

MEWSLETTER 90



September-October 2009

Edited and distributed by Brian W Marshall,
16 Glendee Gardens, Renfrew, PA4 0AL

☎ 0141 886 6117

www.info@kitreg.org.uk



Pictured here at the Tamworth Festival (13/09/09), Mark Taylors' very tidy Vantique. As can be seen from the signwriting, this one works for it's living.

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.....



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: ****Situation vacant****.

Fox alternative parts list contact: Duncan Bradford

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme is run for us by 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.

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.

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

Dinky Cars

RELIANT SPECIALIST

**Wennington Marsh Farm, Wennington Road
Rainham Essex RM13 9EE
Tel: 07958 246891**

SALES, SPARES, REPAIRS, ENGINE RECONDITIONING

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For this edition I was advised to move on from Kittens on the cover, and here was me thinking we could do a whole year of them just for a change! (just wait till you see the Christmas one!)

Feedback on the new cover format has been subdued, therefore I assume it has not caused great offence, so with a big thank you to John, we will continue. That said I am still interested in what you think, that is an invitation to respond!

I had begun this edition with the comment "The never ending plea for input goes pretty much unheard." Not only that, but I had reduced the number of pages for this one, then Duncan Bradford and John Copestake came to our rescue, thanks chaps. That said, as you will possibly have noticed, and will read further on, I took my eye off the ball and managed to get the numbering sequence of Terry Horler's Rebellious articles out of sync. Not a deliberate attempt to stimulate correspondence, honest. I was at that time, well several weeks earlier in fact, trying to plan ahead and head up the following editions (yes plural) in some kind of attempt to be organised. It began when I elected to serialise Duncan Bradford's article. To try and ensure continuity I split the article in three and put one third into each of the following three editions. At the same time putting in headings for articles I was anticipating. I must have got confused while jumping between them. I do recall being surprised at an apparent conflict, and thought I had checked, but clearly not accurately enough. Sorry Terry, and anyone else who noticed.

It is now nearing the end of September, Moira and I are back from an enjoyable 6 day trip south of the border, and if I do not receive anything else from you this week – Lyn Rodden and Terry Horler excepted - you may hear more of that adventure! If I am to get back on schedule and be able to arrange our usual bumper Christmas edition I need to clear my feet. However, foot clearing begins in earnest in my lock-ups today, I have three friends who have been unwise enough to offer me a few hours on this bank holiday (you don't actually get them when you are retired, but as half these guys are not, it was a golden opportunity).

Right, my spare BX is off to the land of cars past, and I am nervous. What do I do now if something happens to the one I drive every day? Now I know that I was one of a tiny number of drivers on this planet who kept a spare car in the garage 'just in case', but I am out of my comfort zone now, and I don't think that excited is the correct adjective to describe how I am feeling at this point in time!

After initial concerns about having sufficient input (I had already done my bit by the time more articles arrived) I have opted to keep adverts to a separate sheet this time as I am out of room – yes I could cut bits out of my story, but with the pictures that were in taking us neatly to page ends, it is just too much like work to be changing things at this stage. So, special thanks to Duncan, John, Lyn and Terry for helping keep this edition up to size, it simply remains for me to end this and get the thing off to the printers. Till next time....

REBELLIOUS CONFUSED

By Terry Horler

If my endless ramblings concerning LRF 671K are not confusing enough to follow, even I was confused by the last edition. As submitted, it left me as REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 17. Somehow, it appeared in MEWSLETTER 89 as REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 18. Whatever spanner fell into the works, I will confirm that this episode is truly REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 18 (that's eighteen) just in case you are keeping note of such detail. Having cleared up that little confusion, I now revert to my usual practice of confusing you as set out below!

REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 18(Eighteen)

If you have been following this seemingly endless series concerning my 1972 Rebel, LRF 671K, you will no doubt remember that the last episode could really have been the last episode. LRF's main function in life as my daily transport to work came to an unexpected (by me at least) end when I suffered an acute mid life crisis. (And at 60 this must have come late so hence the severity of the mlc). For no good reason other than the Rebel's tailpipe crumbling, I bought a smart roadster. Exit Rebel?

Well no, I had already booked the Rebel into an exhaust pipe fabricator before I bought the roadster. Hence LRF was treated to a stainless steel rear pipe section to meet up with the existing stainless steel silencer at a cost of £120. This was fitted the day after I bought the smart, the Rebel subsequently only covering a further 10 miles and into storage along with my Mk1 Escort GT which only covered 60 miles between its last 2 MOTs. And that was that for a while. The roadster became my daily transport and at around 53mpg for the daily commute, about 10mpg better than LRF was recording. Whilst contemplating the cost of the exhaust for a vehicle that was now redundant, I also had to add the new front trunnion and prop shaft U/J that I had recently purchased prior to my mlc. No good sat on the shelf so I fitted them. Then the MOT reminder came. With the above parts fitted and no other known items of an MOT failing nature afflicting the Rebel, I booked it in for August the 1st. It passed!

The MOT exam did pick up on a couple of minor items. A nail in a rear tyre must explain the slight air loss that was affecting it. Although only around half worn, at £20 for a new tyre, the cost of a repair is not worth considering.

The tyres must be getting on a bit age wise by now, I have owned LRF for four years and only replaced one

tyre previously for exactly the same reason. With the new exhaust, the Rebel seems to have a new found increase in mid-range torque. It is certainly climbing hills with a little more enthusiasm now. The old tailpipe was a fabrication of truncated pipe work that not only looked inefficient, it obviously was inefficient. The new prop shaft U/J has removed the low speed vibration that was keeping me awake on the drive to work early each morning.

Although out of everyday use, I did plan to take the Rebel to a local Micro Car Rally in July. I went to this event last year and really enjoyed the road run to the East Somerset Railway. However, my schedule was a bit tight this year and it wasn't until the morning of the event that I knew that I had a couple of hours spare to pay a visit. The weather looked good (can you believe?) but one snag. The Rebel was stored 10 miles away and I didn't have time to fetch it and go to the Rally, I went in the Frogeye instead. Only fair I suppose, I have been to plenty of Sprite events in the Rebel when the weather was bad. Anyway, got there, hid the Frogeye in a hedge and had a look around. Only 2 Bond Bugs (one a four wheeled Bug) represented the Reliant connection, everything else had oil in its petrol.

Ahhh, an opportunity to interrupt – I have not done that so often in recent times, but Moira is always telling me that I should not assume that every reader has the same – oh my goodness, that elusive adjective? The point(s) being, it is of course not diesel but two-stroke oil that Terry is referring to – of course you knew that, but not only have I pre-empted a question from our lovely proof reader. I have also pushed all the monetary values coming up, onto the one, (next) page! Ed.

The second of August marks four years of my ownership of LRF so now seems a good time to reflect what it has all cost. I paid £700 for the Rebel to include a new MOT and a box of spare bits and pieces. The mileage read 78931 on handover and on checking through the old MOT certificates dating back to 1980, seems a genuine figure. The current 848cc was fitted around 1983 when the mileage was about 43000.

The mileage on the second of August 2009 is 100145 making my contribution to the revolving number indicator 21214 miles. This has worked out at an overall fuel consumption of 44.3mpg. A figure I think is very good even by today's standards given the nature of my journeying. Of course, even 848cc does not provide the performance of modern frugal wagons but considering all my commuting is within 30 and 40mph restrictions – so what? Road fund licence is of course zero and insurance combined with my other 'classics' hardly even noticeable. What does add up is the cost of spares and repairs over this period. From my records this works out as –

2 Tyres	£40
2 Batteries	£86
2 Front brake hoses	£22
Front brake shoes	£16.50
Exhaust pipe	£120
Headlight unit	£9
2 Front trunnions	£50
U/J kit	£14
Hydraulic seal	£5
Air filter	£6.50
Oil seals/gaskets	£20
Total	£389.00

There have been a few other 'non invoiced' items plus a lot of useful parts from the spares box that came with the Rebel. I am not including oils or oil filters but I doubt if other sundry items would exceed £30 or so. So, for £700 for the Rebel plus £420 for replacement parts, I don't think that £1,120 for 21,214 miles at 44.3mpg is anything to grumble about. In fact, I think it is very good indeed. From this, I could or should subtract the current value of the Rebel, which is a bit tricky. Just what is a 1972 Rebel estate with a 12 months MOT and an 848cc engine worth? To me, I think it well worth £500 should I offer it for sale. This would make my 4 years of commuting capital reduce to just £420 plus fuel, oil and insurance. Should I take the government up on their generous offer and replace the Rebel with a new frugal wagon, I would be into an £880 profit. Well, not really, a new frugal wagon is going to depreciate and cost a lot more to insure although the new road tax bands could be taken advantage of.

Furthermore, the traumas and cost of the annual MOT would be lifted for the first 3 years. On the downside, I would have to live with the fact that I would have sent my perfectly useable Rebel into the re-cycling bin – no, I couldn't do that.

More importantly than any of the above - what cannot be measured is the amount of enjoyment I have had with my 4 years with the Rebel. It is fun to drive despite its modest performance. It is very different to every other car on the road, very few people know what it is. It has also given me great piece of mind in ownership; I have no worries about its reliability, ease of maintenance or usability. It owes me nothing really. (Even though I would still ask £500 for it!) The only real grumble would be the reaction from some other road users. They will steam up behind me to read the tailgate badge because they don't recognise it. Having discovered it is a Reliant, they HAVE to overtake – immediately. I have never been so cut up in a car as I have in my Rebel, it brings out the worst in some road users.

So where does that bring me? I ended R.C. 17 contemplating the future for LRF. Since then I have fitted a new tyre, U/J, and front trunnion, plus a new MOT. The answer may be revealed in R.C. 19.

Terry Horler No. 755 - Bristol

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Foxes Den - The Tandy Camper story

TANDY INDUSTRIES LTD

By David Tandy



The Pell Lane Factory

The Pell Lane factory at Ryde on the I.O.W (13,500sq ft) was set in an acre of ground, and was bought by me in the Summer of 1983 for £100,000. It was to have been used to house my proposed acquisition of the Ronson Lighter Group which was in receivership on the Island, the deal however fell through and I was left with an empty factory.

Production of motor homes first started in 5,000 sq. ft of space at Pell Lane, Ryde, I.O.W. In the autumn of 1983 the first unit being exhibited at the Caravan & Boat Show at Birmingham in February 1984. The remaining space some 8,500sq ft was let to the I.O.W. council as a training workshop (called Fernhurst). Princess Diana officially opened the factory in 1985, a plaque recorded the event but when Fernhurst moved to the Council's own factory unit in Cowes, the plaque disappeared. In July 1988 when the last vehicle was produced by Tandy Industries Ltd, production of motor homes was moved to one of our other factories in Sherborne Avenue Ryde. The Pell Lane site remained empty for several years before being vandalised. Planning was granted on the site for 22 houses in 1992.



The road was named after me because of a dispute with the council who refused to allow us to name the road "Green Hill Close" because a road in Newport was called "Green Lane"



The Fox RV having its long distance trial at Gibraltar

We used various places, 95% of which were on the Isle of Wight, my farm at Newport (GOSHENS FARM), the Nunnery at Newport, Wooton Bridge, Cowes, Ryde seafront & Gibraltar.

FOX RV

The Fox motor home was designed around the successful Fox all GRP pick-up truck by Reliant Motors of Tamworth with an all aluminium engine of 848cc, returning 50mpg, and a steel galvanised chassis the body of the motor home being all GRP with a foam core to give strength and insulation, the mould tools were produced by Copland Boats of Ventnor who produced the first prototype. Subsequent production was moved to Portsmouth on cost grounds. The FOX came in various models the Goldcrest and Firecrest, the Goldcrest having a refrigerator, a third berth, catalytic heater & a full oven. The first prototype was still being finished on the car ferry from Fishborne to Portsmouth and was just completed in time at 9.00am in the exhibition hall before it opened. The first three production vans differed from later production, as they had a hand crafted curved sink unit, in light oak which was produced by a cabinet maker at Golden Hill, Fort Freshwater I.O.W. However the interior was productionised and all later units were produced "In House". In the spring of 1984 we took a Red Fox Motorhome on a publicity trip from Southampton to Gibraltar, a round trip of 3,000 miles, the trip would have been shorter except we missed the ferry at Le-havre and drove to Boulogne, then to Dover, Portsmouth & the Isle of Wight The return from Gibraltar to the Isle of Wight was done without stopping to sleep and with one driver, me!

We took this vehicle to the Caravan & Camping club show at Stratford on Avon racecourse, and won the National Benzole prize for the best small motor caravan of 1984. In its first year of production we only sold 3 vehicles, so for the Earls Court show of 1984, I redesigned the interior and we sold 28 units between Earls Court & Birmingham Caravan & Boat show. During the Birmingham Show of spring 1985 we were approached by the BBC to appear on the TOP GEAR television show, filming took place at the Cotswold Water Park in March 1985 in very cold conditions. We spent the entire day filming for an on air TV spot of 2 to 3 minutes with William Willard as the presenter.

Production carried on for another year selling a total of 50 units. The first one was sold on the Isle of Wight and was a red Firecrest. Reg. Number B307 JDL and was picked up in April 1985. The last production one was a custom built unit in white, and was collected on 29th May 1986 C253 RDL.

My thanks to Dick Goodall for making me aware of the above article, David Tandy for creating the history of Tandy Industries, of which this part is obviously of particular interest to us, and John Copestake aka Sparesman 2000, for getting in touch and allowing us to use it.

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53 Years of Motoring Memories, is the name of a book by Les Ives from Tavistock in Devon who tells me that it would make an excellent stocking filler for Christmas. I have to say that at just £8 delivered for 184 pages with 164 b & w pictures, he is probably not wrong!

Cheques / P.O. should be made payable to :- L. S. Ives and sent to

7 Elm Close, Bishopmead, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9AP .

Where have all the Reliants gone?

Well we are getting near the end of summer – what summer you may ask after the weather we were promised by the forecasters.

There have been a few days where one could get out and about, so that is the ideal time to attend vintage rallies either as a member of the public viewing or as an exhibitor.

I personally have attended more than a few of these rallies this year with my Reliant Kitten and to be honest I have been very disappointed to find that in most cases I was the only Reliant entrant. As one drives around the countryside you see many Reliant models on the road – but rarely at shows or rallies. Why?

There were two occasions where I had company, Hebden Bridge where a young man called Oliver from Accrington turned up as a late entry with his Reliant Rebel. At Heysham where I met up once again with Sarah Brown from Heysham who brought her Reliant Robin, where I met her last year, and was very pleased to be in her company again.



At Heysham last year (2008) there were 2 Robins, a Fox van, and my Kitten – where were they this year?

There is a lot of interest in your vehicle when you are on display, people tell you about their experiences with Reliants that they have owned or still own. Some of these stories are hilarious others more serious – they are all interesting. At the Fleetwood Tram Sunday this year I was parked beside a lovely rare Volvo. I am pleased to say that more people stopped and chatted about my car than the Volvo.

One gentleman came to talk to me at the Ribble Valley Vintage Rally and asked if I knew where he could obtain parts for his Robin as he was having trouble obtaining them, as some of the ex Agents who have parts left in their stores charge the earth for bits, (I have experienced this too). I got him interested in The Register – he had never heard of it, but someone else had mentioned Brian Marshall to him but did not give details on how to get in touch with you Brian.

Are people ashamed of being Reliant owners or what? Yes I get the “Mickey” taken sometimes but what the heck? I come back with remarks like “unlike your car I can stick a patch on it to mend it” “My car will not rust like your posh car” “My car is paid for, is yours?” “Have you realised that this car is rarer than your classic car?” They soon start to talk sense to you then – and you end up having a good laugh and a good day out.

One thing I have noticed is the reaction of youngsters – a lot of them are not sure what your car is but as soon as they are told it is a Reliant they start asking questions and then it comes to light that somewhere in the past one of their relations have owned one, but they had not realised that there were four wheelers made too.

Also I have had many chats with people who used to work on these cars when they were first manufactured, like the gentleman at Cleveleys a few weeks ago, he fitted electric windows to Reliants and then he said that there were not many Kittens made with alloy wheels - as Michael Caine would say “Not a lot of people know that!”

Another little humorous thing was related to me that the factory was on two side of a road and sometimes one could see the strange sight of a car body being carried across a Zebra crossing by two men with the body hoisted up over their heads - so as they crossed all one could see was two pairs of legs under the body. Must have been a traffic stopper, literally!

I am hoping to attend the Micro car event at Ripon in September - let's see how many Reliants show up there.



Lyn, many thanks for that, the answer I cannot tell, it can be all too easy to become negative. I was shocked to read in the supplementary sheet of my just arrived copy of Liege News (which is probably the right place for such comments come to think of it!) that John and Mel are to stop production of their wonderful magazine at the end of the year. Liege News is an excellent publication, the more so because they have always avoided a "Brian's Diary" type of thing to fill up their publication, but have religiously tried to maintain a high standard of technical and driver and car achievement articles. Their decision to quit is not in any way because of a lack of vehicles at events, but because, after 7 years and 27 (soon to be 28) editions of publishing Liege News, they have had enough of trying to coax articles out of their very active band of members. (so active that they can't put pen to paper!)

Anyway, you keep attending events in your Kitten, being unique in that regard is seldom lonely, people, as you say, always come and talk to you, and you never know when you will find another Reliant beside you!

Brian

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## **Brian's Diary**

*Now I did warn you about this, so you only have yourself to blame!*

As regular readers will be aware, I still venture south at least twice a year in March and September. The difference this time was that my 2 half cousins and their wives, who had all made the journey north from Yorkshire to be at Arleen and Colin's wedding in July, had prevailed upon Moira, and had coaxed her to agree to accompany me at least as far as a few miles east of York, where they would entertain her while I continued on my regular adventures further afield during my next trip.

So it came to pass that at 10:40 on Thursday morning, only 28 hours later than I would have liked, and just 40 minutes later than we had agreed, we set off for the local bakers shop. This was to be a 14 pie trip, and I have to say that the smell of those freshly baked rhubarb and apple pies wafting from the back seat of the car is delightful.

Due to our slightly late departure, economy was sacrificed to enable the original timetable to be re-instated, and we reached Tesco on the A69 at Carlisle just after midday. (There are as yet no fixed speed cameras on the A74!) Duly refreshed, Moira took a turn at the wheel and whisked us further south and across much of the A66 before I resumed my normal position behind the wheel. On then through Richmond and into wonderful Wensleydale to drop off the first apple pie at the Bentley residence. Moira had not seen Michael and Janet for a few years, and we were very fortunate indeed in our timing as their daughter Helen was there with her 7 week old daughter Elsie as well as 2 year old Lillian.

Having bored them with some wedding pictures I thought it best to separate young Elsie from Moira before either of them became too attached to the other, though Helen seemed quite happy the way things were, I did my ogre impression and dragged Moira away.

On then east to the A1 and south to the A59 and skirt round York to Gate Helmsley on the Bridlington Road near to where we were staying that night, indeed where Moira would be staying till Monday.

The fuel gauge was by now between half and three quarters (the late BX's have an 'extra' fuel tank between the filler neck and the main tank which holds a couple of gallons, so the first 100 miles or so has no effect on the gauge!). I popped along to see Gavin and Ruth in Skirpenbeck, they were to have a pie too, and I thought it might not be so fresh by Sunday (I was to join them for a meal on Sunday evening).

Back at Scoreby we ate well, caught up on things in general, had a post mortem about the wedding weekend, and still got to bed at a reasonable hour, well before midnight at any rate.

I had to be on the road by the back of 8:00 on the Friday morning, so I was first up. Not being used to an AGA I had not realised how quickly they can boil the kettle! Now I was distracted briefly by Mickey, the cat, whose purring can be heard at 20 paces, (I suspect because he was hoping I would provide his breakfast!) and the fridge had 4 different milks, well 5 actually as Moira had brought her Soya stuff along, but could I remember which was which between silver, red, blue, and green bottle tops? (I had left my glasses elsewhere) so I just picked the bottle with the most in it!

Breakfast over, I said my farewells, and hit the road. 9 paragraphs in and the word Reliant has not cropped up once! (I had meant to check the number of leaves in the back springs of Michael's Vantique yesterday, and to see his very tidy Rebel again, but time and my slow pace these days prevented that,) this morning however my first port of call was Michaels of Selby to see Dennis. I am sorry to have to report that the tide has turned, for the first time ever during my visits there, there were more Microcars than Reliants. A trend that sadly I presume will continue.

Dennis was particularly busy that morning, having just returned from a couple of days off, so I didn't dally, and was soon on the road again heading towards Doncaster to see Mike and son Paul, my patternmakers at New Edlington. Mike has a boat which he tows behind his BMW (he had graduated from a Ford Cosworth to a Jaguar, but finds the diesel BMW both faster and more economical (quite how, governed as it is to 155, he knows it is faster I didn't like to ask!) Anyway, he sails the boat near Fort William, but in spite of passing within a mile of our door on his way up and back two or three times a year, he has only once managed to call in at Renfrew!

A catch up there, he likes rhubarb in his pies, though Paul prefers apple. Off then to Penistone to see John Copestake (apple) on my way to Stalybridge (either) to have lunch with Alan and Megan Shaw. Great to see everyone again, though I was not in Alan's garage this time, and like at John's and Dennis', the only Reliants I saw that day had 3 wheels!

The plan next had been to call in on Paul Wheatley at Shireoaks, but I knew he was working that day, sorry Sue and Paul, another time. So I had a leisurely run back over the lovely A658 to the M1 and south to the A14 and hence to Guildsborough just above Northampton where I was staying the night. The fuel gauge was now not much over a quarter, though I had only covered just over 500 miles. I had imagined I would refuel at Tesco at Leighton Buzzard, but that was looking too early, so I decided to see what tomorrow brought.

Guildsborough is, as regular readers may recall, where Tom Lockhart lives. Tom was in reminiscing mood that evening, and after a fine meal we chatted till after 1:00am. How I wish I had a better memory or a tape recorder. The tales of his exploits in the late 1940's onto the early 1950's with the RAF in aircraft the names of which I only recognised a few. He used to go on navigational flights, in his spare time! Taking in the Isle of Man, down to Cardigan Bay and back up by way of Carlisle, clearly he had both a faster vehicle than I travel about the country in, and less traffic, better than that, he didn't have to pay for the fuel!

Then he was telling me that he sometimes wondered why the well known sports car builder who had commissioned his firm to 'glue' as he put it, two of the Wankel engines that Norton were at that time using to great effect in their motorbikes, together, and fit it into their sports car, had never, to his knowledge, been taken beyond the, working, prototype stage. He remembers it particularly well because 5 of his workshop windows were broken when an overenthusiastic individual took off too quickly in the yard, and the stones thrown up by its back wheels did the damage!

The weather had been fine so far, and we felt it was calm enough on the Saturday to try, for the first time, and fly my new helicopter (model one of course! A present from my brother and his family) in his large garden. I only chipped one rotor blade in 20 minutes!

Off after a late lunch to see our front (and back!) cover man, John Pearce and collect the covers for this edition. This is where it gets interesting, if you have stayed with us and not nodded off yet – I got a hurl in John's unique Kitten, the Jaffa as he calls it (something to do with the not unlike Bond Bug colour it is). This is one of a few kittens we know about that has been with the same custodian for over a decade, (more like 2 in this case) and normally covers well over 20,000 miles between MOT's. John you will need to help me out here, is it coming up on 300,000 or 400,000 miles now?

John had to change engines last year, he had the opportunity to convert to the proper clutch release bearing at that time, but chose not to do so. Perhaps we can talk about that decision sometime John?

Anyway, this particular engine, which is just as smooth as the ones I have had the pleasure of being whisked along by in Norfolk and the midlands, seems to run out of puff at anything much over 5,000rpm, which has to be good for fuel economy and engine wear. The ride (John fitted a pair of our new front dampers and springs a couple of years back,) is excellent, and the whole experience of three counties in 35minutes exhilarating. Thank you John.

Another pie lighter (don't think John has a preference) I was off then to Thurlaston (near Rugby), where I was staying the night with another Tom, Wardley this time. Though there is a rolling Kitten chassis still in the yard, no running Reliants here at the moment. I had rung ahead to ask Tom to do me a favour and use his computer to seek out Tesco garages in his area as I was doing well on the fuel consumption stakes. I had a Tesco 5p off a litre voucher, and I aspire to saving £3.00 on a tankful.

By the time I left the M1 and was heading west towards the setting sun along the M45, the low fuel warning light remained dark, it is at times like this that you wish there was an easy way of checking if the bulb is working!

Tom had come up with a number of possibilities between Coventry and Birmingham, but it was his sister Sam, who was able to educate me by pointing out that my Garmin Sat. Nav. not only knows where every Tesco store in the land is, it even has their land line telephone numbers, but it also knows where every garage in the land is, in relation to where I am at any point in time, and it identifies them all by brand, so you can easily find the nearest Tesco which sells fuel!

So, my education more complete than it was, I could relax, confident in the belief that I could find one when I needed it. (Someone had disposed of the Tesco "Storefinder" booklet that I used to carry in the car during pre-journey tidying!) And none of the Tescos I visit seem to have them any more!!)

Another lovely meal, some time spent going through those wedding pics again, and we just about made it to bed on Saturday.

Tom and his mother, Patience, live on a farm, and there are always small animals and birds about. Arleen always enjoyed her visits here, and is always keen to know which creatures were being given warmth close to the AGA (O.K. Tom, I know it isn't an AGA, but it's not a Rayburn either, and I can't remember what it is!). This time it was a hen with 5 chicks neatly tucked in a bucket half filled with straw. I really wish I had remembered my camera, Arleen is not quick to forgive!

Normally I head off early on the Sunday morning and briskly proceed to the Gittus residence at Kings Norton, and indeed it had been suggested to me that this time I should bring Moira with me and leave her with them while I attended my meeting in Birmingham in the afternoon, but the Gittus' had had an offer they could not refuse to spend a day at the races, so that had helped simplify our plans. Moira in the event spent the Sunday at Castle Howard (you know, where they made "Brideshead Revisited") which she thoroughly enjoyed. She had spent much of the Friday with Denise in Harrogate, Harlow Carr gardens in particular, the Saturday in York, with John and Denise, and, as mentioned, the Sunday, with my half cousin Gavin, (brother of John with whom Moira was staying) his wife Ruth and their two children Rebecca and Ben, who I was to join for my evening meal.

Now, oddly enough – this is enough to make you believe in coincidences, it really is. Carl, a one time Fox owner, had been having trouble with a piece of electrical equipment, which Tom had volunteered to try and repair, and had just done so that day. He asked me exactly where I was going, and if it was anywhere near Pocklington.

Well, Pocklington is less than 10 miles from Skirpenbeck, (my destination), and Carl's house not 100 yards off my route, so I was both able and happy to drop it off, along with some eggs and freshly picked plums of course!

Sunday afternoon's meeting went well, and I was on the road north by 4:00pm. Still no sign of that low fuel warning light. Now I know not only that there is a Tesco and that it sells fuel, in Clowne, just a few miles from junction 30 on the M1, but I also know that it is fully 10 minutes off the motorway, and, the warning light, which was indeed working, had only blinked a few times by then! So, onwards and upwards to the M18. According to the Sat. Nav. there were 2 Tesco stores that sell fuel within a mile or so of the M18 near Doncaster, but the first one appeared to add 18 minutes to my e.t.a. at Pocklington, while the other, the second one, only added 3 minutes. I deduced this might be because at the second one it was possible to re-join the motorway at the same junction, while at the other one one may have to proceed through a built up area for a number of miles before being able to re-join the motorway. So, decision made, I did wonder just where my spare fuel can was, certainly not on board!

By the time I left the motorway the warning light had been on solidly for about 25 miles, so I guess I was pretty well into the last gallon. I heaved a premature sigh of relief when, less than 2 minutes off the motorway, I saw the familiar sign, drew up at the pump of an un-manned filling station, and discovered to my horror that, even after 3 attempts, the machine would not recognise my credit card!!!! (Yes, it is a Tesco one!).

Realising that I could probably only travel another 20 miles or so, I moved to another pump, and was more than slightly relieved when that pump accepted my card with no difficulty on the first attempt, only after filling to the brim, and having managed to squeeze in the ultimate 60 litres, did I realise that I could not get my 5p off without a human of the Tesco employee variety in the chain – boo hoo, foiled – oh bother etc. Etc.!

I had rung ahead twice to confirm 6:30 as being my e.t.a. at Pocklington, and was a little perturbed to find no one at home on my arrival, however Carl turned up within a few minutes of another phone call. He runs a 1954 Austin A30 these days (Moir and I ran a 1956 A30 van about 35years ago) so we know all about hydro mechanical brakes and handbrakes that mount on rusting sills!

On then to Skirpinbeck and yet another veritable feast and a few hours in excellent company. Gavin is in the agricultural fertiliser and feedstuff business and is having a much better year this than last.

Moir had mentioned on our brisk run to Carlisle that the Blackpool "hallucinations" were on already, something she had always wanted to see, and so I had said that if she was prepared to sacrifice her beloved Monday evening line dancing class, that we could spend a night in that neck of the woods, and so that is what we did.

I was a bit disappointed as I had hoped to be able to visit the Tower ballroom and at least see if not hear the mighty Wurlitzer organ, but I could not get the car anywhere near the tower, and had elected not to bring my wheelchair on the trip to save space, well, Blackpool was not part of the original plan.

Still, we found a good B&B in Lytham St Annes, enjoyed a good carvery meal, and saw the light(s).

All in all a good trip, though as Moira is my witness the speedo failed, to the accompaniment of a clicking noise that increased with speed, for a few miles upon our arrival in Blackpool, only to fix itself 20 minutes later! So the fuel consumption figures for that tankful will not appear as good as they really were!

Frustratingly Tesco tell me that they have no system for resolving my problem with my 5p voucher. I guess I ought to write to them, but there are more pressing demands on my time right now.

The overall average fuel consumption for the trip gives an M.P.G. figure of 53, which for an eighteen year old 5 seater automatic must tell you something about my driving style!

Will Moira accompany me on future adventures? – you'd have to ask her, but we both enjoyed the trip.

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Here is a preview of things to come.



Robert Fairfoull, the custodian of old number 3 this past 7 years.

Long ago from Lyn Rodden

To me, motoring early post war  
Was not just travel, but so much more  
Man and machine almost as one  
Heady days, when motoring was fun!

Peer under the bonnet – all was simplistic,  
Today, home mechanics are not realistic  
A stocking for a fan belt in an emergency  
Simple cures, oh for a resurgency!  
Bring back a vehicle not controlled by a “chip”  
Retro-mobiles would be really quite hip!!

Pressed into service to accompany an “L” driver  
The reward I remember, not far short of a fiver

By train to Dunmow, the home of the “Fritch”  
All ran so smoothly without ere a hitch  
Returning by car through the Blackwall Tunnel  
Steam blew from the radiator just like a funnel!!

All was not lost, a masterstroke  
Leaks cured with an egg, complete with yolk  
Hole in exhaust? Use a cocoa tin

Strapped with wire, on part that is thin!

Battery flat? Engine won't turn  
Today this would be of great concern.  
But in those early days, quite heady  
The starting handle was always ready!  
A few deft flicks of the wrist  
Enabled you to continue to one's tryst  
That is unless you badly positioned your thumb  
"Kick back" could fracture or leave you quite numb!

Hillman, Riley, Reliant and more  
Intrinsically British right to the core.

Found in the Cornish Vintage Vehicle Society Magazine by Lyn Rodden

## Getting Technical

In the midst of the preparations to mount a serious offensive on my lock-ups I received a telephone call from Stuart Hale, current custodian of what was Fred Heath's Rebel. He has fitted a Dellorto carburettor to it and feels that it is running rich. Dellorto suggested to him that the fuel pressure supplied by the Reliant pump may be too high for their carb to cope with, and he was asking me if I knew what the pressure was. I could not remember, and given that he had also recently fitted a new pump, I felt that, as they used a variety of pump suppliers over the years, that it was pointless to guess. Setting up a test rig however is not (I wait with baited breath to be corrected here....) a quick or simple task to accomplish.

I thought I remembered Fred fitting a Malpassi filter King to that car, and they have a pressure flow regulator built in, but it comes, I think, in a variety of factory set ranges. However, Stuart says not, it only has a small plastic in line filter.

So, if I have not done the research and typed it up in here, please feel free to share any relevant knowledge you may possess.

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## Further Distributor Ramblings September 2009

Thank you to all who got in touch with your comments about the distributor stuff! It's good to hear feedback, and it raised a few points. It's a bit daunting to have people taking something I said seriously though... Firstly, yet again someone was pleasantly surprised to find the improvement in performance when they timed the ignition to ten degrees before TDC, and not TDC as it says in the manuals. Now this is all very well, but whether you time to TDC or to -10 degrees, this is only the starting point. It isn't intended to be the ideal for any particular engine, and will need adjusting under road conditions. Theoretically a distributor with the right advance springs, limiter and vacuum unit should, as timing becomes overadvanced, produce pinking across the range of speed and load. In practice, Reliant distributor settings almost always show the first signs of pinking at low engine speeds and under heavier load, typically accelerating uphill in top from under 30. So take it for a run including an uphill stretch and listen for that sound like a small diesel engine suddenly appearing under the bonnet as you accelerate upwards. If it doesn't pink this means the timing could be correct or it could need advancing further so, advance it a bit and try again. At the first sign, retard the timing just a smidge until it can no longer be made to pink, and this represents the best timing position for your engine [on its present fuel, carburettor-setting etc.].

Note that the disi is held in place by a clamp plate which is fixed to the engine with a setscrew through a slot, allowing some 'swing'; loosening the pinch-bolt which clasps the clamp plate around the distributor body allows much more adjustment, Do not loosen this pinch bolt any more than necessary though or it can totally lose its position, and never loosen both together. So slacken it until you can just swivel the distributor body – clockwise to advance, and vice-versa. To record the starting point I scribe a mark around the tab on the clamp plate with a pencil.

This tendency to pink at one particular point is a weakness of the limited range of vac units available. In effect the vac unit is not backing off far enough when the vacuum formed by a light throttle opening disappears. In practice it's because the vac unit doesn't provide enough advance at higher vacuum readings. It may be worth experimenting with different vac units. You should find an ID number stamped around the nose of the cone shape. I cannot find any legend or chart comparing all the IDs with known settings, but if you'll bear with me I'll explain what I have found out. If you'd rather be receiving root canal treatment just miss out the rest of this section and see if the following one is any better. I have some data on 17 of the disis Reliant used, of which the following may be useful:-

Model 41625 used on Robin 1a & Kitten saloon 1975 to 82-3 [end of production] UK spec.  
This is a 45D4 with a vac unit giving 5 - 10 – 5 degrees.

Model 41961A used on Fox 84 onwards plus Rialto1 1984-5 only. [ie HT-E engines only]  
This is a 45D4 with a vac unit giving 3 – 10 – 7 degrees.

Model 41244A used only on Bug 69-73 plus Regal 3/30 [not 3/25]  
This is a 25D4 with a vac unit giving 7 – 14 – 10 degrees.

So if you use a 41635 disi you may gain from using a vac unit from a 41961A, and most of us might gain from using one from a 41244A. By gain I mean that a higher proportion of the advance will be from the vacuum control, which will therefore be more greatly reduced when under load, which is when pinking prevents us from advancing the timing as much as we would benefit by doing. I'm not sure I followed all that but I think I know what I meant.

There was some discussion about what constitutes wear or play in a distributor. Now this is what prompted me to go into the whole thing really - that, and the availability of cheap electronics to replace the points! When I had my last engine rebuild [Thank you Steve at Dinky Cars – still going strong and so is the engine!] Steve said 'You've got a lot of play in that distributor you know'. Well, I tried to wiggle the rotor arm and couldn't feel anything, so put it to the back of my mind for some years. Last year, changing the points, I noticed I could wiggle the post to which the spring and leads are attached, just a bit. I took off the disi, removed the rotor arm and points and had a close look. The plate on which the points [and condenser] sit is really a sandwich of two plates. The bottom layer is fixed by two posidriv screws through lugs into the disi body. The upper layer, which bears the points, swivels in relation to the lower, by means of a flange peened over to form a bearing around the centre. Thus the position of the points can be advanced or retarded in relation to the rotating cam which knocks them open. As I said before, but I still find it mind-boggling, these points get knocked open and shut again approximately 160 times a second at only 30 mph. Split second accuracy has nothing on these guys, so if there is even a tiny amount of wear in that bearing, allowing any sideways wiggle, your timing goes out of the window along with performance.

Check it, grease it [it needs to operate smooth as silk]. While you're there, considering how flimsy are the points, and prone to spring-wear and pitting, for the sake of a few quid fit a 100% accurate electronic unit, and consign the points to the cubby-hole, 'just in case you ever need them'.

So, to sum up:- Check you have the correct distributor fitted; check it still has the right advance components fitted, or that you've swapped them for the ones you meant to, and that they are working freely; check there is no wear and that all is lubricated, Static Time initially to get it running, then adjust on test. Just don't expect the best results using points, as there are so many weaknesses inherent in them.

Of all the things to check in trying to get the best results from your engine the distributor is not the most important. First thing to check is that the exhaust manifold ports have been filed out to the shape and size that was originally intended [this ties first with checking the handbrake isn't binding full on, actually]. But I've revised what I said previously: there are so many ways in which a distributor or its parts can 'go off' that I reckon if there's no other obvious flaw to fix like a duff spark plug, then an hour or two giving it a good play with should put a smile on your face! [Please note I'm not a great fan of the double entendre, but I do like to slip in a big one now and then].

Duncan, No. 46 - Norfolk

## Speeds

Been meaning to get around to this since about 1985, when my blue Fox was out of warranty and I wanted to see how it drove with a higher ratio back axle. It always seemed that I wanted to change up a gear at about 45mph, and it did seem a little unrelaxed cruising at motorway speeds. Countering this was the knowledge that Reliant had bothered to design, cast and machine a totally new crown-wheel and pinion just for the UK Fox, which was a vehicle



that by all accounts they never were very keen on producing in the first place, so they must have known it would be necessary.

The Fox was originally nothing more than a rebodied Kitten, produced for assembly by MEBEA, in Athens, in the 1970s. Designed by John Crossthwaite, developed from his 'Caribbean Cub' beach car, it was always the odd one out in Reliant's stable. When they finally came to produce it for the UK they drastically reworked the body, gave it 12" wheels and made changes to the chassis, including galvanising and reworking the tie-bar arrangement completely, as well as other cosmetic changes. As the first year's production of 100, which were to be distributed among selected dealers, neared completion, and its public launch was due, it received the HT-E engine, designed to cope better with the Fox's appreciably greater weight. The weight of the Fox is due to its much more complex and stronger body construction, compared with the Ogle designs. Each body area is braced by structural 'boxing' plates making closed sections rather than being open mouldings.

The power output of the HT-E, or 'Yellow Top' engine results from increasing the compression ratio from 9.5:1 to 10.5:1 [though this is reduced again if the thicker head gasket is used], a different jet needle [type AEB, rather than AAT], and a different distributor with more vacuum advance but less centrifugal advance, though spread over a much wider speed range.

Stated theoretical outputs are as follows, with the normal 850 in brackets :-

|                |                                   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| BHP            | 37.5 at 5,000rpm [40 at 5,500rpm] |
| Torque – lb ft | 49.5 at 3,000rpm [46 at 3,500rpm] |

I was interested in how these figures related to road speeds.

A quick look at the MIATA tyre sizes website shows that standard 155/80 x 12 tyres take 927 turns per mile. Per 1,000 engine rpm in top gear [ie 60,000 revs per hour] the rear axle [4.1:1 ratio] turns 14,634 times per hour [60,000 over 4.1]. Divide this again by 927 to find that the tyre takes us nearly 15.8 miles in an hour.

So at 60 mph the engine is turning at nearly 3,800rpm, and at 70mph it's doing just over 4,400rpm.

By my reckoning this means that Reliant got it just about right – 50-60mph is in the highest torque range, for acceleration, and at 70+ it's approaching the highest power output, for most efficiency, and ability to cope with the rapidly overwhelming wind resistance. [The three letters F O X can be taken to represent the physical law that proves 'headway' and 'headwind' cannot co-exist in the same time frame. T-A-N-D-Y represents a longer equation that introduces the added prerequisite 'downhill-no-cornering'].

This means, interestingly, that even with this low ratio the engine never realistically reaches its most efficient speed in top. Moreover, the Reliant engine, in spite of being a long-stroke engine, is very free- revving – in fact is what you might call a real screamer – when not hampered by the chosen camshaft.

The firepump engine in my red Fox has a very mild cam, as from memory it was required to give 45BHP at 5,500 rpm. The resulting road performance is odd: it has little enthusiasm for life until you instinctively feel a dire need to change up a gear, then it changes its mind completely and starts to pull hard. I have once challenged it, just to see, as I had the SatNav in the car and a slight tail wind. It was happy to rev to what must have been about 6,600 revs, as the little screen showed 80mph. I was in third, but when I changed to top it couldn't hold the speed, and I didn't want to either.

Anyway, I eventually ended up fitting a higher ratio axle in the Blue truck [HT-E engine, and ported, balanced, with electronic ignition]. Top speed is approximately the same, but it does take longer to get there. It is quieter, more relaxed, at speeds over 60 mph, but there are drawbacks. Gone is the ability to pull away happily in second & slip lazily into top at 20mph. It doesn't take top happily at much below 30mph and I even have to change down to first for the sharp turn into the close. On the other hand second gear is ideal for much of our city streetplan, as 20mph speed limits are spreading like a rash.

It would probably suit me fairly well if I were to splash out on some lower profile tyres, but at the moment it's a relief even to get into the driving seat of the campervan. Now there's a vehicle that could neither cope with a higher ratio axle or a lower torque engine!

Have a look at the chart if you're interested in comparing axles and tyre profiles. I've included the 165/60 tyres, but they stand a good chance of fouling the rear springs on most axles. Check the distance of your present tyre

from the spring and allow 5mm less clearance. 155/60 size tyres are available, but I could only find one make and they were over £50 each, whereas I found several brands of the other sizes at £25 - £30. I'm sorry I didn't have the inclination to sort out the 10inch wheel data, but there doesn't seem to be so much interest, and the data is available on <http://www.miata.net/garage/tirecalc.html>.

Axles vary physically in several respects by vehicle model. With the possible exception of the Ant, however, which may have continued using the earlier 'Banjo'-type axle, from the introduction of the Robin mkl, all axles for small Reliants use interchangeable crown-wheel & pinion sets, in one of four ratios. [CW & Ps are always a matched pair, by the way, even within ratios – never mix half pairs.]

For the record, differentials were usually, but not always, stamped according to the ratio within.

Foxes alone used the lowest ratio, 4.1:1 [41 teeth to 10 – F stamp]; Robin 750s and Kitten vans used the 3.545:1 [39 teeth to 11 – L stamp] and apart from the very high ratio 2.78:1 used in the Rialto1 [B stamp] the highest ratio you are likely to find, 3.231:1 [42 teeth to 13 – A, X or no stamp] is by far the commonest, being used in all the other vehicles to the end of production, even, I believe, the commercials. Don't take anything for granted though. Who knows what a previous, or devious, owner may have done. I have come across several Foxes with the wrong ratio in the F-stamped axle, due to these being valued by specials-builders, who pay good money for the rare original Fox ones!

Duncan, No. 46 - Norfolk

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Hello, All!

5th August 2009

Recent activity on a Reliant web site about hazard flasher switches brought the following thoughts to mind.

It is the same as the switch used on late Marinas and Itals, if my memory serves me well! They were not that reliable even when new. Made by Lucas says it all.

We used to say that the hazard switch should be marked "Use once only". They rarely worked much more than once, and often caused the direction indicators to stop working immediately afterwards.

Both worked through a common (yes - Lucas again!) "FL9" "Heavy Duty" flasher unit, if I recall correctly.

And what a daft way to wire something so that two things become inoperative when one fails!

Did they modify the design to stop it happening? They did not!

" JOSEPH LUCAS" - Prince of Darkness.  
"LUCAS" – abbreviation - "Loose Unsoldered Connections And Splices."  
"LUCAS" - Holder of the patent for short-circuits.  
"LUCAS" - Motto - "Get home before dark"

Not forgetting that the reason the British drink warm beer is because they use Lucas fridges!

By the way, a warning, be careful to avoid using WD40 where arcing is likely to occur. There are available dedicated switch cleaners that work far better, and crucially leave no flammable residue once allowed to evaporate, which they do very quickly. They are not particularly expensive, certainly in relation to the value of your car!!

All the Best , #157

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Sales And Wants - See separate sheet enclosed

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**Epilogue**

Well, that day, or half a day, that I spent with three friends at the lock up towards the end of September, saw my spare Citroen BX off to the scrap yard, filled to the roof with lots of really useful things – well so I thought – but my ruthless and unemotional friends took a different view. So life should be a little simpler, and I have room for “The Big Red Car”, but more of that next time.

I was working well earlier today, the day after saying goodbye to my spare BX, I typed up 5 pages of this edition before midday – if only I could always be so productive!

Right, a welcome sudden influx of input caused last minute changes in the size of this offering to be re-considered. Meantime, this picture is taken about 150 feet east of the one that I plan to show you on the cover of the next edition, and only a very small number of people will be able to identify it I would think. Oh, I have since sold the Rover.



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