Brake Bleeding

By Geoff Piddington

Brake bleeding can be fraught with obstacles. The following may be of assistance:

The first obstacle will be slackening off the brake bleeder nipple.

Subject to access, if past ownership has been kind and has not tightened the brake bleeder nipple excessively, the brake bleeding nipple will accept the standard ring spanner, a multi point crowfoot or L Type open ended ring wrench (if access is difficult, the two latter wrenches can remove most brake bleeding nipples and unions without issues).

If the brake bleeding nipple (or union) is corroded or has been abused and rounded, you will have to resort to the Irving 4LW Vise Grip, an essential tool for the removal of damaged brake bleeding nipples and unions that has saved many marriages, but be prepared to replace the offending brake bleeding nipple or union. Note, I have yet to find a good quality open brake union wrench under $50 - so these I avoid.

The brake bleeding operation is (if you believe the manual) simplicity itself.

The basic method utilises two persons and need not be detailed here. Should this basic exercise not work, you will be drawn to alternative bleeding methods - usually involving pressure or vacuum based devices, these can be found with operating techniques via the internet and YouTube.

A common difficulty encountered with pressure and vacuum assisted brake bleeding, is air or fluid leakage past the thread of the brake bleeding nipple after it has been opened with the thread under pressure or vacuum. This leakage can give false readings

(note, the thread does not seal the bleed bleeding nipple, it enables pressure to be placed on the seating between the brake bleeder nipple and the brake caliper/cylinder, sealing the system at this point). It should also be noted, that with the exception of DOT 5, brake fluid will absorb water. It follows, that brake fluid on a brake bleeding nipple (or union) thread if left to its own undisturbed devices, will absorb moisture and develop corrosion at a future date returning you to para one, unless treated with a thread sealant or a rubber/silicone grease prior to assembly.

Brake bleeding nipple/union thread sealant.

Applying a sealant to a brake bleeding nipple or union thread will seal the thread from moisture and deter future corrosion. It will also stop the leakage of air or brake fluid past the thread of the open brake bleeding nipple while bleeding. Note, when applying thread sealant, allow the first two threads above the bleed bleeding nipple 'point' to be sealant free and *do not over tighten*.

As a brake bleeding nipple or union thread sealant, rubber or silicone grease may, depending upon the thread condition offer an alternative to a non hardening thread sealant. Permatex #56521 a non hardening thread sealant is a close relative to the thread sealant applied to Speed Bleeder brake nipples and is frequently utilised. Note, sealing the brake bleeder nipple/union thread will preserve the thread from future corrosion, it will not stop leaks that originate from a damaged brake bleeder nipple or union seat.