

Steered in the right direction

How one couple ditched moderns to design a better type of power steering



The attraction of working on classics proved too much for Neil and Gaby Oakley who shelved their thriving independent Volkswagen Audi business to concentrate on oldies and, to be more precise, steer them in the right direction with Lite-Steer.

Power-steering conversions is becoming one of the most popular modifications on classics with electronic adaptations the easiest solution because the system can be fitted and, if required, removed leaving virtually no trace of the alternation. What Neil Oakley did was survey what was already on the market – and make something that was better, and he called it Lite-Steer.

With some 25 years of engineering experience (starting as an apprenticeship at Volvo), working on a wide variety of vehicles, both old and modern, Neil was first alerted to the growing popularity of aftermarket PAS systems when his VW Camper customers complained about the heavy standard steering system. Three years of design and development work led to his speed sensitive Lite-Steer design with the

first application ready for fitment back in October 2010 to a classic VW bus, naturally.

Today, after almost 500 units fitted to a wide variety of classics at Neil and Gaby's Burwash Common, East Sussex workshop, the beauty of the Oakley design lies in the fact that the steering column looks standard. "We had a Ferrari in last year and we weren't allowed to change anything on the vehicle, no extra holes or brackets – anything," says Neil, adding that the kit can even be self-fitted on Campers. The unit is supplied fully assembled and comes with comprehensive fitting instructions;



All types of classics – cars and vans – can be converted, such as this old Bentley

you just bolt the unit in and follow the wiring instructions (of which the loom simply connects to the battery and ignition coil. No welding is required). And it speaks volumes for the product's quality that Lite-Steer comes not only with a full two years' warranty but also covered by full product liability insurance for further peace of mind.

FUTURE IDEAS

With the Lite-Steer well and truly established, Neil is turning his attention and expertise to other areas of classic car chassis improvements and rack and pinion conversions in particular.



Once fitted, the steering column looks completely standard, an important point

Again, it's hardly a new idea, but the Oakleys are dissatisfied with what they have found on some other set ups, particularly sorting out the geometry and curing the unpleasant trait of bump-steer.

"We give the owners a new found enthusiasm for their classics. We put the joy back which they experienced when they first drove the vehicle. The steering is like that on any modern car but still enjoying the uninterrupted beauty of the classic's character.

"Bear in mind that most of our classic car customers are 50+ and maybe suffering with arthritis, lost mobility and so on. Without our power steering they may well have sold their much loved cars – they don't have to now", says Gaby.

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