Spherical joint greasing

The blanking plug at the top of the spherical joint can be seen by removing the oblong inspection plate situated on the top of the prop-shaft tunnel between the front seats.

It is a hexagon plug with a 1/8 BSP thread to lubricate the spherical joint, this plug has to be removed and replaced by a normal grease nipple. Original Austin nipples were manufactured with different thread forms, the more modern nipples are called 'hydraulic types' and usually have either a BSF or UNF thread form. When the spherical joint is greased, the grease first reaches the actual joint then, via a small hole it lubricates the pinion support bearing at the top of the torque tube and also by another passageway, the grease reaches the spherical joint flexible mounting. This grease point is often neglected (but essential) and because it performs a reasonably good job of containing the grease, the greasing period can be extended beyond the monthly frequency recommended by Austin for all the chassis grease points.

So, why is a plug often found here rather than a grease nipple? The answer is that all Austin Sevens were fitted with this plug when the cars were new. The reason for fitting a plug might be that a nipple could foul the inspection cover and although it is dished upwards on later A7s, the clearance is minimal. There is also the possibility that the body might settle a little on the chassis over time thus further reducing this clearance and the fact that the spherical joint being effectively part of the suspension will move relative to the inspection cover when the car is in motion. It is worth noting that on early cars, the inspection cover had a plain profile because there was more clearance over the spherical joint.