

# GP seeks roof rack therapist



## Dr Jon Garvey on car suicide.

**H**OMEOPATHS may sometimes be heard to refer to a 'vital force', which apparently likes nothing better than a sniff of some pills which were once in the same room as various 19th-Century cough remedies. Acupuncturists favour a vital force as well, but prefer to stick pins in it. Such examples remind us of the wisdom of looking beyond our own narrow discipline.

Take, for instance, the recent suicide of my car. To lay eyes, a Renault 16 is simply a three-piece suite with a lot of inaccessible nuts and bolts, but the merest apprentice mechanic knows better.

Our specimen was rather sickly from the time we first had it. Perhaps this was the result of neglect – it had been owned by a succession of solicitors and doctors. Or perhaps it just felt rejected when my wife discovered she was expecting twins the day after we bought it.

Whatever the reason, things came to a head when a lorry drove over it. I was returning from a night call and, oblivious to our presence, the lorry shunted us two yards sideways on to the pavement.

My own vital force retreated somewhere into my left shoe, so the shock to the poor car can only be imagined. However, despite the dented wing and strabismic headlamps, we struggled manfully home, and it was not until the weekend that the car

suddenly developed hysterical paralysis.

On starting, it simply refused to go into any gear. One of the partners kindly towed us to the garage, where the mechanic did whatever mechanics do, found nothing wrong, and stuck everything back together, whereupon the car went perfectly.

A week or so later, my wife reported that the car kept stalling. Well, I already knew that there was a loose hose from the carburettor to the air cleaner, and I was not too -surprised to find it missing. But -when I eventually found a replacement, it made absolutely no difference. The engine continued to stall.

So, back to the garage it went, where the mechanic stripped the carburettor, found nothing amiss, reassembled it and found it worked perfectly.

All seemed well until the following week, when I noticed an inoperative heater and a persistent red warning light, opened the bonnet to search for a leaking water hose, and found an eight-inch crack in the cylinder-block. I had failed to diagnose reactive depression, and so had been unable to avert the inevitable consequence.

We have since bought a Renault 14. It's a bright, chirpy car, in shade and shape not unlike a Laxton Superb, and seems to have a well-balanced sort of personality. However, as it is a little smaller than the 16, we have had to buy a roof-rack.

I thought nothing of it when, unpacking the latter, I found a mounting bracket had become unwelded. After all, the dealer replaced it willingly enough. My

suspicion was aroused when the assembled rack proved to have bolts too short to attach it to the car, and when this was overcome, one supporting flange wouldn't fit its bolt, and that had to be replaced.

Now the rack is in place, it wails like all three witches in "Macbeth" at all speeds above 15mph.

Can anyone recommend a psychotherapist for a roof-rack?

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