



Minus a few pieces of bodywork, our XI takes to the road for the first time, Green at the wheel, Tomalin as riding mechanic

PROJECT XI

PART 4

Will it move under its own steam? And will it stop?!

The further you go into a project like this, the bigger the rewards become. Getting the engine running last month was a major breakthrough; now there was no reason why we shouldn't be able to get the car moving under its own steam.

All we had to do was get the cooling system up and running, connect all the pedals, set up the steering, sort out the brakes, fill the gearbox and diff with lubricant, bolt on the wheels and drive away. Which sounds quite a lot but, other than being time-consuming, it should all have been pretty straightforward. Or so we thought...

When we'd fired up the A-series engine last month, we weren't able to run it for more than a few seconds as without coolant it would soon have overheated, so our first task was to get all the pipes connected, attach the header tank to the scuttle, and add coolant. With everything in place we were able to twist the ignition to position four, listen to the starter motor whir and wake the green machine once again.

Every time our engine starts I'm still taken slightly by surprise, the gruff, twin-carb soundtrack never failing to make me chuckle. I don't think I'll ever tire of hearing it burbling into life. This time we left it to run, checking the water pipes as they began to heat up, quickly followed by the radiator, and then we all cheered again when the fan kicked in. You wouldn't think twice about these processes on a modern car, but when you've actually built the thing yourself even the smallest milestones bring great joy.

The pedals were a fiddle, and only after connecting the throttle cable did I realise the

connecting nipple was the wrong way around, so it had to come off again. It's become a running joke with Peter, Kenny and Roger S that if there are two ways of fitting something, you can guarantee I'll get it wrong.

With the nipple tweaked, Roger filled the brake reservoir with fluid and I climbed in to pump the brake pedal as he bled out the air. Meanwhile Kenny continued to work on the front clamshell (and occasionally take pictures) and Peter began to dismantle the water temperature gauge, which had never worked properly. With a project such as this you end up doing as much restoration as you do kit car building and with the gauge in pieces Peter looked more watch-repairer than car-builder. It was quite amazing to see the intricate internal workings of the dials, not to mention amusing to hear Peter cursing every time one of the tiny springs slipped from his grasp. Meanwhile, Roger connected the steering column and manufactured our own lock-stops using his lathe and milling machine while I fitted the battery tray and strapped the battery in place.

Pretty soon we had oil in everything and were able to bolt on our spanking new set of Revolution wheels, which looked fantastic next to the lustrous dark green bodywork, before lowering our XI to the floor for the very first time. Down on the ground it looked incredibly low – so low, in

