

Clutch thrust bearings

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 3 speed gearboxes where the thrust is continually turning. Unfortunately due to its hidden location in the depths of the engine internals, there is a tendency for the maintenance of the clutch thrust to be neglected..

Lubricating the clutch thrust bearing correctly and frequently 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 lubricate, for nimble athletic types and almost impossible for the more mature rounded owners 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 3 speed gearbox has a small metal cover over the inspection access.

The lubricating oil reaches the thrust bearing down a short length of pipe which can be just be seen inside the inspection access. The top of this pipe is slightly funnel shaped to aid in the use of an oil can.

There will be no problems applying oil if the pipe is easily accessible, the problems start when it is broken off or the pipe has moved forward out of sight. This is caused by the finger pivot 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, a section of 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 running drops pf oil from an oil can down the wire.

Cars in regular use need oiling on a weekly basis, cars not so used can be left to a monthly interval.