

An Imp engine for the 21st century

Ian and Colin Gunton,

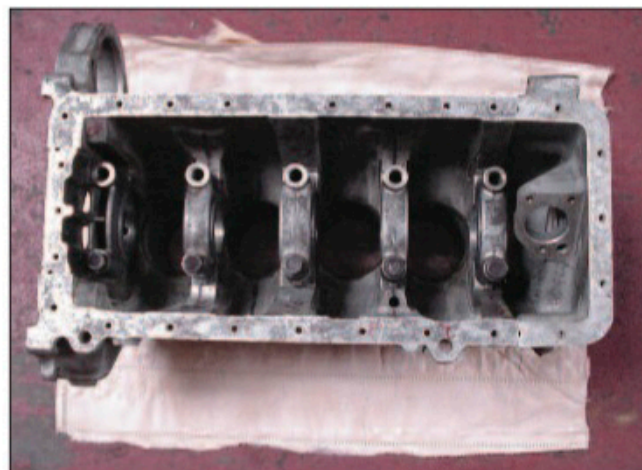
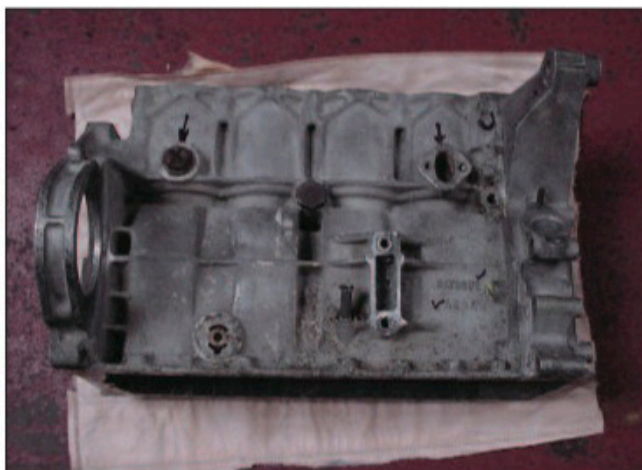
Racing 40-year-old equipment is certainly a challenge, especially since just about every other car on the grid has had continuous development work since the 1966 cut-off date for HSCC Historic saloon car racing.

Following several engine failures the final straw came at the 2011 Croft Nostalgia weekend we arrived with our three Imps for what was expected to be a fun weekend. Fun is not what was to unravel, Shaun Hazlewood expired on the first lap of qualifying. In the first race I managed four laps but Colin, having qualified the Imp in fifth just behind four Lotus



Cortinas, lasted just one lap before, well they say a picture is worth a thousand words...

Thus started the hunt for a way to provide power with reliability; chatting with Ben Boulton of Corley Conversions revealed the existence of a Rootes engine designed to stand the rigours of rallying, the five-bearing block.

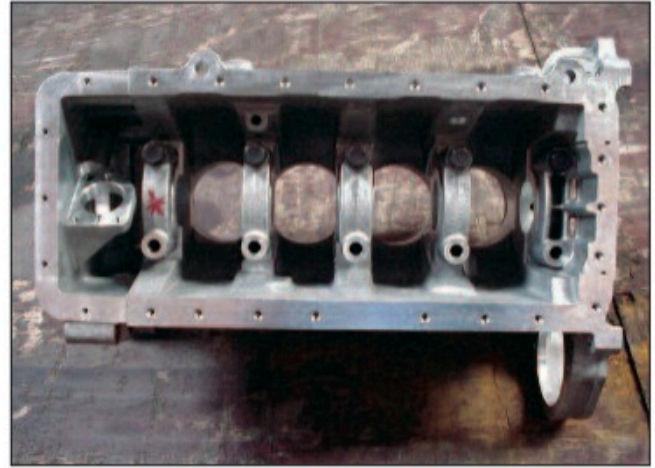
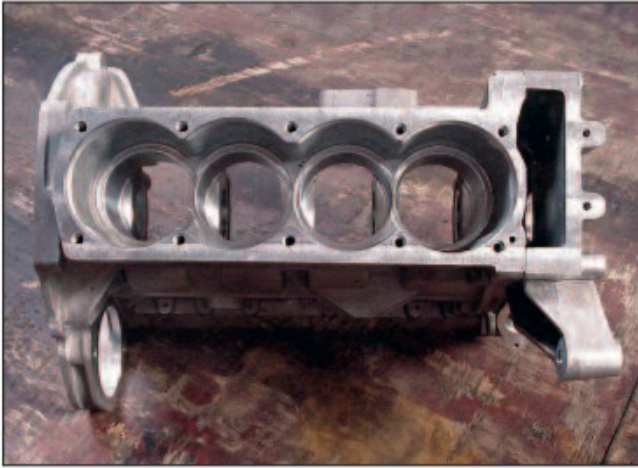


The original Rootes five-bearing block

This engine, rallied by Rosemary Smith, could be the answer. Checking the regulations reveals that this engine is legal, the stumbling block being the fact that only six were built. Fortunately for us one of these rare engines is available for us to borrow.

We are now almost a year in to the quest for what has become the Holy Grail and the first new five-bearing block for almost 50 years now exists. The challenge has been to produce an accurate

copy of a design for which we have very limited documented information. By enlisting the help of a specialist aluminium casting company together with a pattern maker the sample five-bearing block has been meticulously measured to produce the pattern for the new casting. The pattern has been produced in such a way that we can also produce the more common three-bearing block in order to ensure the future of the Hillman Imp engine for as long as there is a demand.



The first new five-bearing block

The new casting has been produced incorporating the improvements Rootes built in to the later Imp and the B1 block: straight edge to the top of the block and the use of a lip seal at the flywheel end. As this new block is being sand cast, as was the original five-bearing block, it contains more metal than the die-cast three-bearing version and thus is a little heavier.

SPEEDY SPARES LTD

Incorporating
R.J.Grimes (Coulson) Ltd

Specialising in Rootes and Classic Spares
From 1930's onwards

NEW HILLMAN SPARES AT DISCOUNT PRICES

Our stock includes Brakes,
Steering, Suspension, Electrics, Clutches,
Cylinders and repair kits, Hoses, Bushes,
Filters, Pumps, Pistons, Gaskets, Exhausts,
Cables, Bearings, Distributors etc. etc. etc.

Send a S.A.E for Spares List
Please State Make & Model of Car(s)
Fast Mail Order Service Worldwide
With more than 35 years of knowledge

Phone : 01273 417889 Fax : 01273 412764

**19-25 Old Shoreham Road,
Portslade, East Sussex, BN41 1SP**

www.speedyspares.co.uk

The driving force of the engine development has come from the disappointment of being able to set quick times but not necessarily race results.

Colin has used his degree in automotive engineering to hopefully bring the Hillman Imp engine back to being a state-of-the-art engine assuming that once all the parts arrive they fit together and all still turn over.

These blocks are designed to be 998 cc for racing but could be made to range from 875 to 1,300 cc depending on the bore size although the 1,300 cc would need a special crankshaft to achieve this.

November this year should be a most interesting time but that's another story.

Please feel free to contact us via e-mail: triacac@aol.com.

Excellent! I look forward to further developments on this landmark achievement. GP