

FAILED TO PROCEED? - THAT'S ONE WAY OF PUTTING IT!!

Ever since I bought the Bentley, ago it has had an intermittent hot starting problem, about once each year, resulting in my replacing the plugs, leads, coil and condenser, the previous owner having already renewed the rotor arm and distributor cap. Last year the problem seemed to have been solved and therefore when I took it from its winter storage for MoT testing a few days before the Annual Rally I was expecting it to be a mere formality.

The run down to the local garage (sympathetic to older cars) was uneventful but when I tried to start the engine to get the car on the lift it flatly refused to fire. After several attempts we removed the plus to find them well sooted up and no.1 plug was also wet (petrol). The carbs. and float chambers were checked and levels were OK. The problem had to be ignition, fortunately I had a selection of coils and condensers available along with the rotor arm and distributor cap replaced by the previous owner. So where to start - there was LT power at the distributor and also HT at the cap, indicating that the coil was OK. The condenser was only 1 year old and so the likely culprit was rotor arm or cap. We swapped the rotor arm for the spare – still no joy, then realised that Gordon Blacklock was only three miles away and he has a Silver Dawn with similar electrics. So I drove to Norton where Gordon obliged by trying both rotor arms on the Dawn - neither worked. He then tried his spare rotor arm which started the Dawn immediately, so he lent it to me to at least get me home. Back to the garage, fit Gordon's replacement and the Bentley started straight away, so the MoT test was done (It passed of course).

After all this excitement I set off for home, unfortunately after about 2 miles a misfire started and within another 200 yards the car was running on about 2 cylinders (and not always the same two). Fortunately I was able to get off the road before it stopped. Further attempts to restart were useless and the Bentley was ignominiously towed back to the garage, where we pushed it into the former paint shop to await my return from the Annual with some new parts.

The good news is that on fitting a brand new rotor arm, the Bentley started immediately and has run impeccably since then.

The moral of the story is “ When you are given original parts which have been replaced, don't be tempted to regard them as useful spares – remember that somebody removed them for a reason , probably because they had been causing problems.”

As a point of interest, original Delco rotor arms are unavailable and the replica arms are difficult to find (c. £29 each). These are described as “suppressed arms”. They have been replaced by a standard simple rotor arm (c. £10 each +VAT) which should prove more reliable. I bought mine from Flying Spares - **including a spare.**

Richard Harrison