Clutch thrust bearing

The clutch thrust bearing is one of the hardest working mechanical components in the Austin Seven drive train. This is particularly true in the case of the early three-speed gearboxes where the thrust race is continuously turning. Unfortunately, due to its hidden location in the depths of the clutch housing there is a tendency for the clutch thrust to be neglected.

Lubricating the thrust correctly and at the right frequency is one of the most important requirements to ensure a long and trouble-free life. Now, regular lubrication is easier said than done for because of its location, the clutch thrust is difficult enough to reach for nimble athletic types and almost impossible for more mature roundedowners like myself. Newcomers to Austin Sevens will note that the clutch thrust is lubricated via an inspection access in the gearbox bell housing, the earlier three-speed gearbox has a small metal cover over this inspection access. The lubricating oil reaches the thrust bearing down a short length of pipe that can just be seen inside the inspection access. The top of this pipe is slightly funnel shaped to aid the use of an oil can.

There will be no problems applying oil if the pipe is easily accessible, but it can be a problem if the pipe has broken-off or the pipe has moved forward out of sight. This is caused by either the clutch wearing or the finger pivots wearing into the cover plate. To make lubrication easier in these circumstances, I have developed the following method ….

- Obtain a short length of flexible cable - the inner wire from a discarded choke or starter cable is ideal
- Enter this wire into the lubrication pipe, or in the case of a broken pipe – straight into the thrust bearing body
- With the wire in position, proceed to lubricate by simply running drops of oil from the can down the wire
- Cars in regular use need oiling on a weekly basis – others can be left for a monthly top-up

…… Eddie Loader