

Fitting new lock and replacing a door latch assembly

It has long been a problem with older MGBs and Midgets that once the door lock becomes worn the whole barrel assembly twists with the key as you try to unlock it. This difficulty is a consequence of the original design which used a simple sprung steel clip to keep the barrel in place, this worked well enough when all the parts were new but once the barrel, clip and door panel become worn the clip no longer provides firm location. Over the years there have been various attempts to rectify this problem, one idea was to glue the barrel of the lock to the door panel to keep it in place while another approach was to use a cut down neck of a Fairy Liquid bottle to fabricate a non-slip washer to grip the barrel in the door skin. The only effective modification was a to use a specially designed clamping device, which enabled the barrel to be gripped and held in tension by two clamps and a pair of grub screws. This system served me well on my MGB for many years until finally the lock barrels became so worn that I decided that it was time to replace them with a complete new set. I had the choice of fitting new locks of the original specification or fitting the later type of lock which features a threaded barrel. In my view the later threaded barrel type are far superior because the lock can be fully tightened into position against the door skin itself, therefore special retaining clips or clamps are not required. These lock sets are available as a complete fitting kit from MGOC Spares and consist of a pair of door locks plus a tailgate or boot lock and two keys. Fitting a complete replacement set in this way gives you the advantage of only needing one master key to fit the doors and tailgate.



The old original door lock on the left fitted with a modified retaining clamp. On the right is the new non-original improved replacement lock complete with a threaded barrel for totally secure location.

Stripping the door trim

To gain access to the locks it is necessary to remove the door handles and trim. Remove the padded waist rail then unscrew the window winder, door pull and push apart the top and bottom plastic trim sections that surrounds the chrome door handle.



Removing the door fittings.



The door trim panel is a press fit and can be levered off with gentle pressure applied near the clip between the trim and the edge of the door. Once the door trim is removed, pull back the plastic membrane and unhook the retaining clip from the inside of the lock barrel. Finally withdraw the old lock barrel from the door skin.

The threaded barrels of the improved locks are slightly larger in diameter than the original design fitted to my MGB GT and it will be necessary to file out the holes in the door to accommodate the new locks. Take great care when enlarging the hole, offer the barrel up and use a small file to remove the metal only where it is a tight fit. It is very important not let the file slip and cause damage to the paint work of the door panel. It is well worth masking the immediate area to protect the paint work. You will notice the scratch that I made when fitting this lock, the door was due for a re-painting anyway!



Fitting the door lock

Once the hole has been sufficiently enlarged you can press the new lock and rubber washer onto the outside door skin. Once the barrel is just through the door skin, slip the nut over the end of the barrel and then locate the forked lever around the thick wire lever of the lock mechanism, now you can tighten the nut. Check that when the key is turned in the barrel, that the fork operates the lever and it will lock and unlock the door securely. Ensure that the internal lock and door handle operate correctly then you can refit the door trim and all fittings.



Pressing the new lock into place in the door skin.

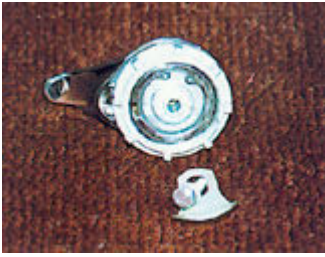
Lock lubrication

Once the locks are fitted put a few drops of thin oil into the key slots but do not lubricate them with grease. However, a small quantity of grease can be smeared on to the linkages inside the door.

Replacing the tailgate lock

This is an easier task as it is a direct substitution process and no filing will be necessary

but the job still requires some care. Begin by unscrewing the cover plate from the lock assembly, remove the two large Phillips screws and the one small self tapping screw.



The new tailgate lock assembly. The operating lever has been removed to ease fitting.

Removing the lock cover plate.



The lock mechanism is held in place by a large nut and this can be undone by pressing on the lugs on the side of the nut with the blade of a screwdriver. Once loose the nut can be undone with the fingertips. After removing the large nut the lock assembly may be withdrawn and the replacement lock fitted into place.

Refitting the tailgate lock

Replace the large nut first with the finger tips and finally put some tension on the lugs with the blade of a screwdriver to tighten it in position. Refit the bolt that holds in the lever which presses on the lock release mechanism. Check the operation of the lever and if all is satisfactory, finally refit the cover plate.

Door catch assembly

In addition to changing all the locks I decided to replace the door catch assembly on the passenger side of my BGT. The catch had broken internally so that my car could only be locked or unlocked from the inside. This arrangement was very annoying when opening the door for a passenger or if I wanted to load items into the rear side of the car.

Replacing door catch mechanism

With the door trim removed you can get at the clips which attach the door catch by rods to the combined internal door pull lever and locking lever.



Both these clips are designed to grip the rod in place and can be sprung off, take great care not to lose the clips or their tiny washers. It is a good idea to place a sheet of hardboard or something similar on the ground beneath the area were you are working to ensure that any dropped items can be recovered. As you remove the clips make a note or a sketch of the way in which they are attached.



Once the linkages are unhooked the three large Phillips screws which locate the catch can be removed.



Take great care when inserting the new latch not to damage the bent rod type lever arm which operates the lock.



Also ensure that you locate the end of the rod within the forked lever operated by the key.



Refit the three Phillips screws which hold the catch in position.



Once the catch is fitted the linkages that operate the internal door lock and the door pull can be re-attached.

Setting the linkages

It will be necessary to try the operation of the linkage rods that connect the internal handle to the lock and adjust their length accordingly. Temporarily re-fit the window winder handle and lower the glass. You can now open and close the door using both

external and internal handles to test out how well the pull handle and internal lock functions. It may be necessary to make adjustments to the length of the rods, by unclipping them and rotating the fixing points, do this before refitting the door trim. Once you are satisfied that the handle and lock mechanisms are operating correctly the trim panel can be replaced and the various handles and other items of door trim can be refitted.

Door handle assembly

The chrome door handle is fixed by two small screws and mounted on two shaped sealing washers. The push button plunger part of the handle presses down on the latch contact lever, the minimum operating clearance between these is 1mm. To take off the handle it will be necessary to remove the door trim and wind the window up so that you can reach the mounting screws and remove them from the inside of the door skin.

Extra security

If you have just purchased an MG, particularly if it was bought through a third party such as an auction house, it is worth remembering that someone involved in the sale, storage or restoration of your car may still be in possession of another set of keys. In fact, there may be several sets of duplicate keys in circulation. If a dishonest person had retained a set of keys and was aware that you had just bought the MG and also knew where you stored the car, they could arrange to steal it from you with the minimum of effort. As new lock sets are inexpensive and straightforward to fit, it seems well worth the time and trouble to replace them and provide extra security for your cherished MG.