

Safety Issue ~ MGB Rev counter fire

(Not necessarily confined to MGB alone & models such as MGA & Midget may be liable to the same potential problem).

Sudden loss of power might be “inconvenient” in the remote parts of Dartmoor but a smoke filled dashboard coupled with loss of power on a busy M5 whilst in the outside lane could be a totally different issue.

An MGOC forum post entitled “Rev counter fire” prompted further interest as it was an unusual title. See <https://www.mgownersclub.co.uk/forum/mgb-technical/rev-counter-fire>.

The opening lines were as follows *“Anyone any idea what could have caused this. Just been driving, car lost power, rev counter dropped to zero. I pulled in and rev counter filled with smoke !!!”*

Panic jump out cut the battery kill switch and then dived under the dash to pull out the wires. One or 2 melted on the back of the tachometer.” The forum post went on to report *“Worked it out.... coil feed had a slice somehow out of the insulation and had shorted across the coil leading to melt down”*.

Exactly how this shorted across the coil is not reported. Many will know and acknowledge that old wiring can in time degrade or even abrade if it is continuously in contact with something sharp.

What is perhaps worthy of further thought is the fact that the live feed (brown) to the ignition switch is not fused so by the same token the circuits that are engaged once the ignition is “on” are also live without a fuse.

This forum post is brought to the attention of members as a safety item so that they might avoid a similar issue. To avoid such an incident will require close visual inspection of the wiring loom coupled with “feel” checking for insulation damage.

Adding extra fuses and accessible battery isolation are other aspects to consider as the forum goes on to discuss.

Note: Consulting the Haynes Workshop Manual for MGB and wiring diagrams for the various years, it appears that circuits brought into play by the ignition switch are typically

- Fuel Pump
- Rev Counter & Ignition Coil
- Ignition Warning Light
- Overdrive

with other associated ignition switch controlled circuits being protected by an inline fuse to items such as Heated Rear Window and Radiator Cooling Fan (depending on model & model year).