

Snow shows The benefits of A second car



What next? The author in pensive mood.

...And a third would have been quite handy, says Dr Jon Garvey



The best bet for getting around Essex in January?

BEST thing I ever did, getting a second car for practice work. True, you've got double the purchase price, double the tax and insurance, double the depreciation, fuel and servicing costs, but offset that against the time and money you would have lost trying to organise transport if your only car were to go wrong and you realise what a good investment it is.

Take the recent snow, for example. Enormous problems in the MG — all that torque causing wheelspin, and the rear-wheel drive sending you waltzing round in the side roads like Robin Cousins after a few too many. Much more sensible to use the Renault, with the front-wheel drive and the weight over the driving wheels.

Only problem is, it has not been starting all that happily from cold recently; battery must be getting clapped.

Never mind — set alarm 15 minutes early and we'll use jump-leads from the MG until I get to the garage for a new battery.

Here we are, then — let's get the thing started, and then

manoeuvre it along the road so the leads will reach to the Renault. Ah... can't get the key in the door, because the lock's frozen.

Luckily, Superdoc has non-smoker's cigarette lighter handy for just such emergencies. H'm. Seems, to be out of fuel. Better go inside and fill it.

Whoops, left door key inside. Ring bell. Thanks, wife. Shut up, dog! Refuel lighter, heat car key — and we're in. Starts first time. What a magnificent car!

Oh, I see. It doesn't want to go over the thick snow — that rear-wheel drive again. Well, we'll have to rock it. Rev... and back... rev... and back — come on, you damned car... rev... and back — from the smell, I'll be needing a new clutch before winter's out... rev... come-on-come-on-come-on... done it!

Now, round in front of the other car. This is taking longer than I thought. The thing about these MGs is that the battery is behind the driver's seat, so I have to back up to the Renault and put the jump-leads through the rear window, which you can unzip, just like this... ah. They won't reach.

I'll have to back another nine inches... which I can't because the car won't move through the snow again. It will probably be easier to dig the snow from the wheels than risk rocking smack into the other car, so let's get the spade.

Now the leads are on, so let's restart the MG. What was that funny grinding noise from the starter?

I hope that's not going to jam — now... no, it's okay, so we'll have a go at starting the other



The sports car can outperform some in the snow — but the rear-wheel drive sends you waltzing in the side roads.

car.

Well, it's turning over, but it doesn't want to fire. One more go. No, it's no good, and I'm due at the surgery now, so I shall just have to go in the MG anyway.

What a waste of time. Shove all the gear in, and off we go. Hello, there's that grinding noise again, only worse... oh dear, what an awful row. And what's that burning smell?

I can't risk going to work like this. I'll have to cut round the block and have another go at starting the Renault... here we are. Back up to it again. Bother, we've stalled. Now what's happened? It won't start... oh, hello, neighbour.

No, it won't turn at all. Just goes 'ptoh'. Think it must be the starter-motor. Yes, it would help if you could give me a shove. If we can get it over the snow on to the road. No, it doesn't help that it's uphill.

Gnnnnnnh... graaaaaah. No, you're right, we'll never do it. What? Try jump-leads to the Renault from your car? Well, I have tried already, but it's worth a go, if you're not in too much of a hurry, and we could use some of your magic cold-start aerosol stuff.

Right, that's all connected. No good. I'll have another go... no, it's no better than before. The plugs must be dirty, and I haven't got a spanner — you need a special one for a Renault, because the plugs are where the exhaust manifold should be. Thanks for your help anyway.

Was that a phone call, wife? Well, I'm not surprised the surgery phoned — it's 10 o'clock. They're sending the receptionist out on her moped to pick me up? They shouldn't have done that — that old thing's so unreliable it might never get here. . .

Jon Garvey is a GP in a snowdrift in Essex.