 for safety. Thanks for that Roger.

Of a non specific number of responses to the identity crisis question that Terry Horler raised, all but two were against change, the comment from Roger Brown was that the fact can't be avoided that the Register really should be renamed to reflect the status quo, present the best image, and continue to most efficiently record the four wheeled family. The only snag is the cumbersome name suggested, but how about "Reliant Small Quads" with the present strap line?

Now, unlike the government, I am not about to get involved in knee jerk reactions. After all, it took me a decade to finally get our logo on the cover of the mag – how many of you remember the competition to design it? Yes, you know it well, it has been on our membership cards for years - I know, what membership card I hear you ask? Well, I still do not have a working colour printer here, and the file I sent to John who had kindly offered to do it for us, he could not read. Jim Spence did repair one of my colour printers for me, but it only lasted for about a dozen pages, and again will not pick up the paper – see this technology – it's great when it works.....

At the time of writing, 6th of August, we are getting organised for our trip to Whittington. Thanks to a number of people, Philip Naylor in particular, this edition is half way to completion already, and I am wondering if I may be able to include an extra page or two, we will see!

Just back from our biblical visit to Whittington Castle, biblical? Well there were the same number of cars as there were disciples. A very nice selection, of Rebels, Kittens and Foxes, but no saloons!

The venue was first class, thank you Malcolm, the weather was varied, but the sun shone for the prizegiving, it was great to meet everyone, though I am conscious that because of our early departure we did not get to chat to everyone, or for as long as I would have liked. I was absolutely delighted that Moira made it, we had a great trip.

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## **Rebel round up**

One reason that there were no Rebel saloons at Whittington Castle was that they were all on the ROC's John O'Groats to Land's End run. Moira and I had lunch with them at Dumbarton immediately before setting off south.



I had thought there were 4 Rebels on the run, and there may have been, but the fourth one I was looking for was Kerry Croxton's. He had a gearbox failure, I was asked to try and find him an early Rebel gearbox, and propshaft, but it turned out they were for his Fox Tandy, not for one of his Rebels – is it any wonder that I get confused at times?

While I was able to organise a couple of 10" wheels and tyres for one of the Robin entrants, I was frustratingly not able to source Kerry's requirements in the time available.

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## **REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 13**

By Terry Horler

There is good news, there is bad news. Firstly, the good news, LRF 671K passed its MOT without a hitch on the 4th of August. The bad news, I got caught 'speeding' in it. Well, I am certainly proud about the first bit and none too sure how to feel about the second bit! The Rebel is just about the slowest car I have ever owned in 42 years of motoring and to cap it all, I was returning from a micro car rally with a rather heavy passenger on board. I firmly blame my passenger. He was by far the heaviest single object I have ever had in the Rebel, as we were going down a steep-ish hill at the time of the crime; I suddenly discovered that the usually 'adequate' drum brakes, simply were not on this occasion. My right leg pressure was insufficient to get me within the law; hence 39mph in a 30mph restriction resulted in an invitation to take the Speed Choice course. Well, no points on the licence but it has still cost £60 that could have otherwise been spent on a brake servo. On the plus side, I can now say the Rebel has 'officially' been timed at speed and has the 'certificate' to prove it

The 2nd of August 2008 marked the end of my third year with the Rebel and as we seem to be into annual mileage checks, mine work out as –:

Aug 2005 to Aug 2006	5,501 miles
Aug 2006 to Aug 2007	6,006 miles
Aug 2007 to Aug 2008	4,786 miles

This equates to a total mileage of 16,293 at an average fuel consumption of 44mpg. The lower mileage for my third year is thanks to being off work for 3 months.

My incapacity rather prevented any work being undertaken on LRF and my usual annual pre-MOT inspection was frighteningly brief this year. I did however replace the nearside front trunnion as this was flagged up as an advisory at the 2007 MOT. I placed my order for a new trunnion online with Rimmer's on a Saturday afternoon. I did not opt for express delivery but it arrived on Tuesday and fitted the same evening. Great service. Rimmer's offer both original and 'pattern' part trunnions, I went for the original 'Stanpart' item as I felt that the slight extra cost would give me the piece of mind that it might last longer. The 2008 MOT has now placed the offside trunnion on the advisory list so that will be a job nearer to August 2009. The only other item I spotted on my pre-MOT 'glance' over was a slightly blowing exhaust joint. This was where the down pipe meets the silencer intake pipe. No amount of adjusting or repositioning the clamp had any effect. Eventually, I felt a small blow hole just in front of the joint on the invisible side of the pipe. A piece of heat resistant tape and a hose clip fixed that.

Thinking all was well after obtaining the MOT, I arrived home with a puncture in the offside front tyre. The previous week, I returned home from the same MOT garage in my Sprite Mk1V

with a new MOT certificate – and a puncture in the offside front tyre. Do I believe in coincidence? I am certainly not superstitious otherwise this would not be REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 13. (I would have jumped to R.C. 14 and hoped that no one would have noticed!). Anyway, none of the local tyre depots had the correct tyre for either car in stock, so those had to be ordered. The Sprite tyre, although hardly worn, had a nail right on the edge of the tread where a repair is not possible. I couldn't find the cause of the Rebel's deflation but as a puncture repair would cost about half that of a new tyre, a new tyre seemed the better and safer option. The Rebel's tyres are around half worn but I do not know how old they are, tyre aging is something of an issue these days so I reckoned that I had little choice so took the safer option. Also an issue, this happened the week before the RKR gathering at Whittington Castle near Oswestry, no way was I about to tackle a 250 mile round journey without 5 tyres full of air.

Come to think of it, tackling a 250 mile round trip is something I have never attempted in the Rebel before. So, what to prepare? To cut a short story to its full length, I filled up with petrol the day before ready for a 6.30am start. I find a cruising speed of 50mph about enough for my delicate ears so I reckoned I needed to allow a good 3 hours plus 'comfort' stop to arrive at Whittington Castle for 10am. Fortunately, the previous day's torrential rain decided to have a rest on Sunday but suddenly awoke just as I passed Bridgenorth. I was too committed to even think of an about turn and carried on through the wet stuff to arrive at Whittington right on my ETA. A few RKR types had beaten me to it so I joined the orderly line up between the car park and pond (moat?). Careful reversing here as the pond (moat) had rather a steep bank and was design to capture any invaders – or Rebels, Kittens or Foxes.

There to welcome us was Malcolm Rush who organised the gathering along with Brian and Moira who had travelled all the way from somewhere near the North Pole. After 'signing in' mileage readings were taken to see who had travelled the furthest under Reliant power. I must say, my 128 miles faded into insignificance compared to some who had obviously made a huge effort to be there. Indeed, most mileages were well into 3 figures and demonstrated that distance was of little object for an all too infrequent gathering of the RKR. This was certainly my first opportunity to meet many of the names that appear in MEWSLETTER and what a friendly bunch they all are. Malcolm had thoughtfully organised tea/coffee and cake for arriving crews followed by a conducted tour of the castle and grounds. 6 hours absolutely flew by despite frequent interruptions by yet more rain. Around 16 RKR type vehicles attended but only 2 Rebels. Other than LRF, John and Jill Unwin had travelled all the way from Reading in their 700 estate with an 850 transplant. During the afternoon a white Reliant Robin pulled into the car park. Its oversize rear wheels and twin exhausts looked rather out of place as did the darkened glass. A peek inside revealed no front seats, just a large alloy fabrication, covering something. A peek underneath gave the clue, a V8. The driver sat in the back, who he was, I know not (The Stig perhaps?). As the Robin burbled away, no driver was visible in the front, with the darkened glass, was barely visible in the back either – crazy!

The time I spent chatting made me overlook the fact that LRF's heater stopped working on the journey from Yate, a sure sign that I should have topped up the radiator. Half an hour after leaving Whittington, the temperature needle started to rise slightly so it was time to stop in a picnic area to add some water. Just as I stopped, well off the road, John and Jill passed and spotted me. They about turned and stopped to offer assistance. Fortunately I had water on board and it only took a small amount to restore the heater and needle to normal service. This was more timely than I thought; shortly after leaving the picnic area I encountered the steepest hill of the whole journey. Too steep for 3rd gear yet too many revs in second gear. Thankfully, the temperature remained normal for this prop shaft twisting, gear tooth shearing climb.

Certainly, those attending Whittington were all very keen to have a gathering rather more frequently than the previous one at Burford in 2005. There was a great atmosphere at Whittington and for me, having joined in late 2005, the first time that I have been able to meet so many RKR subscribers. Again, my thanks to Malcolm for making it happen, to Brian and Moira, and to John and Jill for stopping and offering assistance on my unplanned stop homewards.

The remainder of my homeward journey was uneventful other than my gaze to move from the temperature gauge to the fuel gauge. Usually, the Rebel requires a visit to the filling station every 220 to 230 miles for around 23 litres of unleaded. Just 21 litres were required after 255 miles equating to 55mpg for the round journey, not at all bad that.

The Rebel was on the short list for another 'long' journey the following Wednesday. This was to Seaton in Devon to pick up another gearbox from Mike Plummer. Mike quickly responded to my plea for a gearbox as 3rd and 4th gears now play ping pong with the gear lever by firing it into the net, i.e. – neutral. However, after 255 miles on the Sunday plus the Monday and Tuesday commute to work, I thought I'd have a rest from Rebel motoring for the 95 mile trip to Seaton. Both the Sprites were ruled out as the weather forecast was dreadful and carrying space limited. The Mk1 Escort GT was ruled out because I couldn't be bothered to shift my daughter's unused Renault 5 out of the way in front of the garage, so it was the unspeakable estate car that got the job. I thought to make a day of it, visiting the West Somerset Railway and the Seaton Tramway before arriving at Mike's. The gearbox and propshaft were all that remained of his Rebel but he does have plenty of other vehicles to keep him busy. As I removed the gearbox from the car, the sound of something loose met my ears. Tipping the box end to end produced a tinkle from the extension housing. So spanners out to remove the housing, the propshaft nose bearing was out of its bore. Noting that the box has been apart before with only silicon instead of gaskets, this may not be the quick replacement job I had wished for. Mike knew nothing of the history of this box as his Rebel was not on the road during his ownership, other than it could moved backwards and forwards on his drive. Anyway, that's as far as we are for now, hopefully next time, I can report on a Rebel that does not have a self selecting gearbox!

Terry Horler - No. 755 from Bristol

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## **ROAD FUND LICENCE – PAYING WHEN YOU SHOULDN'T**

None of us like paying tax, whatever title it hides itself under. For the motorist, its not just VAT that catches us, duty on fuel and the 'road fund licence' all serve to keep us on the brink of starvation. Happily, our government have decreed that those of us with 'Historic' vehicles may escape paying the road fund licence. The governments view on what constitutes a Historic vehicle is very simple, one that was built before the 1st of January 1973. Most owners are not aware of when their vehicle was built, only when it was first registered. Hence, if your vehicle was first registered in early January 1973, it was almost certainly built in 1972 and would therefore qualify as being a Historic vehicle and should be tax free. Just looking at the date of first registration on the vehicles V5C is no indication of when it was built and should not be dismissed as being ineligible as a Historic vehicle.

For us, this threshold in time crossed the Rebel production years. If you are a Kitten or Fox owner, read no further. Already, we know that many Rebels were first registered long after their estimated date of construction. The loss of the factory records has made pin pointing dates very



difficult. Fortunately, Glasses Guide has recorded some dates, presumably from the records sent from Reliant to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. From this, we know that the early 750 Rebels were produced from September 1972 from VIN 94/1001. The last VIN of 1972 is not confirmed but I can say that 94/1128 was registered on the 22 December 1972. Hence, all 700 Rebels and 750 Rebels prior to 94/1128 should be Historic vehicles and road fund licence fee exempt.

If you are paying with a Rebel prior to the above, you shouldn't be. I note that we have a Rebel on file, 94/1151 first registered on the 11th January 1973 which falls across this important divide. Quite likely, this would be a Historic vehicle. If you would like to know more, please give me a ring on 01454-881770. It is possible to re-classify a vehicle' taxation class but don't expect any retrospective tax should your Rebel be so affected.

We really should thank our government for being so decisive about this. After all the long arguments that we enthusiasts have over what makes a 'Classic' vehicle, our government has the answer – One that was built prior to the 1st of January 1973.

Terry Horler

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## **REBEL REGISTER UPDATE**

In the last edition, I did refrain from jumping in with the statement 'RELIANT REBEL – ONLY 7 LEFT'. Such was the feedback from the Rebel Register forms at that time. A reminder, and another edition on, I can now jump in with the statement 'RELIANT REBEL – ONLY 12 LEFT'. Can this be true? Somehow, I suspect not.

No, I still think that there are a few more RKR subscribers out there with a secret stash of Rebels hiding under a sheet. One thing that no one could doubt, there are very few Rebels actually on the road today. The October 2007 edition of PRACTICAL CLASSICS magazine stated a figure of just 26 Rebels on the road and went on to urge readers to save these little cars. Hence, the realisation that the Rebel species has become endangered and that the RKR should now reappraise the survival rate. So, if you have or know of a Rebel, in any condition, please let us know. If you require another Register form, please contact Brian Marshall or me – Terry Horler for one to be sent.

Of the 12 Register forms received, 8 Rebels are on the road. This is not to suggest that 75% of all Rebels that remain are on the road, I don't think anyone could believe that! This only goes to show that a little information can provide very inaccurate statistics. However, despite only a little information, what we do have is proving very interesting. Some owners have provided a comprehensive dossier on their particular Rebel, so many thanks for that. Also, most owners have been asking questions about their Rebels. As a self confessed 'non expert' on the subject, I am having some trouble in finding the answers. Please, don't think I have swept these under the carpet; they serve to make the quest for knowledge even more important. As a Rebel owner with a question or two myself, I believe the truth is out there somewhere, in some file or other, which I will call mystery file 'X' for now (sorry). One thing that is certainly forming a pattern, the time period between the approximated build date and time of being registered by the first owner. Although we only have a rather wobbly idea of when chassis numbers were built, some dates of registration are very much later than one might expect. With the loss of the factory build records

for the Rebel, and so few examples surviving to use as a reference, you will understand that we have a difficult task in being precise about anything Rebelwise.

Another point that is making itself rather evident, the number of Rebels that were originally registered in Staffordshire. That is registrations that have the last 2 letters of RE or RF. Reliant were of course based in Tamworth, Staffordshire which strongly suggests that Reliant themselves could have been registering new vehicles. I must at this point thank Dave Allen who has made some research on this subject, not just on Rebels but for the whole of the Reliant range. Both Dave's research and the existing RKR Rebel register shows many Staffordshire registrations of Reliant products. Were Reliant registering vehicles to 'massage' their sales figures? A practice that some dealerships of other manufactures indulged in to keep their numbers up. You have seen the adverts 'Only delivery mileage'. 'Ex demonstrator etc etc'. This could provide the answer to my own Rebel's history – bought new by its first owner in Southampton, yet carrying an RF registration. Now that is a long way to go and buy a new car when there was a Reliant dealership in Southampton.

Both Dave and I have been registration number spotting from articles past and present and logging what we find. This does seem rather 'Anorak and thermos flask' territory but if we all subscribe to something that has 'Register' in the title, then I guess we shouldn't have to feel too embarrassed by it? More importantly, it is all information gathering and as I said earlier, with the absence of factory build records and only a very limited register, then we need to act swiftly and effectively if we are ever to be in a position to have most of the answers to most of your questions.

So what do we have? It is my intention to give regular updates on what is known Rebelwise. That should be good news to those Rebel owners who subscribe to RKR in the hope of expanding their knowledge and having their questions answered – that's why I joined anyway! To kick off with, I have gone through the existing Rebel Register that Brian kindly sent me when I volunteered to do this. I have to say that I think that this list is a 'few' years old as it failed to show my Rebel when I joined in late 2005. There were some minor typos and double entries but otherwise, somewhere near the truth. This I use as my starting point for the REBEL REGISTER UPDATE.

## **THE RKR (REBEL) REGISTER** sometime prior to 2005

Rebel model            Number on register with a Vehicle Identification Number(VIN)

600 saloon	19
700 saloon	23
700 estate/van	32
750 saloon	15
750 estate	15
750 van	17
Total	121

Rebels with no VIN stated            28

Rebels declared as scrapped        17 (Included in the above)

Total entries on register 149

I must thank Brian for pointing out the error of my ways in the last edition. In listing the VIN prefixes, my fingers rather got ahead of my brain (no surprise there really).

The 750 versions should be as follows –

Saloon S94  
Estate E94  
Van V94

Somehow, I placed a '1' after each 94. Officially, a slash follows the prefix, so perhaps I just straightened up the slash! Actually, all the 750 models started the serial number with a '1' eg – S94/1 followed by 3 numbers. So I wasn't entirely wrong, just not quite right!

Dave Allen has also provided some information on Rebel VIN prefixes which shows the first 2 numbers as being a part of the prefix. Hence, all Rebels have but a 4 digit serial number. The following list displays this. With only 4 digits, Reliant couldn't have thought that sales would be very high – they were right!

The REBEL REGISTER UPDATE, bearing in mind that some of these were already on the RKR (REBEL) register, has produced the following 'NEW' entries.

600 Saloon	1	R10 prefix or FW 10 for a pre production example
700 Saloon	3	R10
700 Estate/Van	3	E15
750 Saloon	0	S94
750 Estate	0	E94
750 Van	0	V94

The FW prefix for the very earlier VIN numbers, possibly only the first 9 Rebels, refers to the model designation code – FW4. The Rebel being the fourth Four Wheel vehicle out of the design office. In case you thought you had missed something, Dave Allen provided the following list.

FW1	Regent Four Van	1958	Reliant/Autocars Ltd
FW2	Regent Mk11 Van	1961	Sussita? Van/pickup/estate
FW3	Carmel	1963	Israel (Autocars Ltd)
FW4	Rebel	1964	
FW4a	Rebel 750	1973	
FW5	Anadol	1964	Turkey
FW6	Rebel 1600GT	1968	Ford 1600GT engined Rebel
FW7	Prototype	1969	Mid engined coupe
FW8	Prototype	1969	Replacement for the Bond Equipe
FW9	Coupe	1973	Bond Bug derived 4 wheeled coupe
FW10	Kitten	1975	
FW10a	Fox	1982	
FW11	Anadol prototype	c1975	Bertone styled

Surprisingly, I thought the Sussita, Gilboa and Rom might have crept in here somewhere. In case you are wondering about the unfamiliar names, Reliant were producing design and support help to AUTOCARS Ltd of Israel. Autocars produced quite a range of vehicles from

designs and parts from British companies. The Sussita 12 for example looked just like a Rebel estate from the side view but used a 1200cc Anglia/Cortina engine.

I have also compiled a list of registration numbers of Rebels that have appeared in print over the years. Some have been the subject of magazine articles whilst others are just photographs with little or no further information. Dave Allen has helped to extend this list as mentioned earlier. The following are those that have appeared in magazine articles.

In an effort to keep things that can be fitted on a single page, I just thought I would interrupt Terry here. I am quite sure that the energy and enthusiasm with which Terry has got to grips with matters Rebellious is plain for all to see, puts me to shame really, which is one reason why I am very glad for his help. I saw two Rebel saloons, on the road, in August, which were not on the Register, steps are being taken to contact their owners. Meantime I know of three individuals, who receive this magazine, who own a Rebel, more than 1 in one case, who have not found the time or motivation to complete and return the form to Terry. Please try to find the time to do so, your efforts will be appreciated. Brian

## REBEL REVIEWS

SOURCE	DATE	SUBJECT	REG. NO.
AUTOCAR	18 SEPT 1964	SALOON 600 (1)	938 KNX
MOTOR	19 SEPT 1964	SALOON 600 (1)*	938 KNX
SMALL CAR	OCT 1964	SALOON 600	
PRACTICAL MOTORIST	NOV 1964		
MOTOR	12 NOV 1966	SALOON 600 (2)	
MOTOR	14 OCT 1967	ESTATE 700 (3)	
POPULAR MOTORING	JAN 1968	SALOON 700 (2)	HRE 459F
VW SAFER MOTORING	3 MAR 1968	SALOON 700 (2)	JRF 194F
MOTOR	25 MAY 1968	SALOON 700 (3)	ORF 184F
AUTOCAR	20 JUN 1968	ESTATE 700 (2)	LRF 442F
PRACTICAL MOTORIST	JAN 1969		
MOTORING WHICH	JAN 1969	SALOON 1969 (3)	
FINANCIAL TIMES	12 JUL 1969	SALOON 700	ORE 251
MOTOR	10 OCT 1970		
AUTOCAR	25 MAY 1972		
COMMERCIAL MOTOR	24 NOV 1972	VAN 750 (2)	MRE 621L
THE EVENING CHRONICLE		ESTATE	MRE 620L

(1) Model introduction

(2) Road test

(3) Comparison test

\* Front cover shows Rebel AUE 38B. This reg: number also appears on a Scimitar.

Updated August 2008

Well, I think I have taken up enough space in this edition on the subject of Rebels. The Kitten, Fox and derivatives deserve just as much so I will just sign off by repeating the request - If you have any Rebel information, please get in touch.

Terry Horler



"Say ahhh - then swallow"

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## **Foxes Den**

I know, you Foxy lot are all too busy driving your vehicles to have the time to write and tell us about their adventures, well I happen to know that they do break down occasionally, so you could tell us about that, couldn't you? No it would not be bad publicity, it might give others the chance to take preventative measures – talk to us, please!

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Dear Brian,

August 2008

Thank you for the mention in dispatches. I thought I'd let you know how I have got on with putting YNG 785S back on the road, plus I enclose a few pictures as requested which I hope you will like.

I bought the car in December 2000 after looking out for a Kitten saloon. It was advertised in Autotrader in Melton Mowbray, just out of MOT. I particularly wanted a green one for some reason – and although this looked a bit sad as it had sat for a while and was damp inside, underneath it seemed remarkably clean and rust free and the interior was very smart if a bit mushroomy. The car had been resprayed in the same parrot green colour, but in two pack, so it was very shiny if with microblisters here and there. The car had been owned by Irene Howarth in Sprowston, Norwich for most of its life, and I think was being sold by her son. One of the things I like about it is the sticker in the back window "Pointer Motor Co Wroxham Rd Norwich – Fiat, Reliant, Batavus & Vespa, Mopeds Scooters" which puts it in its place! Anyway, it was ferried back to Bakewell on a lorry courtesy of the seller, who owned a lorry fleet, and remained in my garage for the next 8 years.



I must have misled you as to what was being done to it, as although I would have liked to go for a nut and bolt rebuild, the other Reliant fleet (Se5a & Fox camper) and life got in the way,

and it sat there dry but dusty, waiting patiently for attention – although I did start cleaning up the interior sometime in 2003 and must have been optimistic, it was nearly done then!

Anyway, this winter I decided I had too many cars and reluctantly decided it was time to sell, so thought I'd MOT it and do the foul deed, hoping you wouldn't notice. So up on the ramps it went, and starting underneath I wirebrushed the very small patches of rust and used rust remover, then waxoyled it all over, then sprayed over into all the nooks and crannies with my favourite old engine oil spray mixed with a bit of white spirit. I stripped the rear brakes, noting how easily they came off (unlike a Ford Fiesta I once had) and replaced brake pipes with copper and put in new wheel cylinders. I fitted new rear shock absorbers and oiled the springs and covered them with that greasy tape stuff. I filled the rear axle (it didn't have much in) and changed the oil in the gearbox. Marvelling at the lack of rust underneath I started to think – why am I doing all this work for someone else to enjoy? So that's it then – I'm keeping it!

Round the front, its off with the drums and backplates taken off – looking in an old Mewsletter I noted a member's excellent solution to the adjusters by grinding them off, drilling them, using grub screw and retaining pin each side, then wirebrushed, cleaned, rustproofed and painted, 4 new wheel cylinders and new brake pipes, grease bearings and put together. Greased the ball joints which were all OK and wishbones very clean and rust free. I think it must have been garaged most of its life. Sloshed the waxoyl about again. The bottom ball joints for some reason didn't have grease nipples so I drilled carefully into the bottom, and tapped with 6mm tap and fitted new nipples. Final squirt of oil, then round to the job I'd been avoiding – the body roll bar to the chassis, surprisingly, had rotted quite badly compared to the rest of the underneath. I think the reason from what I can see is that Reliant didn't seem to have bothered to paint them. Mmm this could be tricky. After a bit of a scrape and prise away of glass fibre around where it disappeared into the body on each side, luck seemed to be in as there remained about 2 inches of good square tube visible above the corroded bit which had largely disappeared near the mounting. Anyway, using a hand held sharp hacksaw blade (good Sheffield one) mounted in one of those wooden handled things with the blade slotted down the handle and tightened with a screw, and underneath the wheel arch (on axle stands!) I managed to cut through each side – a tedious hour or so each - leaving about an inch and a half showing, then filed the stubs square. Given I couldn't get a welder at the stubs I made up a new length from some  $\frac{3}{4}$ " square section, and cutting bits from a length of 1" square section I welded this to the repair section to form a snug square socket to fit round the protruding stub. I then drilled a hole through the socket and fitted it over the stub, then drilled through the stub – I could just about get a drill to it. On the reverse side of the socket I welded a captive M8 nut (back on the bench that is). I then cut out a new mounting plate, drilling the holes using the old one as a template, then clamped it up each side, noting the right position, then welded it to the new square section bit at the correct angle. Finally, I painted the whole thing, put plenty of waxoyl and grease on it and fitted it each side by passing an M8 bolt through and tightening up.

Inside? I stripped out the interior and noticed how much water kept coming in. This was traced to the doors and the lack of plastic sheeting. Cutting a new plastic sheet was straightforward and I finally cured the leaks by ensuring the plastic was taped right up to the stainless steel door card retaining thing so any drips didn't bypass the plastic. I also traced a leak into the boot to the rear hatch seal which was sealed with a bit of silicone. Is my Kitten the only dry one now?! The door covers were stripped down as the hardboard cards were all bent and mouldy, and new ones were cut using the old ones as a pattern. The old vinyl covers were restapled to the new ones and cleaned up. The seats are in superb condition as they had been protected all their life with seat covers. I had to take off both covers however to repair some of the

seams with new stitching and weld one of the frames. I also eradicated the mould stains by scrubbing the seats with a slightly diluted bleach solution. New carpets were cut from the old patterns using some carpet I bought from Val Walker the Scimitar dealer ages ago – it was sold as Scimitar carpet, which it wasn't, but it looked like it had come off the same roll as the original Kitten carpet! I wasn't very happy with the fit of the gear lever gaiter so I went to the scrappy and came away with a Ford gearlever rubber and its retaining ring, which fitted after a bit of argy bargy. The old Kitten rubber fits over this and looks original, with the benefit of better sound proofing. The interior looks pretty much as it did when new so am pretty pleased with it. Final touch was a brown spare wheel cover purchased from your good self which I had been hoarding. The rear light units were rebuilt using new stainless steel contacts to replace the rusted mild steel ones which was a bit tedious with a few hours shed work and a soldering iron.



Engine? At 86,000 miles it runs very sweetly and all it needed was oil change, filters, plugs, tappet adjust, points, timing etc. I cleaned up and sprayed most of the ancillary bits to make it look smarter. I bought a carb rebuild kit from Burlen to improve the carb. I dispensed with the belt driven fan and using a Metro electric fan fitted this in front of the radiator using some stainless steel bracketry mounted from the two radiator mounting nuts at the top and the chassis at the bottom. A relay was fitted and a spare blower switch used as a manual switch from one of the spare switch holes in the dash, which I find only really needs to be used in traffic. I suppose one day I could work out how to do a thermostat driven switch. I was a bit puzzled by a problem of poor starting, and when the engine ran, it went reasonably smoothly (enough to think it was OK),



but when gear was engaged it backfired and stalled repeatedly and just wouldn't pull under any load. After a lot of frustration I started to think it was electrical / timing even though I had it perfectly timed on the strobe. Inspiration dawned (amazing what comes up when you type "backfiring through the carb" in Google!) and checking my Fox I checked back to the Kitten and was absolutely amazed to find that I had the spark plugs firing in the correct order, but the wrong way round from the Fox, so I had 1243 rather than 1342. So, a quick swap round and it ran as sweet as anything and started instantly – serves me right for not paying attention!

Anyway, sorry for being a bit long winded. One of the good things about waiting 8 years is it builds up anticipation. What's my impression of it? I have now done about 850 miles in it and think its great fun – what a super little car Reliant made. Although it's a bit slow up some of the larger hills we have in the Peak District, it bowls along well enough at 40 – 50 mph and is fun round the bends. The first time I tested the fuel I reckoned I was getting about 57 mpg. The second & third time – ensuring I filled to the brim both times – I calculated an awesome 70.7 & 72mpg which I wouldn't have thought possible, including some quite long motorway journeys cruising at 50 as well as tooling around country lanes. Of all my cars, I think this is the one I will part with last – whilst I like my Scimitar (the subject of another long rebuild) I particularly like the design purity of the Kitten, in terms of its simplicity, lightness, and fitness for purpose in these days of high fuel costs!

I have a couple of outstanding jobs. One is to refurb and fit the Kitten alloy wheels I bought off Ebay a few years ago. The other is to try and work out how the rear hatch holding thingy works as its broken. Finally I wonder if you could put a wanted in the mag?

I would like to find some brown original plastic mouldings for the rear three quarter panels for the boot., left and right hand side for a saloon. Plus a matching boot cover if anyone has one. All in perfect condition with no cracks in the plastic to match the rest of the interior? I am happy to pay postage plus asking price if anyone has one or more of these items

Regards and best wishes, and may I thank you again for providing such interesting reading & fabulous encouragement for us to keep these little cars going, without which I may not have persevered!

Philip (Naylor) from Derbyshire, No. 507

*Philip, thank you, both for the article and your kind words. They arrived just 48 hours before we were due to pack for our departure to Whittington Castle, Moira had a list of tasks which, given the speed I make progress at these days, looked like a week's work, but I just had to get the article in, and the pictures too. (What was I saying about knee jerk reactions?) The car looks really good, and while you cruise at a very economical speed indeed, the fuel consumption you are achieving is excellent, I doubt many Kitten owners achieve those levels of economy. I know I never did, 60mpg was the best I ever managed on a tankful, and that was trying really really hard in the height of summer. In reality I think 47 was an average figure that I could achieve month on month, mind you, I could not resist moving a bit more quickly across the surface of the planet than you do!*

*As far as your new plan to keep the car is concerned, you are preaching to the converted, a good Kitten is a very hard act to follow even 3 decades on and ignoring the several thousand pounds a modern replacement might cost. The benefits of the wee Reliants, (I include Rebels*

*and Foxes in that), are absolutely amazing, and stand up well in comparison with modern machinery as far as ability to do the job us concerned.*

*As for you misleading me about the car, I was probably just not paying enough attention!*

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## **QUIRISITIES!**

After what I was saying about how well the wee Reliant 4 wheelers stand up in comparison with more modern tinware, someone has been enjoying a bit of luxury recently in the form of a Rover 75 tourer, as they call the estate car these days. (like Citroens, Rovers have depreciated rapidly in value, you can pick up what was a £33,000 car 7 years ago for about £3,300!) ) It was intended as a replacement for a 17 year old Citroen BX. Like the Citroen the Rover is diesel and automatic, and on paper, more economical. But, there is always one of them, isn't there?

You really miss a number of the Citroen's features, its turning circle for one, a lot better than the Rover's, though nothing like a Kitten or Fox! Also the ease of operation, little things like the hazard flashers, some families blink them every time they leave home, so they are used every day. In the Citroen the switch is one of 4, 2 either side of the instrument binnacle, which you punch with your thumb, it is right there in your line of sight when looking forward, but in the Rover it lurks beside the handbrake lever, and mastering its operation without taking ones eyes off the road is a skill indeed.

The Rover has its benefits, in no particular order, the cruise control is great, the reversing buzzer parking sensors are wonderful, till you get into the Citroen and almost demolish a wall waiting for the bleeper which is not there to warn you! She who likes to think she must be obeyed loves the air conditioning, and you can be sure that in the winter the heated front seats, which adjust electrically, will be wonderful. The electrically adjustable door mirrors are a boon as well. On cold mornings the demisting is first class, even the rear side windows have heater elements in them, and the doors shut with a real 'clunk' like doors really should, reminds one of railway carriages from a bygone age! The tailgate, you can open the glass separately if you wish, opens really high, there is no lip, so loading is a dawdle, and it makes a wonderful seat with ones feet dangling over the back bumper able to touch the ground, great for picnics, without the need for picnic chairs!

Leather upholstery, well, It's a matter of taste really, but it will I fear not prove to be as hard wearing as the Citroen's cloth stuff, which has survived well in spite of the dog! Indeed a small tear is already developing on the driver's seat of the Rover, probably due to the driver's odd way of getting in and out, even though the BX is 10 years older, it is faring really well in that regard!

As far as ability to eat miles in comfort goes, you really cannot beat that magic carpet ride that the Citroen hydraulics give you, while the Rover weighs over 2 tons, and is well sprung, you do feel the bumps more than in the Citroen, though the cruise control on the Rover does make the miles easy. The noise levels inside the Rover are very low, the Citroen at 60 sounds like the Rover at speeds one is not allowed to boast about in writing, but half as much again and then some would be no exaggeration. On a run down to junction 30 on the M1 a couple of months ago, and, don't tell anyone, but a figure of 72 was achieved, not fuel consumption sadly, it was just over half that, but average speed! It's over 20 years since I knew anyone averaging better than that, even on a long run.

Part of the reason for the quiet pace is the gearing. I remember my father telling me when we were passed in a Jowett Javelin by a very fast Jensen when approaching Kincardine Bridge in the mid 1960's, that it's engine was only doing 3,000rpm at ninety, roughly twice as many miles an hour as the Javelin for the same revs, well the Rover is doing the ton at just 3,000rpm, now that is what I call progress! Oh, that Jensen, Dad thought he was leaving braking a bit late for the roundabout, in fact he turned up a side road 80 yards short of the roundabout!

So, is it just that one has been driving and enjoying BXs for over a decade, and is slow to adapt in old age? Or is it that they, like our beloved wee Reliants are truly a hard act to follow?  
Anon!

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## Us.

After what I was saying about numbers, we signed up 5 new people in July, then 2 on the first of August – it's been a while since we had more than 1 new subscriber in a day, they were both special cases, and so writing to welcome them took longer than usual, but it is great fun. In fact I had three bits of hand-written mail that morning, the first out of the envelope was from a chap in Northern Ireland who had contacted me about Reliants in general, and was good enough to let me know that he had bought a three wheeler and so would not be joining us ;-

Brian,

28th July '08

Thank you for your letter about the "Kitten Register". I have bought a 1994 Robin in Northern Ireland, and will be contacting Sandy Riddoch (Reliant Owners Club Thistle branch membership secretary) to join that club.

Many thanks, Alan Brown, Ballyalcock, Newtonards

*I know it was negative as far as we are concerned, but how good of him to take the trouble to let me know, even some negatives can be positive!*

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Brian,

31/7/08

Please find cheque and form enclosed to re join the Kitten Register as I was a member years ago with a Kitten Estate (Now I had forgotten that, but in defence of my memory it was 9 years ago! Ed.) a vehicle I wish I had hung onto as it went with a shedload of spares.

I have returned from being a Land Rover owner, as you may well know they have a very strong following.

I have acquired a tidy Fox as that is what I was after, and after curing a few problems and a good tune up it runs "as sweet as a nut".

Still plenty to check out on the suspension front to ensure all is O.K.

I did have a bad experience with a dealer who sold me inferior used parts at inflated prices which I did not expect from a supposedly enthusiast web site. Still, I won't be using them again that's for sure!

Anyway I always found the Kitten Register to be a friendly group in the past, and look forward to re-joining them

Many thanks, all the best. Les Smith Ashford No. 378

*Les, welcome back. Your acquisition has highlighted more of my failings I am sorry to say! The Fox you have now belonged, not that long ago (could be a couple of years given the pace I tend to move at these days) to Keith Gittus. Keith, as everyone who read the last edition will be aware, has two Foxes, but when I updated your record to include B591 BOA, that only left Keith with 1. So I have missed something – I'll give Keith a ring and sort all this out before you all read it, but it brings home to me the need both to ensure that owners who renew do both complete and return their renewal notices, and probably more to the point, that I don't take 8 months or more to update our records from these forms!*

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*The third letter that day, which raised more questions as far as the Rebel Register goes, and, well, read on.*

Dear Brian,

28th July 08

I enclose my registration form and £16 cheque, and look forward to receiving the back issues of the 'Mewsletter'.

I enjoyed the copy you sent me, if you like I could write a small article about the long journey home with the Rebel (on the end of a tow rope), and my plans for it later this year driving through France down to Spain for a week where I will be a volunteer at an animal shelter.

Hopefully we can get the small parts we spoke of to get it through the M.O.T. and start work on making it reliable enough for the trip in October.

Regards, Francis Newall - Maidenhead No. 839

*So, there's ambition for you, I am sure Adrian did something similar in one of his Rebels a couple of decades or so back, I know Adrian does not read magazines the moment they arrive, but saves them for a time of leisure, if you do get to this bit before Christmas Adrian, perhaps you could confirm? I seem to remember colour pictures, was it a blue one? And when and where was that exactly?*

*Moving on, taking a vehicle that is over 35 years old, and that has not been on the road for a while on such an adventure is just great, and fine, wonderful even, but with so short a time to test for reliability has to be brave. I can remember, just, the days when I had such confidence and enthusiasm, it does seem a long time ago now!*

*So, there you have it. Three letters on the same day, not unheard of, but the fact is that the majority of people joining us do not enclose letters, so I thought them worth a mention.*

*The question regarding the Rebel Register. Terry and I do not yet have an agreed procedure (unless my memory is worse than I thought!) for dealing with new Rebel owners. And this one was as new as they get, a new individual, with a Rebel previously unknown to the Register.*

*I did explain that situation to Francis, (part of the reason that the standard welcome letter was not exactly appropriate) and enclosed one of the new forms that you got earlier this year about Terry's efforts to improve and up-date the Rebel Register, which seemed like a reasonable compromise. It does ask a couple of questions that 'our' application form does not.*

*Does this mean that in future I need to look out for new Rebel owners, and treat them differently from everyone else – oh bother, here was I trying to make my life simpler, I should have known better – if 'taint broke don't fix it - springs to mind! Never mind Terry, we will get there.*

*You should be aware of the recent attempt to up-date the Rebel Register, which Terry has kindly undertaken this year. However, as you will have read last time, the initial response from our readers was that less than half of the people who I know have a Rebel, took the time to complete and return the form to Terry.*

*This helps, in my mind at any rate, highlight the need to either more clearly define the task, i.e. just what is the point of such a Register? Or perhaps emphasise the need for a revision of what they call our "Mission Statement". Neither of which I really want to think about, but perhaps I should, what do you think?*

*Based on previous requests for your opinion, I suspect that apathy rules, and that you are perfectly happy to let things drift along as they have in the past. After all, I'm not a bad chap, mean well, if a bit forgetful at times, and while the grammar and spelling may not be perfect, (our beloved proof reader found 36 mistakes in this edition after I had checked it till I was blue in the face!) they do stand up well in these times. Seriously, your thoughts, ideas and opinions will be welcome. TALK TO ME!*

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Hi Brian, had a quick read of Mewsletter 83 this morning yes dealers could be allocated block registration numbers, though it was usually larger dealers that did this. I think it was up to a month in advance of the new registration year letter coming out. Customers would have picked their new vehicles and dealers were very busy doing pre delivery inspections putting number plates on and cleaning vehicles some dealers even stayed open so that customers could drive them home just after midnight on the 1st of August. See attachment I also see you have an item about chassis numbering in the 80's. I am going to send you some vin and chassis number info for Reliant vehicles Some of it is Scimitar but most of it crosses over, note I am still working on some as I do not have all the chassis information on earlier Regals and TW9's etc yet. I may have to send this in stages hope it should help you identify vehicles on your register a little easier. I will start with vins

Regards, Dave (Allen) Tyne and Wear No. 791

## Whittington Castle Tour

Our deepest thanks to Malcolm Rush who not only organised this ideal venue for us, but treated us all to tea and cakes too. He even, eventually, managed to have the sun come out, a man of great influence and organisational abilities, but where have all the saloons gone?

Moira and I arrived just before 10:00am to find two Rebels, Two Kittens and a Fox had beaten us to it. We had seen the Fox the previous evening, the sat. nav. having let us down with the search for our B&B, we elected to leave nothing to chance, and sought out Whittington Castle on the Saturday evening – just to be certain that we knew where we were going on the Sunday morning! And what did we see in the hotel carpark across the road?



You remember Mary Metcalfe, the girl I was having secret correspondence with a while back? Well, that is the Fox that she ultimately bought her husband John for his birthday, lucky John! Good to finally meet you Mary.



See, the sun did eventually shine, and over, the early risers.:-







It was great to finally meet Terry Horler, and everyone else, as well as renewing old acquaintances like Andrew and Angie, and Duncan Bradford, who was the furthest travelled by Reliant, and John and Susan Pearce, and of course our host, Malcolm. With hindsight and better planning, we should have spent two nights near the venue, and would not have had to dash off with such haste. I will try to be better organised next time.

I will long remember the look of delight, or was it disbelief?!, on Daniel Rodd's face when he won the car of the day award with his Fox pick-up. Well done Daniel, it says something for our self judging system. I had not anticipated that some owners would not want to have their cars in the competition, and we had not devised a way of letting the judges know if a particular vehicle was in the competition or not. A lesson for the future methinks.

I can't speak for everyone, especially as we were among the first to leave – gave everyone time to talk about me! Moira and I thoroughly enjoyed our trip, would we do it again? Certainly. Should we make it a more frequent event? Let me know what you think.

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Dave Allen, our man in Wallsend, is looking for support at the following event run to support the great north air ambulance people

**Croft Race Circuit. Darlington.  
DDMC. Club Race Meeting.  
Sat/Sun 27/28th September.  
Exhibitors Free Camp Sat Night.  
(Sorry No Pets Allowed)**

**Contact. Colin Toner.**  
E-mail [colin.toner@ntlworld.com](mailto:colin.toner@ntlworld.com)  
Tel. (M) 07709377741

Visit. [www.greatnorthairambulance.co.uk](http://www.greatnorthairambulance.co.uk)

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## **Getting Technical**

Dick Goodall is one of two Scottish resident readers who have recently found the need to be fitting new dampers and springs to the front of their Kittens. Jim Smith, one of our 'silent majority' readers, recently went on holiday to the Black Isle, which is but a few miles from Tore, and he was good enough to pop along with his camera, thank you Jim.



I am sure that Dick will be providing us with some details, it was not just dampers and springs, but a new lower wishbone and strut that he needed after an emergency stop caused the old strut to fail !

There was at first a communications failure, for which I accept some responsibility, as to how far you need to screw those spring seats up to get the ride height correct. Four fingers is about it, go on, get out there and check yours, and then I'll ask you to measure your fingers!



As you will see from the previous picture, the spring seat needs to be moved up about 20 turns to achieve such a gap above the tyre. Dick had come to the conclusion before fitting them, that little or no adjustment was required, so he fitted them with the spring seat at the bottom of the damper, only to discover that there was no clearance between the top of the tyre and the wheel arch! When I mentioned 20 turns to Duncan at Whittington the other day, he said that would take them to the top of the thread, so Dick must have meant 20 quarter turns, well, it is a pretty good picture, I count fully 20 threads below the bottom of the spring seat.



I can see that I ought to introduce Dick to stainless self tappers for holding the plastic front grill on!

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Still on the matter of front suspension, dampers and springs in particular, I always ask for feedback on how these work, and what settings people use. Yoland Brown recently had a pair for her Tempest, frustratingly 10 days before delivery of the lighter springs which John Melody and I felt might be more appropriate for the Tempest, here is her other half's response, thank you Roger.

Hi Brian,

16/8/2008

The ride height measurement on Yoland's Tempest is 4cm from bottom of the threads to the bottom of the support ring, which looks to be equivalent to the distance on the old

components. The garage set the dampers at 7 clicks as Mick (our mechanic) said that felt right. We drove about 30 miles on a variety of roads and it felt fine, so don't intend to change it.

Regards, Roger

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## **Strutting Kitty's stuff**

Here's a cautionary tale about Kitty, and this has been mentioned in earlier Mewsletters. First to set the stage.

I had recently fitted a rebuilt steering rack, no special problems but I wish I did not find it necessary to remove the radiator for easy access to the top two rack securing bolts. Once all had been refitted I filled the radiator with coolant, which promptly trickled out onto the ground. Eventually I found that not only had the bottom hose perished at its lower end, but the bottom hose clip had jammed and would not tighten anyway. Luckily I had a spare hose in stock. After this I thought I could have a period of trouble free motoring. WRONG!!

At my local garage I had filled the car with fuel and was pulling away when another car drove straight across my bows, naturally I stood on the brake pedal and stopped, at which there was a 'Bang' then 'Crunch' from somewhere at the front. Oh dear, what has broken? It's only half a mile home, so I drove at walking pace, hoping things would hold together, luckily they did. A quick peek revealed at least one cause of the problem, for the n/s track control arm (or strut) had broken where the U section joins the rubber bush housing. I seem to recall reading about that possibility in an earlier Mewsletter. The worrying point is that the section had fractured across until only a quarter inch width was left, which the sharp stop had broken.

So I contacted our esteemed Registrar whose excellent forward planning has resulted in him holding a small stock of these struts. I ordered two, after all, if one has broken, can the other be far behind? Having finished the usual chores, the road wheel was removed to reveal that the lower wishbone too was in a state of diminishing structural integrity, for the steel cylinder which houses the rubber bush at the chassis end had partly sheared too. There was nothing for it but to spray WD40 on all the bolts and break for lunch to let things (perhaps!) free off.

Having resumed activities, I feared that all bolts would be seized solid, others have experienced that situation, do you recall Duncan Bradford's articles on his FOX front suspension overhaul? Forcing myself to take things steadily I worked away and eventually all the necessary bolts came undone. Even the inner pivot for the lower wishbone. This I consider remarkable. Of course this car was rebuilt by Brian Millar a few years ago, he does pay attention to detail, and in all cases he had greased the bolts, with a yellow ochre type material which I have not seen before. It seems even better than copper grease. Now believed to be a Rocol product though I cannot find out the part number or a supplier. I owe you a deep debt of gratitude Mr. Millar!

The bottom wishbone was indeed broken at its inner end, nothing for it but to phone Brian again, whose efficiency has resulted in wishbones being in stock. Is there no end to this man's foresight?

In due course two struts and a wishbone together with rubber bushes arrived. As some of you may know, rubber bushes do not go into place easily, someone suggested a garage press.

But by this time I was tired of catching the bus walking about town and recalled a DIY method used years ago to fit bushes to a rear spring on my A35 van. Yes, I'm that old! *(Hang on Dick, my Austin van was an A30, from 1956 [chrome grill] to which I fitted flasher indicators to replace the semaphores, or trafficators as we called them, and half the folk reading this will have not a clue what I am talking about, but the wise half will know exactly what I mean! Ed)* So after rummaging about in the shed I found a length of M10 studding, hex nuts, and a selection of plain washers, I had to be careful to select washers with the required diameters, both internal and external. The idea is simply to draw the bush into place by tightening the nuts. The first bush got quite tight halfway in the wishbone, so I recalled words of wisdom from a friend and applied washing up liquid as lubricant. It worked, though a couple of times after I tightened things up I had to wait for the rubber to creep a bit further into place.

I had placed the second bush in the freezer for a couple of hours to see if it would shrink a bit on outside diameter for easier fitting, but it did not. Having applied liquid to the inside of the Strut the bush went in better than the first attempt, but still needed time to creep in.



So for the 3rd and last bush and second Strut, I liberally applied washing up liquid to both the bore and bush outside. This time it went in much better, though another couple of applications of 'lubricant' were needed during bush entry.

I took photos of the method which explain it much better than words. Now if I had a lathe I realised that I could have made special tools to make this job easier. Dream on!

Just before all this nonsense of failed parts occurred I had bought new (shock! horror!) from our Spares stock, a couple of new front spring + damper assemblies because the ones on Kitty were soft and leaking. It's called a Distress Purchase isn't it? Opinion seemed to be that they would require adjustment which needs a 'C' spanner. I couldn't source one easily. But when I

compared the length of new and old units they were the same within a 1/4" as received and that seemed good enough for me.



And now if tomorrow is dry, work will hopefully proceed.....

Now I had to fit the wishbone. When the rubber bush was fitted it had squashed out so it was longer than its steel inner so I had to gently push the wishbone into place with a jack. The bolt is 7/16" UNF, an unusual size, and so I had to re-use the old one but with a new spring washer under the head. It was not too difficult to poke a round rod down the hole to wriggle the rubber bush into place at the front, but the back end just would not go into place. I tried several ideas then, bright spark (!) that I am, shone a torch down the bolt-hole and saw quickly where the bush had to be moved. Soon the bolt slid into place. I had not been able to locate the same grease used before, and so coated the bolt with Copaslip. It should help. Reliant's original design provided a welded on nut to fasten the end of the bolt. These apparently are a real pain as they often crumple and spin when dismantling is undertaken. However Brian Millar had replaced them with a piece of flat steel bar with an offset tapped hole, which does the job well.

Now I thought I was getting somewhere, and attempted to fit the Strut, which would not enter the wishbone no matter how I tried. Luckily I still have micrometers and bore gauges from my apprentice days. It soon was obvious that both of the Struts were rather too wide to fit the wishbone aperture. Hmm. So I measured the Strut widths, they varied, and the wishbone aperture differed on each side. Rather than start carving away at new parts, I phoned our Editor, who agreed to send another pair of struts, in bare metal this time, to see if this helped.

The next couple of days was the weekend so no post, just as well for my back played up. Once the parcel arrived I tried the new pair of struts for size. Hmm again. Both were still too wide to fit the wishbone. Just what was happening? So for interest I measured the aperture on each

side of the wishbone, to find that one was 0.050" wider than the other. Of course the narrow side was the one I needed to use. No I won't say Hmm again! I did think other words though.....

Having measured the wall thickness of the wishbone end, I decided it would be safe to reduce it to fit. So after clamping the Strut in the vice I set to with a grinding wheel in the electric drill and carefully worked away on both sides in turn until the size was reduced to fit. If you use this method PLEASE use goggles and a pair of work gloves and go very canny. A flat file would have worked well, if needing more effort, but I lent mine to friend a while ago.....

As I said, the 2nd pair of Struts were bare metal, so I unearthed a 2 pack kit of epoxy resin paint (from Rustbusters of Peterborough) which I bought a while ago. Might as well give it a try, it's paid for. It went on with a brush quite well, the snag is the extended curing time. After 7 hours it was still tacky. So the rubber bush will not get fitted today. But it did next day. I realised that new bolts etc. were needed and ordered them from Namrick. (tel 01273 779864). UNF bolts are not available locally now.

For the record, the parts needed are:-

Inner end of wishbone to chassis-

7/16" UNF bolt x 2 1/2" lg

7/16" spring washer

7/16" flat washer

plus special nut, if needed, made from flat steel bar.

Outer end of wishbone to suspension unit and balljoint

1/2" UNF bolt x 3 1/4" lg

1/2" plain washer

1/2" UNF Nyloc nut

plus special tubular spacer salvaged from old bolt

Outer end of wishbone to strut

5/16" UNF bolt x 2 1/2" lg

5/16" plain washer

5/16" UNF Nyloc nut

Strut to wishbone

5/16" UNF bolt x 2" lg

5/16" plain washer

5/16" UNF Nyloc nut

If coating the 1/2" and 5/16" bolts with Copaslip, coat the shank but DO NOT coat the threads or the Nyloc insert will not act as a locking device.

Having stalled on one side of the car, I turned my tender affections to the other. The wishbone to strut bolt came out after a while. Then I removed the nut on the strut to chassis end. But the bolt would not come out, it just turned a bit on the rubber bush. As I was waiting for the required bolts to come in the post from Namrick. I applied WD40 liberally and left it. Of course this was again at the weekend. So I had a couple of days to several times re-apply WD40 and try to free the bolt which was well seized in the rubber bush steel inner sleeve. Salt water from the roads is a powerful rusting agent. However I did have the opportunity to apply a 2nd coat of paint to the strut! The finish was quite reasonable.

Here's an aside which may be of passing interest. I was listening to the radio and someone had asked how WD40 got its name. After a bit of research they came up with this explanation. In the early 1950s the Rocket chemical corporation in the USA was developing a spray for use in the space programme. They tried several different formulae until they got the product right. The problem of a name came up. Well it's a water dispersant, among other things, and it took 40 attempts to get it right. So the obvious name was Rocket WD40! They soon realised that the product had uses for many other purposes than the space programme and put it on the market, though the 'Rocket' part of the name was soon dropped. The trivial knowledge that I accumulate....

On Tuesday the pack of bolts arrived. Great! Reassembly of the first side was reasonably uneventful (see comment below regarding tightening the bolts fully!) just common snags. Best to make sure the clicker knob that adjusts the damper settings faces to the outside of the car so it can be accessed easily. And best make sure that the wee grub screw that locks the round nut at the bottom of the spring faces outward too, in case spring adjustment is required. By the way, there is a nylon plug under the grubscrew so that the threads are not damaged after tightening. Don't forget to tighten the grubscrew so the nut cannot move! Then I refitted the roadwheel. As I still could not remove the front bolt on the 2nd side strut, I inspected it closely and it looked OK. After a bit of thought I decided that the nearside takes all the shock from roadside pot-holes and the offside should not be so stressed so it should be OK. Then I reassembled the offside with a new suspension unit. My method was to fit the top and tighten the nut loosely then fiddle the wishbone, ball joint fork and suspension unit together, they were a bit tight, then use a screwdriver to line the holes up so the bolt could be inserted. It's not a good idea to fully tighten the bolts with the suspension dangling so the wishbone was jacked up into my best estimate of the position when the wheels are on the ground and all bolts and nuts finally tightened. That way the rubber bushes are in a 'neutral' position and only flex when the suspension moves up and down when travelling. My word, don't the new suspension units look smart! Then on with the road wheel and I lowered the car to ground, tightened the wheel nuts and I thought the job was done. WRONG! For the top of the wheel arches were virtually touching the top of the tyres. Obviously the springs do need adjustment after all. At this point, and luckily, my neighbour popped round and saw the problem. He kindly offered to borrow a C spanner from work to adjust the springs. It was a Tenka tools size 2" – 4 1/4" item.

Having borrowed the spanner, up with nearside of the car and on an axle stand, off with the road wheel and oh! the round nut was catching on the wishbone and could not turn. A jack and piece of wood soon lifted the wishbone enough to free it and adjustment began. At one sixth of a turn at a time (the normal way of progressing on any Reliant job?) I tightened the springs by 10 turns of the nut in total then after refitting the roadwheel lowered the car to the ground. It seems that there should be about a hands width of space between the top of the tyre and the wheel arch, but there was not enough by half. So I repeated the process and ended up with the spring seat raised 20 turns. This time it looked near right. Having done the same with the offside the gaps on each side then seemed about right. Opinions vary as to how many clicks to turn the adjuster knob for damping, so I gave it 6 clicks for a first trial.

A road test to the next village on the following day showed that the settings were about right for this car, certainly the ride is improved so much that I am wondering if the same type of dampers would improve the hard ride at the rear! Though I think I've spent enough money for the present.



Conclusions? A fiddly job but could have been much worse if all the bolts had been seized. Compress the springs on new suspension units by 20 turns before fitting, easier off the car! Order new bolts before starting the job to save time. And note the angle of the wishbones before dismantling so the bolts can be tightened with the wishbone at the same angle on assembly.

It only remains to thank our Registrar, Brian Millar and Namrick, without whose help I would have been hard pressed to save the car from oblivion. And suspension unit stockholder Duncan Bradford for speedy despatch,

Dick Goodall Tore #157

Footnote. After 4 weeks I checked all nuts etc, for tightness and, yes, they did need tightened. Obviously parts had bedded in!



## Parts

The matter of back springs is currently causing some frustration. Spring steel is now over £1,000 a ton, and if that was not bad enough the minimum batch quantity for rolling any given size is 10 tons, or possible even 10 Tonnes, either way we are not about to invest over £10,000 (plus vat!) in spring steel stock, never mind the work involved in turning it into springs! So, the dilemma is, given that our supplier has no 3/16" stock, and for the above reasons never expects to have any ever again. What do we do? , They do have some 7/32", in the correct width, do we use that? And if so do we make Kitten springs with one less leaf to compensate? Should we simply offer kits and let you build your own? I can see difficulties there, I know how easy it isn't to press those

bushes in, and as for the clamps that bind the leafs together – no, I don't think we will go that way either.

They did say, not ones to wear blinkers, that we could opt to use the thicker material, and have it ground down – I dread to think what that would cost, and would the grinding process harm the temper?, probably not given that they are the experts, but you never know? I don't think we want to go that way!

They also tell me that in the past they have used two 3/16" leafs and two 5/32" ones to make Kitten springs, but do not have any 5/32" material in stock either.

So, help! Do you happen to have a few hundred feet of 1 3/4" by 3/16" spring steel lying about? (rust free of course) or know anyone who has?

I was going to have Fox springs made at the same time, the top leaf is certainly the same as that on a Kitten, albeit with a different bush at the front, and by the time you read this I will have measured a new Fox one to see if the intermediate leafs are the same length as any of the Kitten ones. What difference does the length of the other leafs make anyway? I guess I need to learn more about leaf spring theory. In practice I don't think leaf length is critical, even the top one can be plus or minus quarter of an inch or more and work fine. Come back the good old days when British Springs made them, (their phone number does not work these days, even though it appears on a web site of theirs!) and I could just ring up and quote the part number, and the cost was reasonable too. It's true what the song says, "You don't know what you've got till it's gone"



Yes of course there will be that chap in India, or his cousin in China, who might be able to help, but do they understand the British Standards that we work to? Perhaps that is an unfair question, B. S. I. is internationally recognised, but ask anyone in the know about the quality of Chinese steel, or indeed any other material, I have no plans to be doing chemical analysis!



Watch this space, and if you can help, please do so. Yes of course I am in touch with other potential suppliers, but I have a limited amount of time to spend on this, important as it is, getting this magazine out in good time is an even higher priority just now, see how important you are!.

Thanks to John Box, I now have measurements of a new Fox spring, it is as I feared, only the top leaf is the same, oh bother!

And how come the one with 5 leaves has only 1 clamp, while our Kitten ones with 4 have 2? Like I said, I need to learn more!!!

.....

## Sales and Wants

For Sale :- Fox 1984, custom van/pick up in cream - chassis restored and body re/fitted - good engine & gearbox & back axle. all brake-shoes & wheel cylinders are new - heater unit o/hailed & fitted - electric fan conversion - has 4 -10inch alloy wheels but will require tyres - £475 for a quick sale, all spares that I have will go with the Fox- will require trailering David Eyre, South Yorkshire

Avoid the gearbox crunch. 4 new Syncro cups for the price of one ! £20 per set inc. postage. A few sets only, first come first served. John Box

For Sale :- Tempest Kit. 90% complete, extra thick fibreglass for trials use. All panels and framework present, only needs a donor vehicle and a few parts (available through Tempest cars) to do the build. Relatively straightforward if you are mechanically competent. Rare chance to get hold one of these at a bargain price. The parts retail at around £1,800, now need the garage space so an asking price of just £775. Contact via email for photos Located in N London, delivery maybe possible at cost. Martin

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten saloon project, (the owner has a new addiction – a Ford Capri, there is no accounting for taste!) near Ballinluig (just east of the A9 just south of Pitlochry), contact Lyn

For Sale :- For those of you who have envied Tandy owners, there is one for sale - owner, a retired engineer, is not well enough to finish fettling it. I don't know condition in detail but pretty good, had full MOT a year or so ago, undriven since. Includes new s/s doorframes supplied by me, gearbox, new batteries & loads of spares - looking for around £1,500. Sounds good to me, contact me in 1st instance as owner hates phone. Portsmouth area. Dunc

Wanted :- Some brown original plastic mouldings for the rear three quarter panels for the boot of a Kitten Saloon, both sides. Plus a matching boot cover if anyone has one. All in perfect condition with no cracks in the plastic. I am happy to pay postage plus asking price if anyone has one or more of these items – Philip Naylor

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## EPILOGUE

Here we are again, it seems no time at all since the last one, and the next time will be the Christmas edition!

Whittington Castle was great, thanks again Malcolm. There was some talk of tagging onto a big event in Yorkshire next year, anyone up for that?

I was going to do a write up of 3 hours of the recent Reliant Owners Club's John O'Groats to Lands End run, (we met them for lunch at Dumbarton just before we headed south to Whittington) they had at least three Rebel saloons on it, one of them, Fred Heath's lovely red one, was, if not the only one, then one of very few vehicles that did the same run in the opposite direction just over a decade ago, well done Fred, and Gloria. This warped old mind of mine thought about saying what a Triumph, but I wondered if anyone would get the pun? The first one of you to ring me with the explanation gets a free year's subscription!

Sadly, possibly my fault, I was the only entrant in 1998 who did the run in a Kitten, there were no Kittens at all on the run this year, rather sad I thought, but, as I was unable to do it myself, I guess I can't really criticise everyone else. Perhaps in a decade's time with an automatic conversion?

Observant as you are, I am sure it will not have skipped your notice that this edition is thicker than usual – see, I didn't just use pictures to substitute for text, tempting as that can be at times. The fact is that if you write to me, it could be this size all the time – the solution is in your hands.

Dick Goodall's anticipated article arrived today, August 21st, thank you Dick, so this is the largest edition for a while – the Royal Mail's current rules would allow us even more for the price of a second class stamp if you were up to taking advantage – I'm game if you are!

That said I ought to acknowledge Francis Newall's article about his recent acquisition of a Rebel Estate car, you will see it next time, though I have to say Francis that I am pretty certain that, legally, you can only tow a car off a motorway ( if it has broken down) not on to one, and that strictly speaking you are obliged to leave at the next (first) exit – that certainly used to be the case.

As is so often the case I may be too late with this, I meant to mention it last time – and may have done so, I can't remember. The point is that John Sawle is doing an article on the Reliant BRM engines, and he asked that if you have any information he would rather know before he goes to print than after. 01872 553932 is the number or [melbrown@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:melbrown@ukonline.co.uk) should get him. John is also wanting to talk to anyone who has a copy of a book called "Reliant Sports Cars" which he has been told mentions said engines, again, if you can help, please contact him.

Right, I'm feeling really pleased with myself, it is September the 2nd, and we are here, 44 pages, all proof read, corrections done, just a couple of adverts to check on, must talk to John about the covers, and we're off! Not only that but I've got a couple of articles for the next edition, want to help make a real bumper Christmas edition? You know what to do then, don't you?

Oh listen, a while back we used to run an annual quiz, anyone care to start that up again? I seem to recall that the winner, as well as getting a free subscription, also got to provide the following year's quiz, I can't recall why that fell by the wayside, but feel free to pick up the mantle.

Do I really need to mention grease and what to do with it?

**Brian**

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