



AUNTIE'S MANTELPIECE CLOCK CAN NOW BE REPAIRED!

It could be argued that the focal point of a P4's elegant interior is not the steering wheel, but the dash clock. Perched in a central pinnacle, this period device led the former racing driver turned motoring journalist Denis 'Jenks' Jenkinson in the 1950s to compare an early P4's ambience to being at his Auntie's home, with a central mantelpiece clock. Thus the 'Auntie' nickname came into being.

The old Smiths or Jaeger (a more up-market sounding brand, but actually made by Smiths) timepiece is just as elegant and evocative today. Especially if it works. The problem is that most of them probably gave their last comforting tick in the 1960s, and the numerals are only just visible behind the glass and the plastic face which is more discoloured than ancient Sellotape. Being many times thicker, the plastic is now almost opaque.

But now it's possible to repair the clock. Even better, it can be done on a DIY basis; no soldering or electronics knowledge is required. Best of all, the supplier Clocks4Classics can offer a 10% discount to Guild members – see their advert on Page 19.

Unlike other conversions, the Clocks4Classics kit uses the original mechanical movement but replaces the mechanical contacts with a solid-state sensor and microcontroller. This makes the movement much more reliable but retains the original character of the clock - including that all important tick. The circuit board fits neatly within the movement and the modification is undetectable externally.

The kit suits both the early P4 clock with 55mm diameter body (not to be confused with the face diameter) and the adjuster on the back, and also the later clock with 60mm body and two adjuster /reset knobs on the front. It doesn't suit the Kienzle clock used on a few P4s.

If you need to replace the milky, faded face, replacements for the earlier unit are available from J R Wadhams for £8 plus p&p and VAT (see facing page). We don't know of a supplier of new faces for the later unit, but please tell us if you do and we'll publish details to assist owners of later cars.

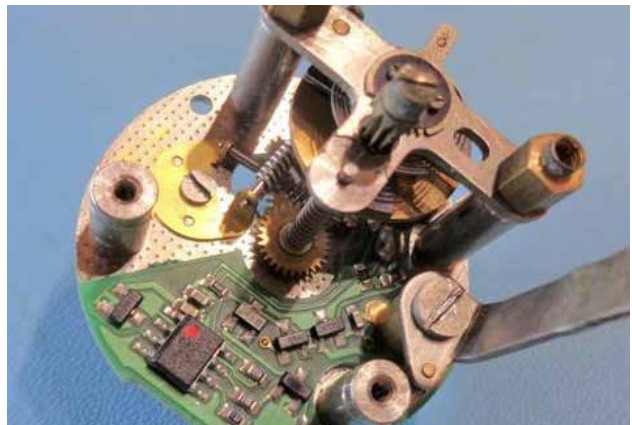
The clock on my Rover badly down let the interior, so I jumped at the opportunity to be a guinea pig for the Guild by buying a repair kit and trying a DIY rebuild. Until now I'd never repaired a clock, didn't know how one worked, and don't own any special tools for the task.



Old and new faces



Dismantled on the bench



Circuit board fitted



Can you hear the rebuilt clock tick in this photo?



I'm pleased to report that the repair worked, and my Rover's fascia now looks far smarter. Like almost any car repair, it's quite a challenge the first time you attempt it, but as long as you're patient and follow the detailed instructions on the supplier's website (including a number of YouTube tutorials), you're likely to succeed. You'll need reasonable eyesight – mine's only average for someone in their mid-fifties – and good lighting in your working area. Oh, and one or two miniature screwdrivers are needed, besides a pair of tweezers borrowed from the bathroom cupboard when other family members aren't looking.

Only one problem arose with my attempt, which resulted in the clock stopping after a couple of minutes. Nevertheless Mark Willows of Clocks4Classics was happy to give advice by phone, and after cleaning one part further as he suggested, the unit ran.

The kit works with positive or negative earth cars. This, for me, was a safety gain. My car at some point in its past was converted from positive to negative earth, but until now the clock needed to be wired for positive earth operation. This left the metal clock

body a different polarity to the car body. Not ideal from a safety angle. However the rebuild has enabled me to change the clock polarity and remove this concern.

Another gain is that the clock lighting can now work on a car converted to negative earth. Before, the clock body was positive, hence it needed a permanent negative supply for the mechanism and a permanent positive for the body. Easy enough to arrange after a car conversion to negative earth. But the lighting shares an earth with the mechanism, therefore it needed a negative supply *only when the instrument lighting is on*. I don't see how you can do that. But now, it's possible to use the original wires from the loom and change the clock polarity. Everything works, including the lighting.

The kits retail at £59 and are manufactured in the UK.

Tim Pearson