

MG Wiring (Or, What I never expected to find in the rat's nest)

As you may recall, I finished putting Jan's MGA Coupe back together a couple years ago. One of the items I did not replace was the wiring harness as it already had a replacement wiring loom that had been installed in the late '70s or early '80s. It appears to be in good condition, but when I removed it I discovered that the replacement "snap" connectors (this is what Lucas calls the rubber covered female connector for wires with bullets crimped onto the ends) were made of steel (instead of the original nickel plated brass) and that those exposed to the elements were badly corroded.

While buying bullet ends and additional snap connectors I discovered that I could not find original type connectors. They were all made of steel; so, I cleaned up salvaged snap connectors to use on the coupe as I prefer them not rusting. Another thing I do for these connectors that are exposed to weather is squeeze some Ox-Gard (available at most hardware stores in the electrical department). It is an anti-oxidant compound that promotes conductivity. It is only used where wires are common to a single circuit. Where there are multiple conductors such as in light bulb bases I use a Non-conducting dielectric grease.

Well, when I had the car all back together again and was testing the functionality of all the electrics, I discovered that one of my brake lights was not working and traced it to a bad wire in the rear wiring harness that crossed the rear of the car. I ended up temporarily adding a wire that snakes up from under the car up the left rear fender behind the bumper and into the rear light housing to provide the brake light with power. I will eventually fix this correctly, but it may take a while since I have so many projects and it is working. This is what we call in the industry a "work around". It is not absolutely right, but functional.

Another thing I did while wiring the car was to add relays for the light circuits. It is common for the MGA headlight switch to fail because of the load on the switch, particularly if more powerful headlights (such as Halogens) are added. I have also seen the dipper switch fail because of the same issue. So, adding relays to take the load off the switches is a good idea. I know it is not original, but they can be hidden so they are not seen. I know a lot of people are going to LED lights and they do not put a strain on the switches, but I cannot bring myself to pay \$20 to \$30 per bulb for the rear lights when I can buy them for \$1.50 each. Headlights are even more. A sealed beam 7" round bulb is about \$7 but the LED versions start at \$43 and go up from there!

John Gill came over yesterday as he was having trouble with his brake lights. This is another situation where the replacement wiring harness developed a problem with the wire from the brake light switch to the brake/turn relay. I had added a wire (outside the harness) to fix this issue when it was Jan's MGA. After John bought the car the brake light switch failed, so, rather than replacing it he added a MGB style switch and a bracket to hold it up at the pedal push rod. Well, apparently this switch was also failing and in John's troubleshooting he disconnected the wire I had added from the brake light switch to the relay. So, I diagnosed the issue and gave John another MGB brake light switch and he was able to drive away with brake lights working again.

This brings me to my MGA roadster that I put on the road back in year 2000. It had a replacement wiring harness when I built it and one of the early events I took it to was a NAMGAR GT in Connecticut. I remember having problems and blowing fuses and ended up having to bypass a couple of the circuits powered by the green wires. I don't recall now which they were, but it has had these work arounds in place for 20 years!

My current project is a 1948 MG TC. I am doing a complete rebuild. I was able to buy a nice wiring harness through Abingdon Spares for a good price and it includes wires for turn signals

(which my TC did not come with). I have included a picture of what the previous owner was going with the wiring under the dash. All the wires were of the same color with masking tape label (numbers) which I have no clue as to what his numbering system was. He had installed a junction block with wire loop connectors to screw into the block to join the dash harness to the rest of the wiring. He had also done his own wiring for the headlights and driving lights. I have replaced all that with the new harness and will see if all the connections work once I get to that point. I did add relays for the headlights under the dash as well as a MGA style turn signal switch and the MGA 1500 style relay and flasher. I will let you know how it goes when the time comes. I still have to buy a battery for the car but I don't have the headlights and tail lights installed yet.

Well, this is some of what I have been doing during our stay at home orders in MA. I will report more in the next issue of the British Marque.

Safety Fast,
Jack Horner
President, Bay State MGA Club

MGA corroded snap connectors



MGTC wiring nightmare

