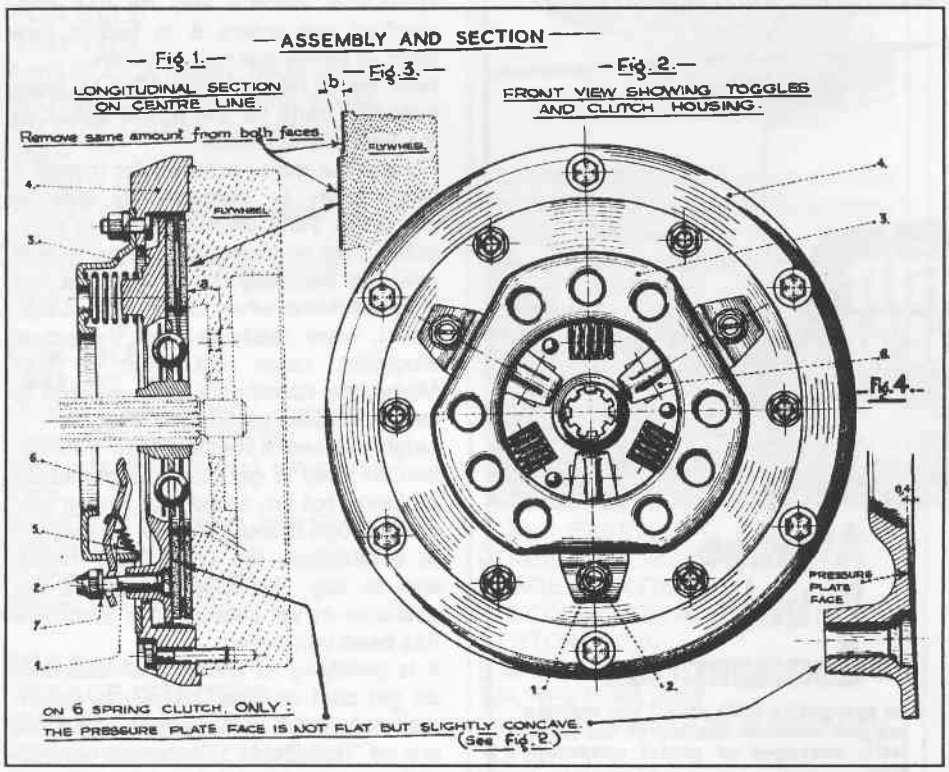
ALL STUCK UP

By Roger Williams

Earlier this year I had the urge to get the Traction on red plates and endeavoured to get it running again. I discovered that I had a stuck clutch and some may remember the advise I received on the Traction chat line. This article comes from Tech Torque in Floating Power, the UK Traction Owners Club magazine. (April 93)



Many Tractions sit for long periods, inactive in the garage, even those tenderly restored. Let's face it, Tractions are not an every day commuting vehicle anymore. Storage in a cold garage can create problems. Ed

One of these is the 'sticking' of the clutch, ie when the clutch pedal is fully depressed the clutch plate does not separate and the car is then stuck in gear.

This is because the friction plate has become stuck to the flywheel and the pressure plate.

Around Christmas time there were a series of really cold snaps broken up by almost Spring-like warm days. Perfect conditions for condensation which can rust the friction plate to the flywheel and the pressure plate. The same problems can occur at any time by a leaking water pump or radiator if the water is allowed to get to the friction plate area. (also rotting the thrust bearing)

Do not underestimate the strength of the bond of the rust. In some cases it is so strong that the gearbox/bellhousing has to be removed and the pressure plate separated from the flywheel by a hammer and suitable drift. However, in most cases the bond can be broken by the following procedure:

Make sure you have plenty of space in front of the car!

Depress clutch pedal.

Engage first gear.

Keep clutch pedal depressed.

Start the engine. As the engine turns the car will move forward (kangaroo). With the clutch pedal still fully depressed and when a reasonable speed, say 10-15 mph, has been reached, hit the brake pedal hard and then release it immediately.

As you still have your foot on the clutch pedal, a successful operation will result in a momentary dramatic increase in engine revs and slowing of the car's forward motion as the load is decreased by the freeing of the clutch.

You can now stop the car.

The theory is that the momentum of the engine/flywheel will be stronger than the bond of the stuck friction plate which will be slowed by the sharp braking. Bearing in mind the fragile nature of the Traction gearbox this operation has to be undertaken with some care. If the bond is not broken after three or four attempts you will probably have to remove the gearbox/bellhousing.

Citroen recognised this problem and on the later cars fitted a device to the clutch pedal which allowed it to be held down, thus separating the plates, if the car was to be laid up for any length of time.

The brake shoes can also get firmly stuck to the brake drums, particularly if they are poorly adjusted ie almost touching along their whole length. If the car is to stand for any length of time, particularly in a cold damp garage, it is advisable to slacken off the snail cam adjusters to give the maximum clearance between the shoes and the drum. Never leave a car standing for any length of time with the handbrake.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Although this procedure is acknowledged practice for curing this problem, I must emphasise the point about the weakness of the gearbox, and the care needed in performing this operation.

Roger Williams

Footnote: Readers may remember Roger Williams from our last issue in his (Roger's) retort to Bernie Hadaway's article.