

How to Watch a Clock

By John Booth

Like many other Rover P4's running around the world... or any other British car. My clock did not work. Mine, it seems had stopped working many years ago and it appears to be quite a common problem. I remember when I was still in primary school reading an article about some Israeli dude during the 1970's who could bend spoons with his mind. He could even get clocks to start working again by using some form of telekinesis. I thought I would try this myself by staring at the clock hoping that by some luck my positive thoughts would get it working again. This did not work. Even a clock dance around my workshop did not invoke the clock spirit to get it going. So in the end I either leave it where it was and pretend it was always on the 'right' time or I somehow get it to work.

So what are the options? Some Rover owners I have spoken to said they had these clocks repaired on numerous occasions only to find they stopped working after a few months. I did not want to go down this road.

There are a few kits around, but they are expensive and you need to fit it yourself. I imagined myself dropping a gear on the floor for it never to be found again or shorting out the solenoid coil making the clock redundant and wasting all that money and effort. I also did wonder about whether the circuit boards on these kits have some sort of protection should someone forget these cars have a positive earth. For me I wanted something independent of the car's battery so that if I fitted an electronic ignition one day, I did not have to worry about what effect reversing the polarity would have on the clock.

I looked at buying a clock mechanism and seeing if I could fit that. However these take an AA battery and considering where the clock was positioned, I would be concerned about the battery leaking which they tend to do. I did not want to destroy the original clock by going this route. Whenever I do a modification I like to have the option of reversing the procedure as far as possible. So in the end I decided to buy a quartz wrist watch. Note that the clock hands are not much bigger than a wrist watch in size.



I stripped the original clock and removed the inner workings. This is not difficult but care must be taken so that you do not damage the original clock workings. This I will keep safely in a box so that the clock could one day be put back to its original condition if need be. Clocks for Rovers seem to differ. I did the clock for Clyde Wyatt's Rover. His clock was smaller than mine and the casing was made of pewter whereas mine was made out of steel. Also my clock had holes in the face for adjusting the speed of the clock and to change the time. Clydes clock you could twist off the chrome ring to open it up, my clock had tabs that you needed to prise up. One word of warning NEVER use a solvent type oil spray to lubricate the clock. Use one drop of oil where needed. In the case of my clock it appeared not to have been taken apart so the white numbers on the plastic face were very solid. Clydes clock had been sent in for repairs various time and it appears some solvent spray had been used to either clean or lubricate the clock workings. Because the letters are on the inside directly in front of the workings over time this solvent has attacked both the numbers and the plastic face. The plastic had a slight frosted appearance and the numbers were very soft. Perhaps one of the Rover suppliers could look at a type of sticker replacement.



The original working are safely stored in a small box should someone one day want to put it back as it was.



I took the front clock face into a few watch shops and looked at the watches available. I selected a few and put them behind the face to get an idea as to what they would be like. In the end I settled on this watch. Now the watch needs to be quartz for accuracy. Must be battery operated and not automatic or wind up. Must not have a date function. Also no light and no numbers on the face. You just want a basic watch. The more basic the watch the longer the battery will last. With this type of watch the battery should last around 5 years. I chose a black face and white hands like on the original. This looked smart. One plus was this was a stainless steel watch with Japanese mechanism. I got all this for a mere R150.00. Bargain!!!



I turned up a wooden boss that was a snug fit into the old clock casing. Then I machined a recess to take the back of the watch. I will use contact adhesive on the back of the watch and glue it into this recess. This will keep the watch central and will be easy to change the battery when it needs it.



I turned a 3mm thick round steel 'washer' and drilled holes to match the 4 holes at the back of the original casing. I tapped 5mm threads to take the machine screws and locking nuts. The 3mm plate drops into the clock casing. The machine screws and the lock nuts come from the back. Next the large plain washer is dropped in. The wooden boss with watch goes in next followed by the clock face and chrome ring. The chrome ring is locked into position by bending over the tabs.



The machine screws are screwed in until the watch face lightly touches the clock face then the nuts are locked into place.



Before and after.
In all its glory we have once again a working clock.



The mental telekinesis had worked with some assistance from some physical 'telekinesis'. Note no damage or modification was done to the original clock.

So it can all be put back together as it was. It has been in the car for a while now. Looks smart, keeps accurate time. Battery should last a few years. One thing I have noticed is that when the old clock was in the car the battery used to be discharged within two week of the car standing. Now it keeps its charge. Certainly for other clocks to watch. Nice clean face, back in its rightful place.

