

UNDER THE BONNET BY TIN-TIN

As I write the daffodils are now really beginning to bloom so it looks as if winter might be on its way out.....which means we can stop tinkering with the car in the motorhouse and with luck soon start some enjoyable motoring. So what then has this winter produced in the way of tinkering ?

No major jobs really but a number of smaller ones, which have sorted out some irritations which have been demanding attention for far too long.

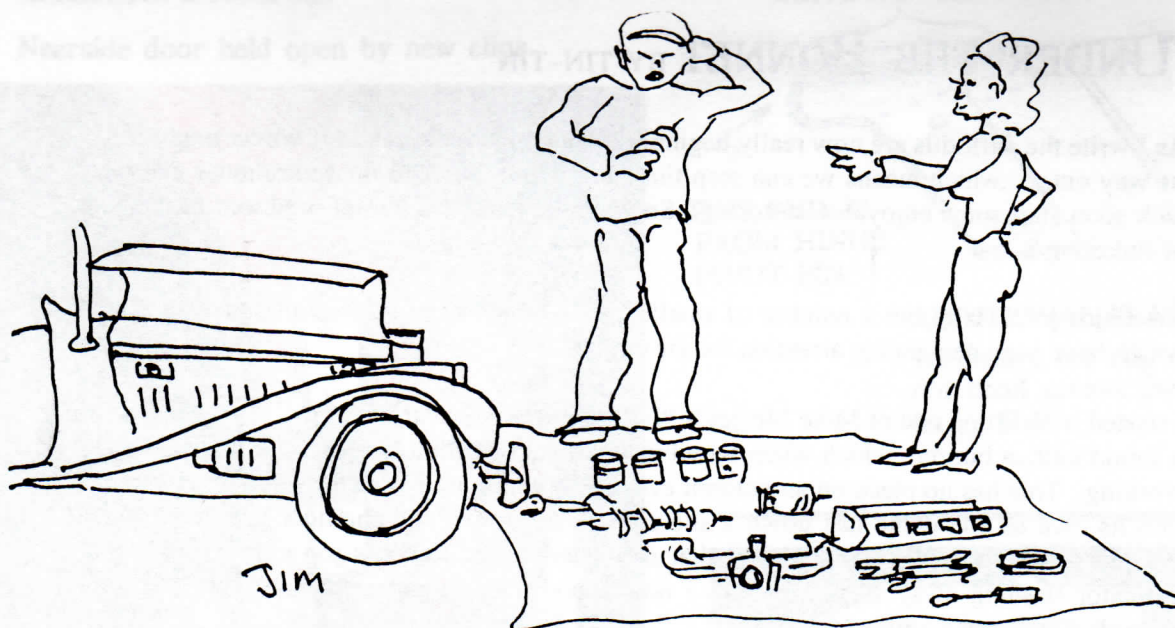
I started with fitting one of Mike Morley's "Flashing down the Straight kits". This consists of a sound unit...a buzzer...which when wired in gives warning that the direction indicators are working. This has no place on an autumn evening in gentle rain with the hood up but comes into its own as you come fast down a slip road, hood down, and shoulder your way into a column of traffic on the M25. In all that noise and congestion it's too easy to leave that indicator flashing away.....no longer... I now sound like a giant articulated lorry backing towards a concrete loading dock !

Mike supplied comprehensive instructions with diagrams and pictures and then I noticed that the picture of the dash indicator lights showed them on the lowest position of the four pairs. Mine are second from the top. (As the cars were built owners had a choice as to how these clusters could be arranged).....anyway this shouldn't be a problem.

I removed the under dash trim, a job I had done before so this was the easy bit and tried to have a look up behind the dash. The seat and steering wheel were very definitely in the way. No, this was very definitely a job you had to see....feeling around just wasn't going to work. I drew a deep breath and decided to remove the driving seat. This was not a job I had done before but after a reconnaissance with a torch I managed a ring spanner on one of the bolts under the seat and with ratchet and socket wound off the appropriate nut from under the car.....and yes you do need the back axle up on a pair of stands for this....The other three nuts soon followed and I lifted out the seat. The accumulated rubbish now revealed would have kept Steptoe and Son in business for years. "Her indoors" loaned me the vacuum cleaner and then I managed with a struggle to get myself into the car with my feet over the back and looking up behind the dash. Having arrived in this position I wished I had bought a cushion, even with the carpet that floor is hard on the back of the head.

The first thing I could see in the light of my trusty examination lamp was that the trip cable to the speedo was hanging loose. Now the trip had failed some time ago and I suspected instrument failure. I pushed the cable end back into the speedo and groped for the trip reset knob and turned it.....the cable popped back out of the speedometer. The route for the cable seemed a bit strange so I rearranged things a little and Lo.....it would now stay in place. Well this was a bonus.....now to that wretched dash light unit. It took time, but then I came to terms with the idea, that from where I was the thing could not be released to pass through the dash front. O.K., so if we take the speedo out and get a hand through the hole it's going to be much easier.

I looked up at that trip reset cable and thought, Oh no you don't..you can stay where you are ! Removing the Rev Counter looked a more attractive proposition so I managed to disconnect the 3 wires and pull out its illumination light. I undid the knurled nuts on the U bracket holding the instrument in place and relaxed with the thought that this is the proper way to build a motorcar.....you can actually take it to pieces. Unlike the other newer diesel car we have where every instrument is digital and the only way you can remove the dashboard is to break it.



"I don't wonder you can't find where it fits, it's part of my mincer !"

So all I had to do now was get off my back and out of the car. Had any of you dear readers been there to watch my antics in the next five minutes, you would almost certainly been leaning against the wall holding your sides and convulsed with hysterical laughter. And if you had been there I would have been telling you "It isn't b****y funny !! Eventually I emerged with a sort of strangled half roll and discovered the concrete floor of the motorhouse can strike very cold on those parts of my anatomy not normally discussed in polite society.

I went and put the kettle on whilst I recovered a modicum of dignity.

I returned to the car with an element of caution. Without the driving seat in place you sit very low but the Rev Counter came willingly into my hands and... Yes!.. you can get a hand in and reach the dash indicator light unit. With this unit free and disconnected it didn't take long to fit Mike's buzzer and wire it up. With the ignition on..it worked first time. Bless you Mike. The Rev Counter went back like a dream and works. I refitted the underdash trim and considered the driving seat. I cleaned it and in putting it back put a couple of half inch spacers under the front bolts. This makes an amazing difference for me at least.....I should have done it years ago.....gone is that feeling that I might slide down the seat and engage my chin at the bottom of the steering wheel. Mind you, on baling out with the hood up my bald patch is a mite too close to the hood frame...but then you can't have everything!

Now during last season my reversing lamp failed. The bulb was sound but there was no current at the lamp unit. I came to the conclusion that I would need to fit a new reversing switch to the gearbox. Ah Ha ! A quick look at the job said leave it for the winter programme. So the time had come. I won't say the job is impossible...I suppose no job is...but well you either have to remove the transmission tunnel cover or bore, cut or hack a hole in it in precisely the right place. The reversing light switch is at the top of the remote head gearchange assembly and screws out horizontally towards the passenger side (on a R.H.D car that is) The trouble is that the thread on the switch is much longer than the gap between its head and the tunnel wall. Hence the need to go mining. During my investigations of this curious phenomena I noticed that the two cables from this switch pass across the car to the opposite chassis member. Here the cables pass into a complicated looking plastic device which, on hesitant and then more determined examination, proved to be nothing more

complicated than a two pin plug and socket. I lay on my back and viewed this interesting discovery, but that concrete floor was getting cold again.

So I climbed out from under and went and put the kettle on and have a think !

Many years ago, I bought myself a circuit tester, a simple one, just a probe with a small lamp in the handle and a lead with a dog clip to fix to a good earthing point. I found it and with the ignition switched on and reverse gear firmly engaged, started probing around that two pin plug. On one side power was going to the switch in the gearbox.... and glory be...it was coming back to the two pin plug and socket. Another probe... but no power going down to the back end. I climbed out from under the car, switched off the ignition and returned again to the discomfort of the concrete floor. I cleaned that plug and socket 'till it shone and tried again. Yes ! power was now going down to the back end.....but still the lamp didn't work. I went down to the back end and removed the lamp to the workbench. With some white spirit I gave it a thorough clean, polished up the earth contact and then the feed contact which plugs into one of those rubber cased little plugs. The inside of that plug was filthy, which is not really surprising, for it lives in a very exposed place. Having put everything back together, IT ALL WORKED !

The last job is much easier said than done.....in fact it took me several days.... I removed the road wheels, pressure washed them and cleaned them with white spirit, a toothbrush and very large supply supply of clean rags. I then masked up around the tires using old newspaper and masking tape and then masked up the hubcaps and balancing weights. Then I hand painted the wheels silver with a half inch paintbrush. My reason for doing the job this way is that I will soon need to fit some new tyres and this always damages the paint on the wheels. I could see no reason to have them done professionally and soon have the paint damaged again.

A quick blast down the local dual carriageway proved that I hadn't unbalanced the wheels. A service is now needed and an MOT.

There now remained one last job to do. During last season we had been struck a dastardly blow in the windscreen, almost in the centre of the license disc. Whilst up north I called in at Pawson St and bought a new windscreen glass...so now was the time to fit the thing.

First I removed both windscreen wiper arms and then undid the three screws on each stanchion. The whole frame then comes out towards the cockpit and with an old blanket spread over the bench the thing was laid to rest. On both sides of the uprights are two countersunk screws and one of mine had only half a head. I removed the three easy ones and managed to drift out the damaged one. The lower part of the frame should now part from the two sides and the top. Only mine wouldn't ! It was well and truly stuck in with some sealing compound. With a wedge of hardwood and a 'flannel hammer' I tapped away, first at one side and then turning the thing over repeated the treatment on the other side. At last it parted and all I had to do now was remove the remains of the old glass from the remaining three sides of the frame. Frankly it was a job I had never tried before and the problem then is not knowing just how much force one might apply. Concerned (very !) that I might distort the frame, I sought help from an expert and let him finish the dismantling and fit the new glass.

The experts comments were revealing....." Your replacement.....well it's OK.....but its a good age you knowIt has a scratch from storage...(I hadn't detected it and had to look very hard to see what he meant).....and you can always tell with Triplexlook can you see this slight milky effect on the edge.....they go like that with age ". When Alan Milne broke his glass I now he went direct to Triplex.....nuf said !

Well then, I think we are just about ready for the season .