



P6 ROVER OWNERS CLUB

SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

Earlier in the year I was a bit flush and looked towards the P6 to relieve the burden of excess cash overflowing from my wallet. Unlike a lot of people I decided not to spend it on something visible (new passenger carpet seemed favourite for a while) but on improving the handling. All the suspension bushes were in order and the shock absorbers were less than 10,000 miles old so the springs were selected for attention. I know for a fact that our cars were not designed to scrape the front mud flaps on every corner and I have even been in a couple that could be 'thrown about' with vigour and not leave mud flap marks on the road. Thanks for those experiences must go to two former Club members (both recently cured of the P6 bug) who can drive these cars quickly and safely in a manner which would leave most boy racers envious.

Back springs are noted for settling on these cars, just take a look at how low the back end is on some of the cars next time you attend a rally.

After a bit of research I decided that for my needs a set of new, heavy duty, rear springs would be the first to be fitted. A few days later they arrived and within a couple of weeks I had them fitted. This was a doddle by usual P6 repair standards, no special tools were required, a trolley jack, axle stands, socket set and several choice 4 letter words sufficed. This job transformed the car's handling and soon I was enjoying P6 motoring something like its original designers intended, i.e. the car went round corners with much less roll than before and seemed somehow smoother. A season of enjoyable motoring followed and I am fairly confident that this was a successful repair and upgrade.

Not one to be satisfied with half a job (unless I can get away with it!) I then started thinking about the front end and the still scraping mud flaps. As the front springs are not fast moving items, they took some sourcing. A call to Walkers had already revealed that they will not supply them as they consider the job of changing them to be too dangerous! I agree! Anyway a further search through my local catalogues I found a supplier. They were duly ordered and arrived a few days later. Unfortunately these turned out to be SD1 springs. They were returned and after another few days a set turned up labelled P6 2000/2200. I pointed out that they were several different front springs listed by Rover for these cars and that the 2000 springs would not be suitable for my 3500 Auto. A call to the supplier and the reply was "they fit all models in the range, aftermarket springs are fairly universal". I fitted one and it was obviously wrong, the supplier agreed and refunded my money. One lesson to learn here is that Rover made 3 cars that could be known as 3500, the P5, P6 and SD1. It is conceivable that you could perhaps pick up a set of SD1 springs from an auto jumble or the like and get in a pickle trying to fit them, so beware. A similar situation exists with the P6 2000 and the SD1 2000. My problem was now where to go from here?

A search on the internet located a company called Coilsprings from Sheffield (0114 275 8573) that will manufacture any type of automotive suspension coil spring to order and offer advice regarding handling and performance improvements. They made mine to standard ride height but increased the stiffness to try and decrease roll on cornering. One phone call, one letter with a cheque and two weeks later, as agreed,



they were ready. They turned up and on inspection seemed every bit as meaty and robust as the original equipment.

I have been fortunate enough over the years to acquire the special tools needed to do the front springs, including the special clamps, and so was fairly confident that the job could be done safely.

Removal of my front springs necessitated the use of normal spring compressors as the holes in the spring caps provided for the Rover clamps were not in line. This was because I improvised and used the wrong tools when they were fitted last time. I used four compressors and had to search around for ones that were just the right shape to fit in the space between the spring and the inner wing. Treat these front springs with respect as they could kill you with ease if the compressors fail and they go flying around the garage. Even if you have the correct Rover clamps fitted in the cap slots remember these cars are 30 years old and that corrosion may have weakened the area around the slots. Use a couple of compressors as well. If this paragraph means nothing to you then do not attempt the job, go to a specialist!

When you come to fit the new springs a friend inside the car will be necessary to fit the long through bolts whilst you hold the spring and pivot in place on the outside. Later cars had long studs on the pivot with nuts on the inside of the car and can be fitted by one person. If like me, you have no mates, you must either get a later car or get a garage to do the job! I will not dwell on the fitting of springs, it really is a job that you need to follow the Rover manual. If you are not confident or competent then let somebody who is do it! Even if your local garage will tackle the job make sure they know what they are up against (this is definitely not Ford Escort engineering on these cars) and do not expect the job to cost peanuts!

In conclusion this job (changing all the springs) has cost the thick end of £250 in materials alone but has transformed my pleasant wallowy dream machine into a really competent mile eater that can be driven with confidence on any road and keep up with any of its contemporary rivals. Yes, now it really is a three and a half litre BMW beater!

If any member has access to metalworking facilities and also the necessary materials, I would be happy to pass on the dimensions of the Rover clamps so that they could manufacture their own. I have no idea what the clamps are made of but I'm sure that mild steel would be totally inadequate.

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