



JAGUAR JOURNAL™

Official Magazine of the Jaguar Clubs of North America

May-June 2021

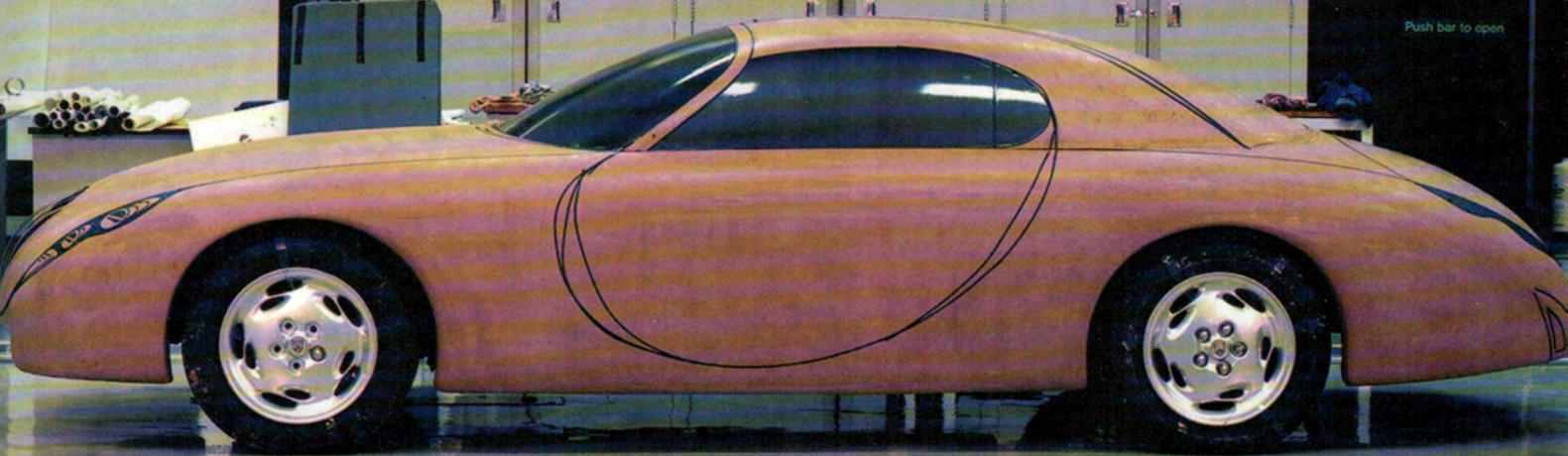
Shock Jaguar Sports GT Suggestion!

XK8 – Mike Dale reveals turmoil behind scenes

X-Type 20th anniversary – future classic?

Modified Monogram E-Type: Part 3

DIY Clock repair options



JAGUAR JOURNAL

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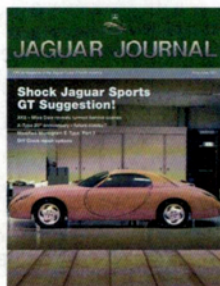
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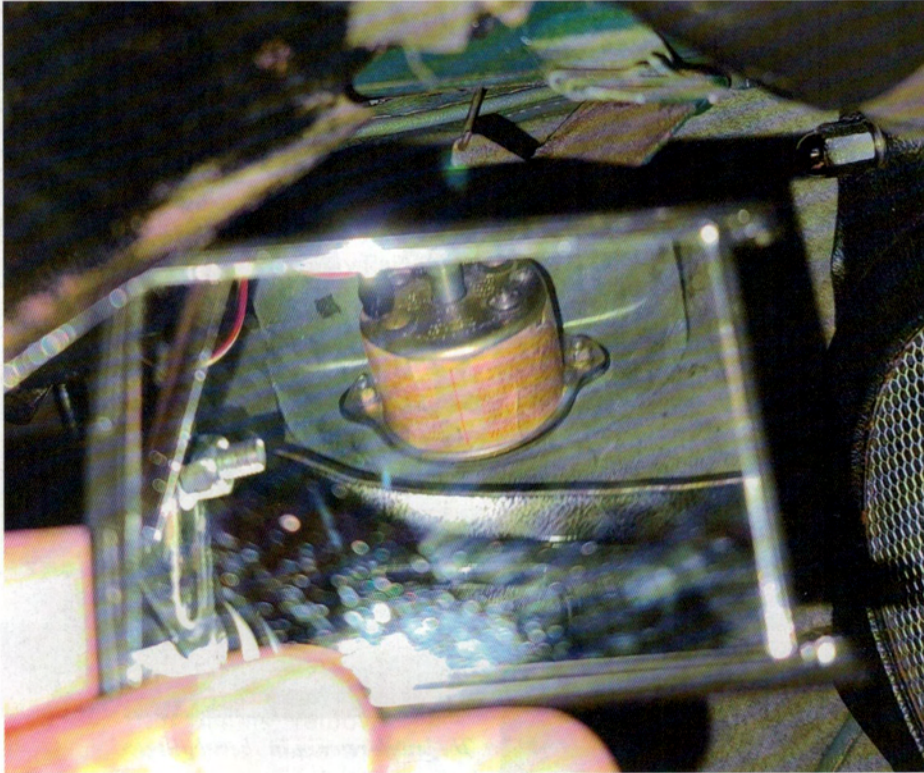
Cover Photo: Ford and their head of styling signed off on this car as the XJS's successor. Can you believe it?



Revisiting Jaguar Clock Repair

The Smiths gold-plated contacts conundrum

By Tom Taylor



Clock secured to tachometer as viewed from under the dash with a mirror. On most models it can be removed from the tach with little further disassembly/removal of the dashboard or tach.

As with many of the mechanical items on our vintage Jaguars, the Smiths clocks are a true wonder of 1940s-1960s technology. But, unfortunately, like some other Jaguar components, the clock was not reliable after only a few years of operation. Mine began its erratic timekeeping after about five years from new (1967-1972). It would often stop, and by readjusting the hands I could get it to work again for a time, until it finally quit for good in 1973.

When disassembled, a declaration stamped on the hidden backing plate states the clock has a four-jeweled movement. You can see pink jeweled bearing holes in two of the bearing areas, and the other two jewels are the end caps for these bearings. As long as the clock was kept operational with power from the 12 volt car battery, it could reliably run for a few years. However, there was a weak link in the design that Jaguar acknowledged in Service Bulletin #P.44, December 1965:

"Following complaints received concerning faulty transistorized electric clocks, investigation has shown that in the majority of cases, the fault is due to the clock not being restarted manually when the battery has been reconnected after work on the car. This results in the gold-plated contacts in the clock chattering and subsequently burning."

The bulletin then states it is essential to restart the clock by tweaking the hand setting control. There was a further admonishment to dealers in Bulletin #P.50, September 1966:

"Despite the issue of Service Bulletin P.44 in November, 1965, it is apparent that the importance of the instructions contained therein are not receiving the attention they warrant... It cannot be too strongly emphasized that FAILURE TO ENSURE THAT THE

CLOCK IS WORKING AS SOON AS THE BATTERY IS CONNECTED WILL INEVITABLY RESULT IN IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO THE TIMEPIECE."

THE REAL WORLD

Mark Willows of Clocks4Classics, which specializes in the repair, restoration and improvement of English automotive timepieces, surmises the weak contacts mechanism was even more problematic than the service bulletins indicated. As Mark puts it, "I am not certain that the contacts were actually that reliable even if the advice in the Jaguar bulletin was followed. I believe the contacts still wore out after a short time because they were necessarily very small and were damaged by the arcing which occurs when the current through the solenoid is interrupted. Later versions of the movement included a diode to help suppress this arcing, but this made the clock polarity sensitive and many were damaged when positive earth cars were converted to negative earth. Interestingly, an ex-employee of Smiths told me that the clocks became more unreliable when Jaguar introduced vinyl seats (e.g. in later versions of the Mk 2, 240, etc.). Apparently, the fumes from the plasticizer used in the seats attacked key components and made matters considerably worse!

"Strangely, the Jaguar bulletin also refers to the clock as transistorised. I think there must have been some confusion at the time. Smiths did later produce some transistorised clocks but these did not have contacts, so I am sure that this bulletin is actually talking about the Smiths clocks like yours from roughly 1940 through the early 1970s, with the 'pin clock' movement."

THE FIXES

Thus, the weak links on these clocks were, firstly, the design of the contacts mechanism itself, and secondly, the mechanic working on the car. When attempting to repair a Smiths

clock, therefore, upgrading the contact mechanism is imperative. Repairing the existing weak parts is impossible, as there are no new-old-stock components available. Nor can they be rebuilt after the described burn-out, and in any event, they are not reliable in the long run. Having researched the matter, I've found there are three avenues available, namely repair, replacement or restoration of the Smiths clocks:

Repair

It is sometimes possible to simply rebuild, clean and oil the original movement. Due to the contacts mechanism being worn or likely burned out, however, this solution is short-lived at best.

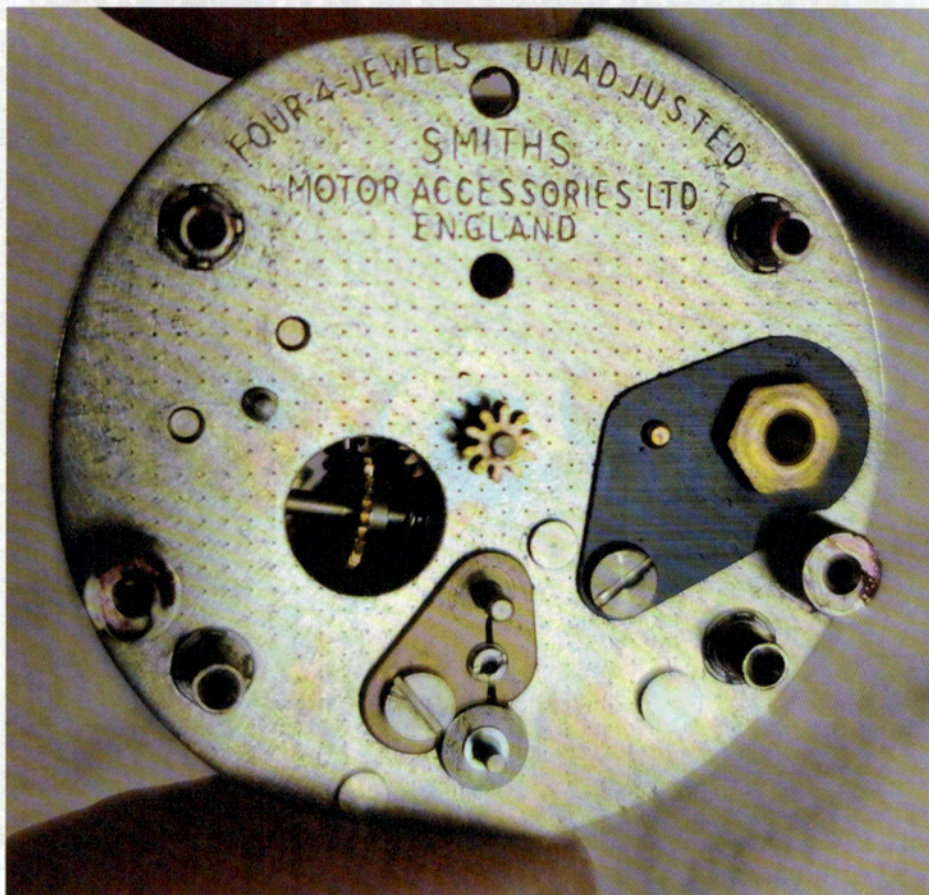
Replace

Some people replace the movement entirely with a new digital clock. Normally this uses a separate battery (such as AA) and does away with the original Smiths clock and its components, other than the hands.

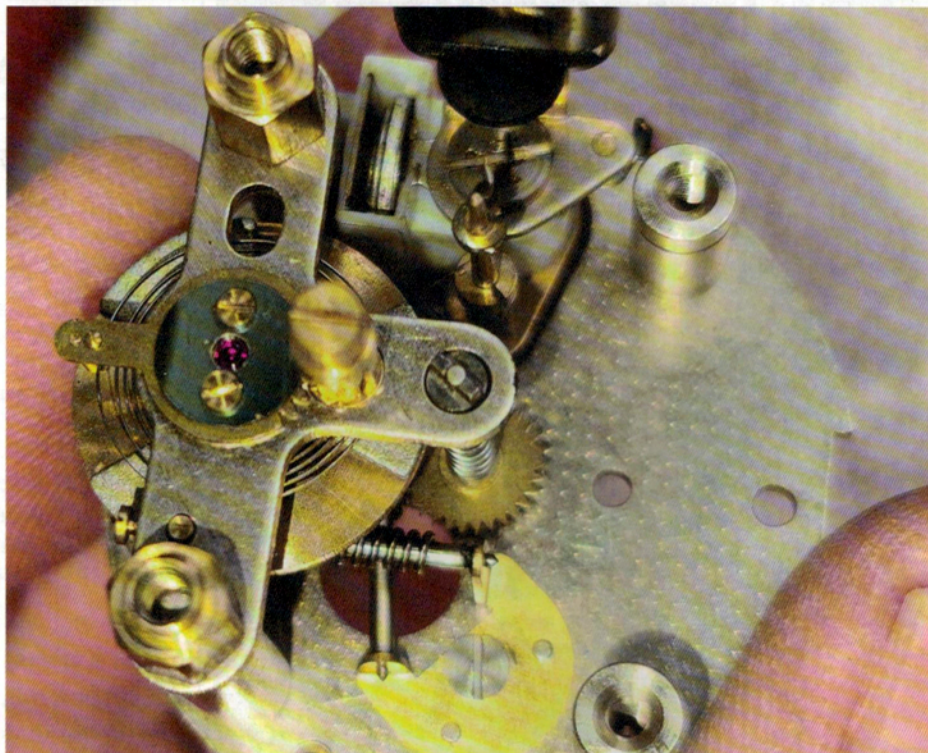
Restore

Call it upgrading or restoring function, but replacing the faulty contacts mechanism using today's digital technology is the Clocks4Classics solution. Mark uses a printed circuit board (PCB) and components to replace the defective contacts. The PCB holds three components and a slotted screw (see photos). The clock retains its oscillating balance wheel and therefore the wonderful, almost silent, ticking sound you may have heard if you were lucky your clock ever worked. It also keeps the four-jeweled movement and its gears – officially known as the 'escape wheel assembly' and 'transverse wheel assembly.'

Using this kit the clock becomes roughly 30% digital, but remains 70% analog with original movement. Plus, it works from your car battery, like it did 50 or 60 years ago, and it is no longer sensitive to polarity. Another advantage is you won't need to send your clock to someone else



Backing plate showing "4 Jewels" declaration. The jewels remain in the rebuilt clock.



Balance wheel assembly clearly showing a jeweled bearing. The old contact mechanism is shown at top, just under the 'connecting bracket' (the black, insulated male power disconnect).

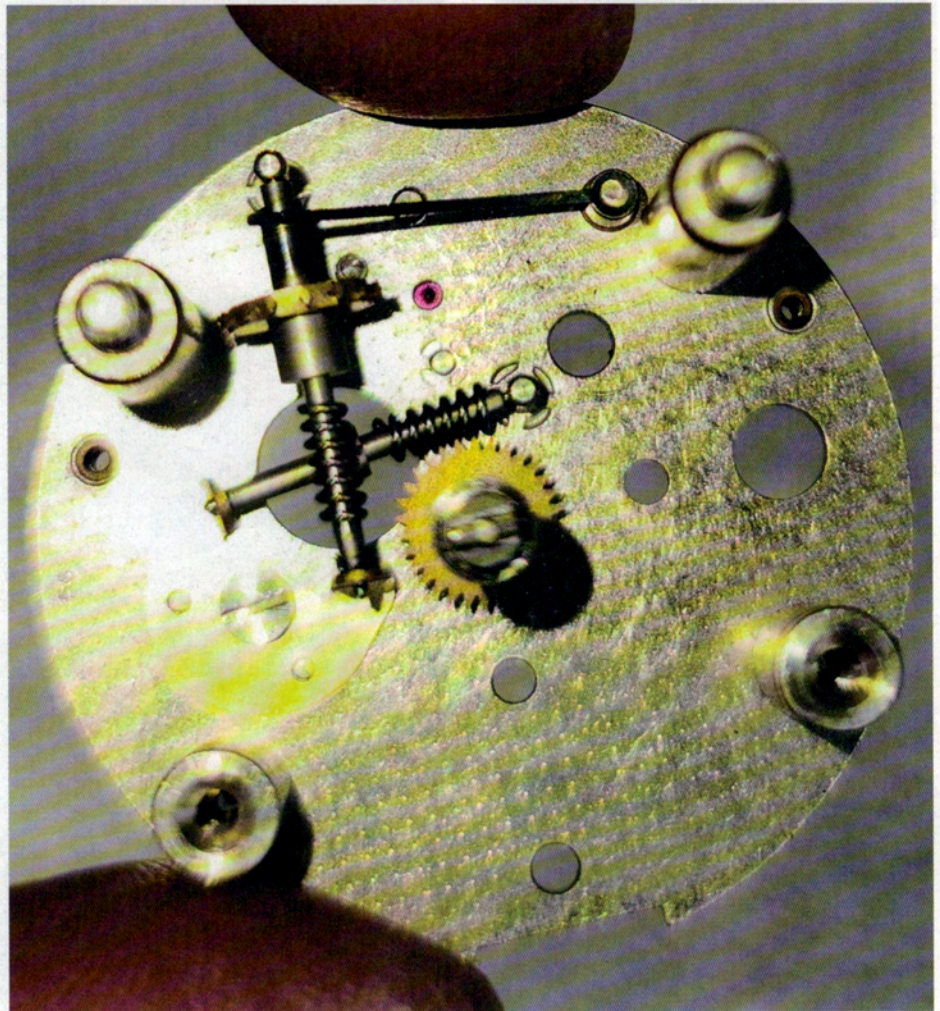
for repair; you can do it in the comfort of your shop. As a final note to this method, it is 100% reversible, should one choose to go back to the faulty parts.

THE "HOW TO" SECTION...

I opted for the Clocks4Classics solution. The kit is just under \$100 shipped from England to your door in North America. Mark's company responded immediately to my PayPal payment and dispatched the kit the same day. It took just under two weeks to arrive. Precise times may vary (appropriately enough!).

Regardless of your choice of repair solution, the first question you might ask is, "How do I remove the clock from a Series 1 E-Type or other models of this era with the clock in the tachometer?" In practice it's not difficult as the clock is normally accessible from underneath the dash. After disconnecting the battery and any trim panels, remove the bezel securing the hand-winding mechanism to reach the fixing nut. Lying on your back and/or using a mirror, undo the two ¼" nuts and star washers, using a quarter ¼" drive ratchet and short extension, or other suitable wrenches. Spin the hand-winder off the back of the clock and separate the power feed wire. The clock will slip out, but take care not to snag the delicate exposed hands. In fact, it's a good idea to tape a piece of cardboard over them at this point. That part of the clock will not be disturbed in the repair process.

I needn't go into the disassembly, cleaning, repair and reassembly process, as Mark's instructions are extremely detailed and easy to follow. He provides both printed instructions in PDF format, as well as an excellent YouTube video. In fact, it was after watching the video that I decided to buy the kit. The rebuild took precisely a week (actually 6 days, 23 hours and five minutes – just kidding), which included four



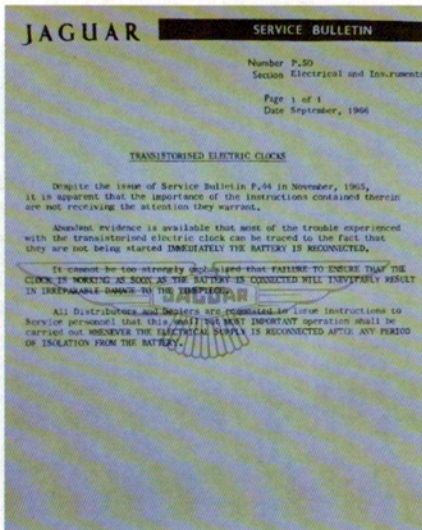
View of gears clearly showing jeweled bearing for balance wheel assembly.

days to adjust the regulation (i.e. clock speed). It's prudent to wait 24 hours or so to check the accuracy and make adjustments, then wait another 24 hours and re-tweak as necessary. It's better than removing the clock again.

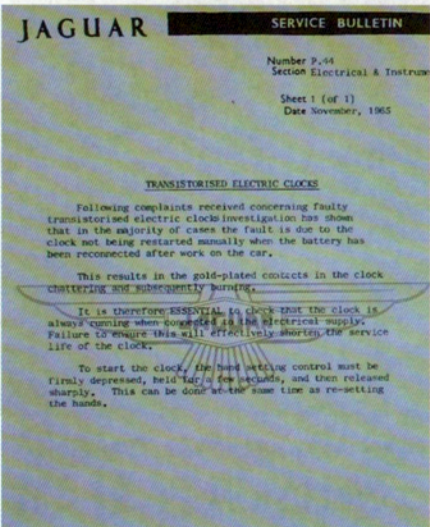
The reason that it took three of the seven days to complete the rebuild was the need for a couple of trips to the hardware store for some tools, and I also had to fashion some other items, which I've detailed below. If you supply these items in advance while you're waiting for your repair kit to arrive, you can probably slice at least a day off the rebuild time. I found that reinstallation was easier than removal. The result is a ticking clock that sounds just like I remember when it last ran... in 1973!

CONCLUSION

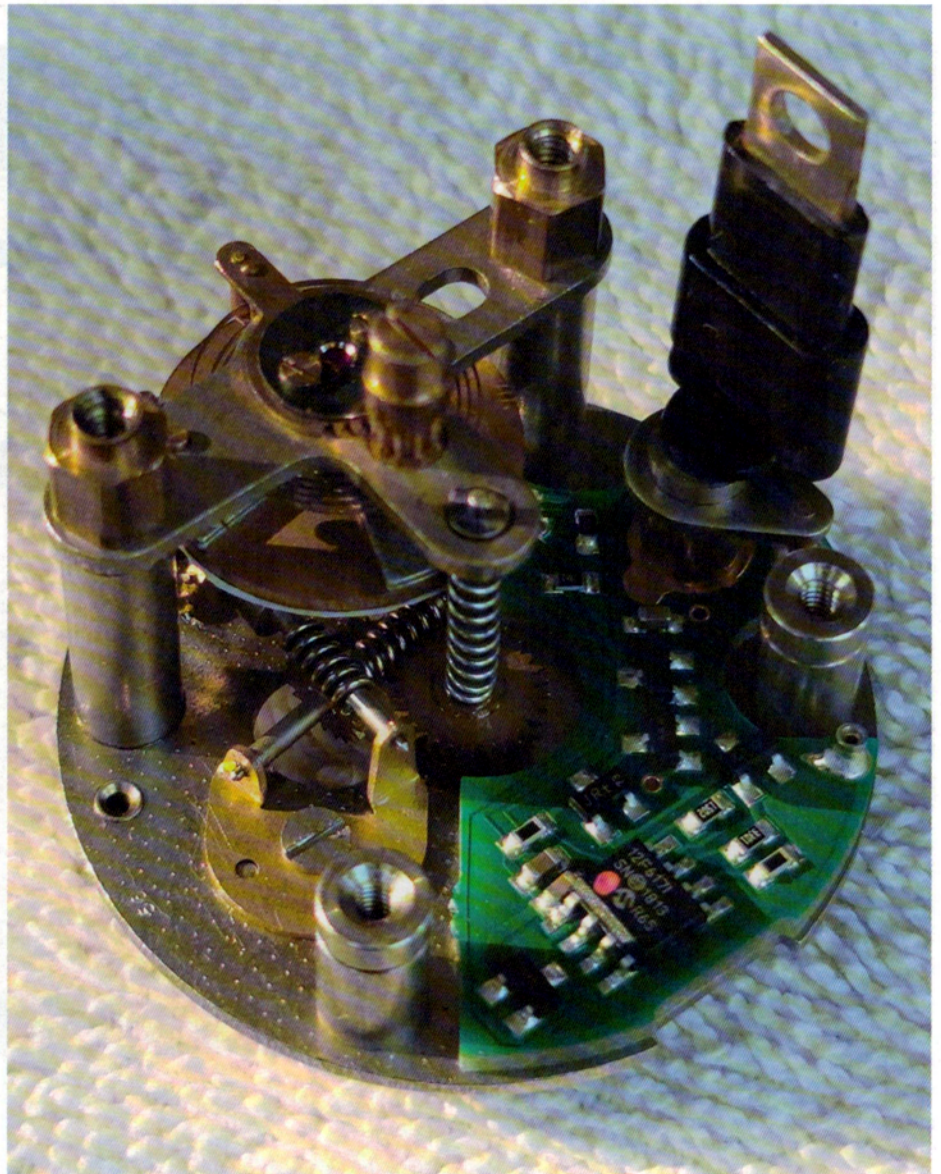
The Clocks4Classics solution yields a reliable Smiths timepiece with most of the analog features and original movement intact. Thus, the clock ticks like it did from day one. Mark Willows and his team have been building this kit since 2012 and, as he attests, his clocks are still ticking. If your car hibernates in the winter, Mark recommends that "you leave the clock running as this prevents any problems with the movement becoming stiff due to lack of use. The current draw of the clock is very low and you do not need to worry about it running down the battery." I am convinced that the Clocks4Classics solution gives the best compromise between reliability and originality. And, most important, doing the conversion yourself is extremely fulfilling.



Service Bulletin from 1966 admonishing dealer service personnel for not following through!



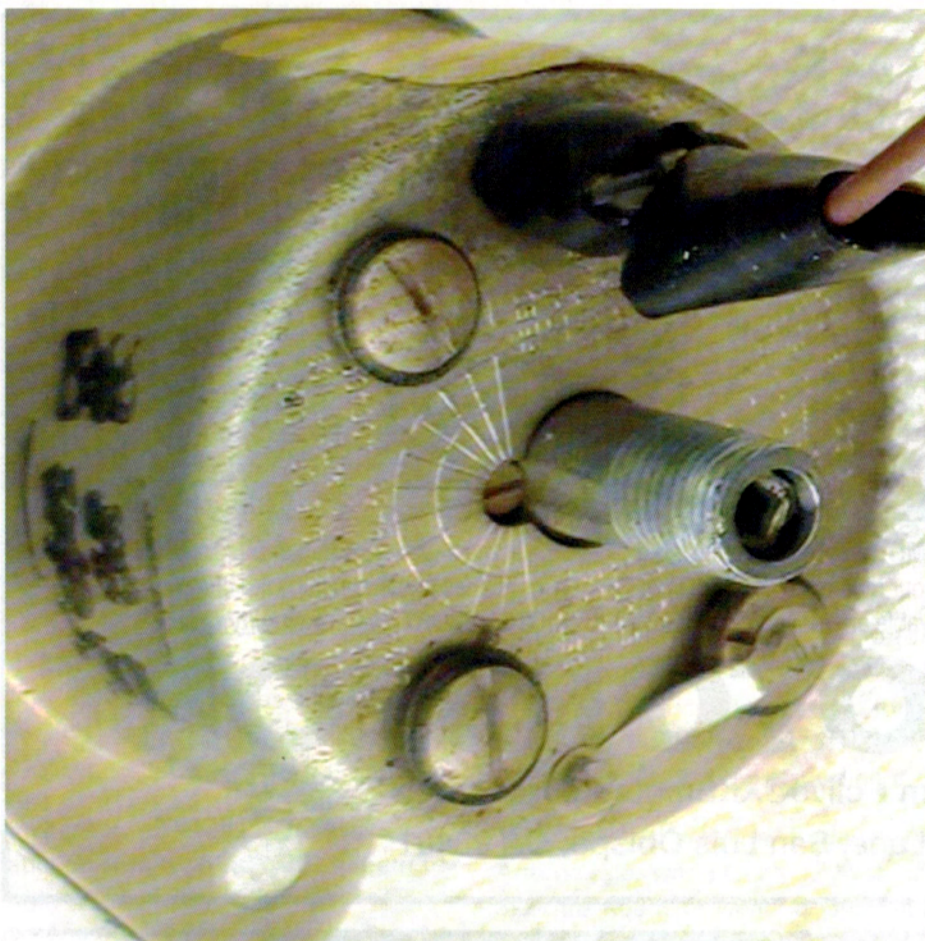
Service Bulletin from 1965 identifying the contacts problem and solution.



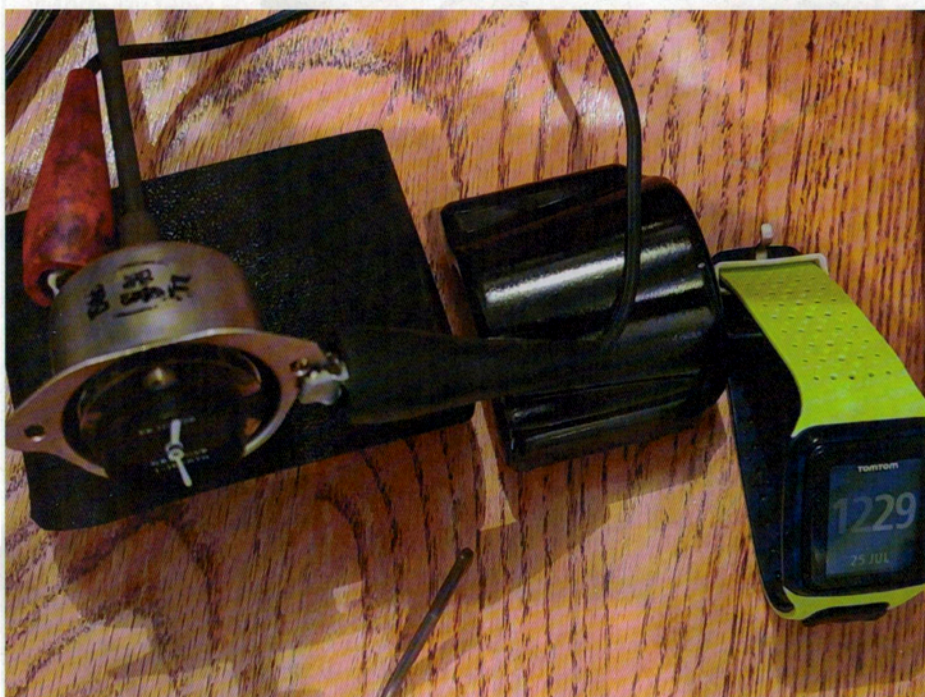
Reassembled clock with PCB board installed, replacing faulty contacts mechanism. Note that the solenoid is not shown; its reinstallation is the final task.



The failed contacts and associated fittings – the weak link in the original Smiths clock. These are the parts replaced by the Clocks4Classics PCB board. Keep them if you ever wish to return to the original Smiths timepiece.



Regulation (speed) adjuster is the slotted screw in center of the photo. Turning clockwise slows the clock, counterclockwise speeds it up.



Reassembled clock showing speed adjustment on the bench. Note alligator clips with power directly from the car battery.

CLOCKS4CLASSICS

CLOCK REPAIR KIT

Repair your Jaguar clock with the Clocks4Classics kit using a few simple tools. Watch our video guides or read our step-by-step instructions to see how it's done.



Visit: www.clocks4classics.com

THE PROCESS

Notes and observations on items needed for the full rebuild.

For removal from dash:

1/4" socket with 1/4" ratchet and 1-1/2" extension. Note: I couldn't get an open end or box wrench on the nuts due to the close quarters in the dash area.

For reattachment to dash:

Sealant to adhere gasket to the clock body for maintaining alignment.

For clock rebuild:

Lacquer thinners ('cellulose thinners' in British parlance). This is imperative to help ease out some tiny screws the size of sugar ants.

2.0mm and 2.4mm slotted jeweler's screwdrivers, modified by slightly grinding down the flat edge into a sharper angle.

Magnifying goggles

Artist brush to apply the lacquer thinner

12 volt, fused +/- test wire circuit with alligator clips (described in Mark's instructions).

3/16" and 1/4" open end or socket wrenches.

Small wire cutters

Super Glue

Tweezers to handle screws

Razor knife 