

barchetta – EMERGENCY BONNET RELEASE

With the newest of barchettas this year celebrating their 20th birthdays and the oldest their 30th, one of the constant nagging fears of owners is that of either the boot release or bonnet release cables snapping and then being unable to open either body panel without causing significant damage which would be expensive to repair.

A couple of years ago, I came across this video on YouTube which instructs on how to rig up an emergency boot release. I did this on The Bumblebee, my yellow barchetta at the time, and have also done the same on its replacement, Esmeralda:


<https://youtu.be/eugZ34lqyzQ?si=HBVhKEyTQ-U7NDm1>

Recently, I had a minor problem on Esmeralda, whereby the bonnet release mechanism became a little “sticky” and the catch on the slam panel would not spring back to the centre on its own without having to be coaxed back with a small screwdriver. Turned out that it was just that the catch had become gummed up with grease and gunk over the last 28 years (!), and after cleaning it all away and spraying silicone grease on the mechanism it now seems to be OK.

However, that got me thinking as to whether I could devise a similar solution to the emergency boot release, but for the bonnet. I think I have come up with one.

For this “repair”, you will need:

- a 10mm spanner or socket
- a reel of plastic-coated garden wire or similar (e.g. straightened wire coat hangers)
- a reel of strong, non-stretchable, braided fishing line
- a small cable tie
- a good torch
- two pairs of hands (!)
- patience
- a swear box

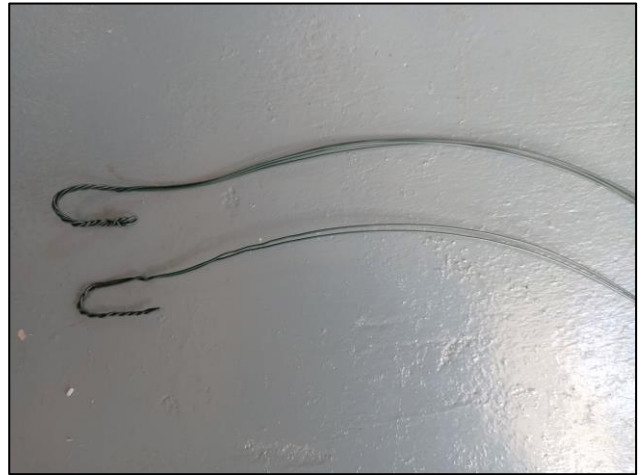
- Allow about 2 to 3 hours
- Degree of difficulty 

Please note that this exercise challenged my drawing skills to their maximum (!), so I apologise in advance if the drawings are not quite as explanatory as I intended them to be.

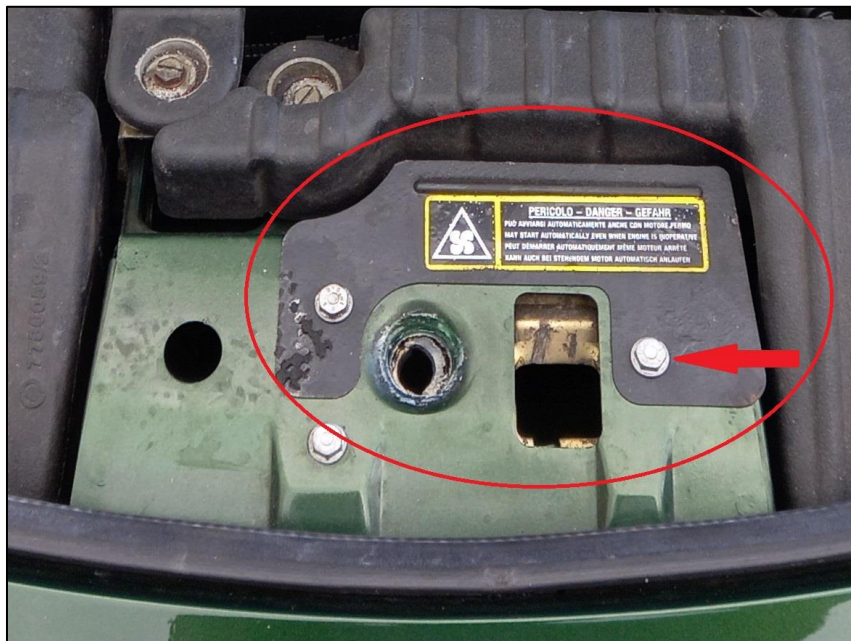
The photographs are also possibly less clear than they might otherwise be, due to the fact that not only is Esmeralda dark green, but unfortunately so are both the garden wire and the fishing line which I have used! Also, I had to crudely edit a couple of the photographs to eliminate unwanted reflections which would have just caused unnecessary confusion.

Hopefully though, you will get the gist as to what I am trying to explain.

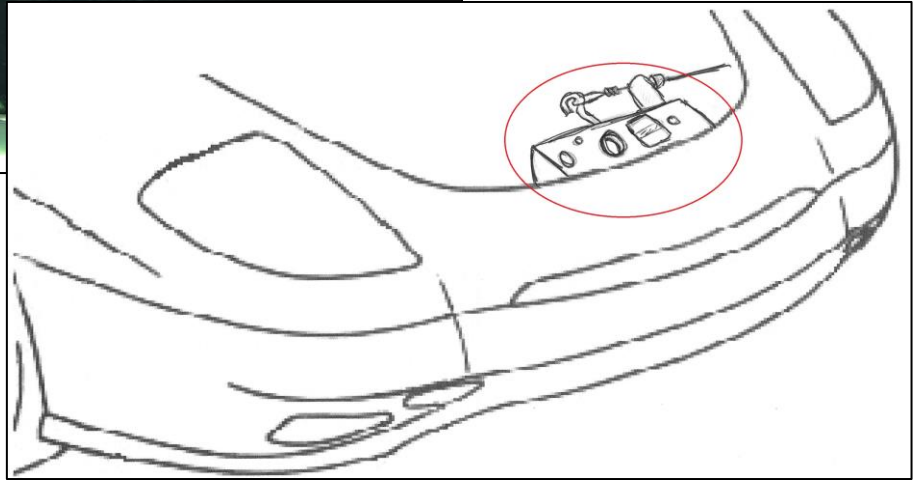
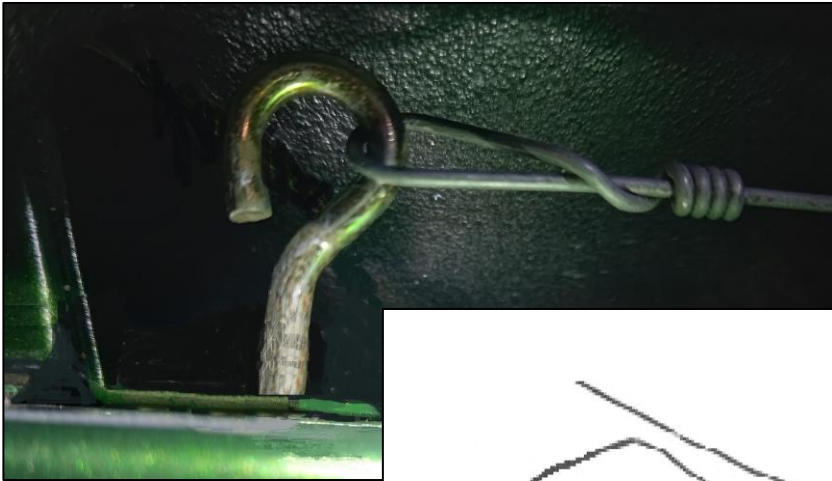
METHOD



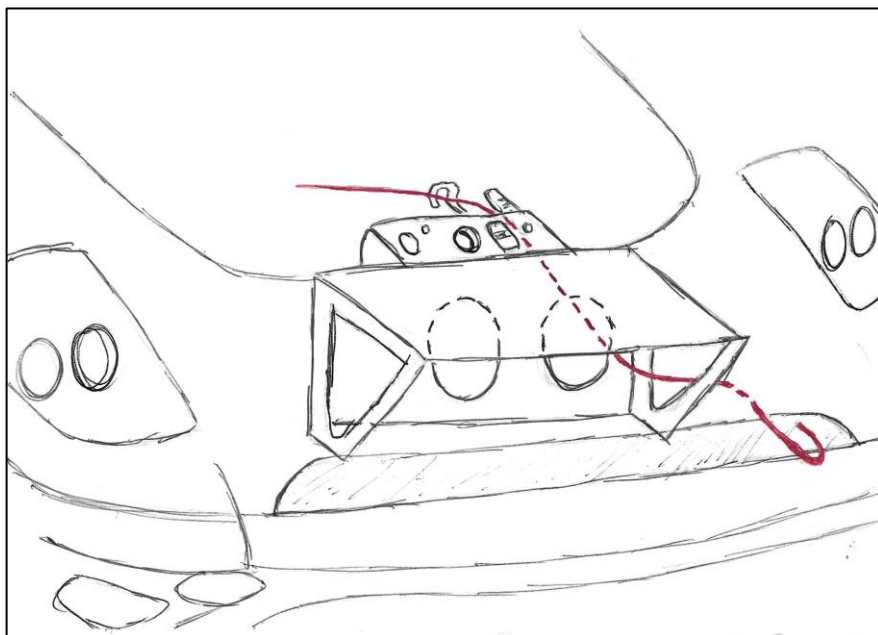
1. Cut two lengths from the garden wire and fold each of them over to make a double or triple thickness which results in a total length of about one metre each. Twist one end of each around itself and form into a hook shape (as in the photograph, above right).
2. Cut a 4 or 5-metre length of the fishing line and fold it over to make a line consisting of four strands. Knot the “loose” ends together, then carefully make further knots along the line at intervals of about 20 centimetres – this is to ensure that the four strands are held together somewhat, rather than just forming a loose mess which could snag on things or get tangled up around itself.
3. Using the 10mm spanner/socket, remove the two bolts from the black cover-plate circled below. Put the plate and one of the bolts to one side, but temporarily replace the right-hand bolt – this keeps the bonnet release mechanism in position while you are effecting the repair.

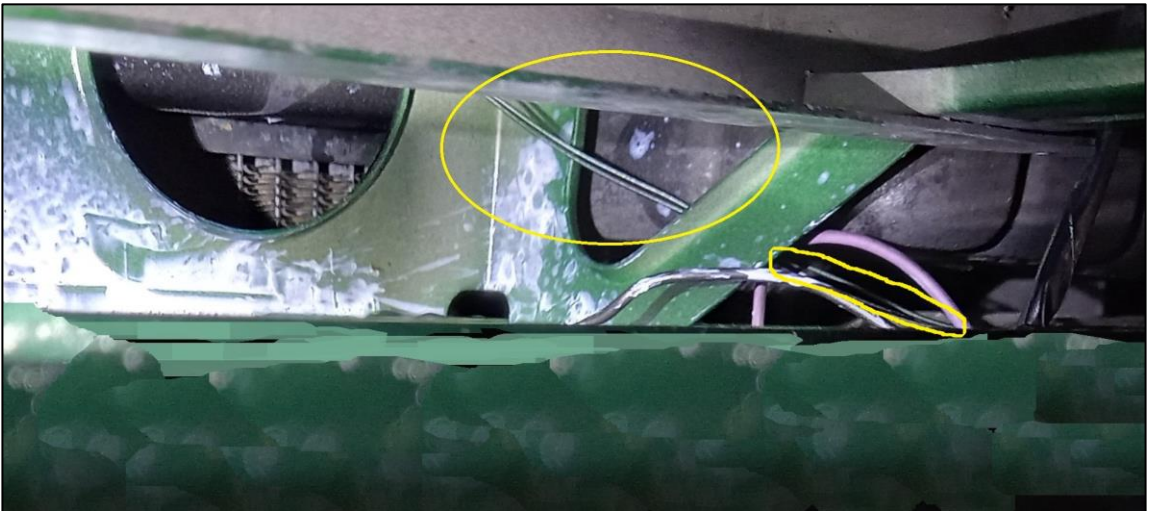


4. With the plate removed, you will now see the bonnet release cable exposed and the hook to which it is attached that releases the bonnet catch:



5. Now comes the tricky part. Using a bright torch, underneath the release mechanism ringed in red in the drawing above, you should be able to make out a structure which looks like a rectangular box that has been cut in half diagonally from front to back along its long edge. There are two large circular cut-outs in the back face and the two triangular side faces are also cut away. Taking one of the garden wire hooks you have made (indicated in red in the diagram below), carefully (and patiently) manipulate it as shown through the right-hand circular hole and then through the right-hand triangular cut-out:





6. If the hook does not come out through the barchetta's "smile", it may have become snagged on something – note that there are one or two wires in the vicinity which you need to be careful to avoid pulling on. If that is the case, take your second hook and manipulate it from the front through the smile to capture your first hook, which you can then pull through – be careful though that you ***don't pull your first one all the way through*** or you will have to start all over again!
7. With the two hooks now pulled clear of the car, detach the second hook and, slightly separating the fishing line strands, place the fishing line onto the first hook, then twist the hook around itself forming a closed loop to ensure that the fishing line doesn't come off:



8. You can now carefully pull the wire hook and the attached fishing line back through the smile and into the engine compartment, but again, ***make sure that you don't pull all the fishing line through!***
9. Untwist the wire loop and remove the fishing line. Attach the fishing line securely with several knots to the cable tie. Fasten the cable tie around the hook on the bonnet release mechanism, but don't fully tighten it. Test that the emergency bonnet release works by ***gently*** pulling (don't yank it!) on the fishing line hanging outside the front of the car, in the same direction as the real bonnet release cable pulls – you should see the bonnet catch move to the side and then return to its central position when pressure on the fishing line is released. If everything looks to be OK, fully tighten the cable tie (photo, below left).
10. Nearly there now. Using several knots, securely attach a split ring from a spare keyring to the end of the fishing line which is outside the car, to use as a pull-ring for the emergency bonnet release – preferable to just pulling on the fishing line which may well slice through your fingers! Then using duct tape (or similar) stick this to the underside of the “top lip” of the barchetta's smile (photo, below right).



11. Finally, replace the black cover-plate. Job's a good 'un!

Fingers crossed though that you never have to resort to using it!