Keys

The following article was written and provided by Mark Paget. Thanks Mark.

Initial production had pull-out, exterior door handles. The spring-loaded barrel of the door lock having a large, smooth, chromed boss. The vast majority of production have push button door handles. A pronounced, chromed zinc barrel design, without any spring assistance, common with much of the fleet. When new, an Australian MG-B came with four Wilmot Breeden Union keys in the FS series:

- one for ignition and doors (square head) plus a spare, and
- one for boot and glove box (slim rectangular head) plus a spare.

Chrome (nickel) plated brass or later steel. Each key stamped with its series and number. Issued key numbers are entered into the Passport to Service by the selling dealer. Period replacement (pre-cut) keys purchased from a dealership had a smaller, oval head and frequently in un-plated brass. The obverse embossed with BMC/BLMC and reverse with the identifying sequence.

Due to age, parts interchangeability and a culmination of previous 'repairs', cars could presently have almost anything fitted. Frequently not displaying the simplicity of what was originally delivered (two, clearly different keys). Without the key or respective documents the correct sequence can still be identified. Glove box, ignition switch and boot handle require disassembly to expose the number stamped into the side of the barrel. Ignition switches in the previous FA and FP series had the sequence stamped into the outer stainless face of the barrel. Anyone could then have a replacement key cut. Having the key number stamped into the outer face of the ignition barrel should have been dropped before the first local B.

Presented with the brand, series prefix and number (e.g. Wilmot Breeden, FS, 888), a quality locksmith should be able to cut a replacement key. Specifically not the stereotypical owner nonsense ramblings of MG, MG, MG, Secret Squirrel, MG… The shopping centre key cutting service can still be expected to carry generic blanks for straightforward copying. Once more without requiring the nonsensical owner MG, MG, MG… preamble. Beyond the scope of such owners is the extent of vehicle manufacturers that utilised Wilmot Breeden hardware.

A handful of specialist repairers maintain keyboards. Generic replacement keys, pre-cut, in popular Wilmot Breeden sequences for user/buyer convenience. There are less than 100 keys in the FS series. The company did not offer replacement vehicle lock sets or even keyed alike pairs. One service bulletin espouses the new barrel being presented to a grinder so as to 'match' the wafers to the existing locks and keys. The inner, forked end of a genuine door lock is stamped with the key number and side (R or L). Therefore excuses for incorrect installation… Present day replacement WB lock assemblies are unmarked, save for the number stamped into the keys.

Once installed the original door lock has the key's slot in the 6.30 position. Whereas ignition is typically 12 o'clock. Regardless of present day expressed value or owner exultations about quality and detail of their rebuilt car, door locks fitted upside down is a really easy way to tell if the owner/repairer had a clue about what they were doing. Similarly, such cars with shopping centre

generic keys, hanging from the ignition on non-period key fobs. The most common replacement key blank supplier is still SILCA.

Over the years certain suppliers have offered replacement lock ‘sets’. Typically lots of three (boot and doors) in whatever is the most available key sequence to hand such as FT. None appear to have offered the original 2 + 2 arrangement in FS. Though even the concept of ‘keyed alike’ seems to elude many an owner. Excluding steering lock, there are four different barrel types fitted to MG-B. Unlike a slightly later Land-Rover which utilised one common design for ignition doors and later still, the bonnet lock. Allowing the present owner of a later Series III to just buy a new set of three to six keyed alike barrels.

Australia took a step towards metrication in 1966. A penny became a popular key fob for many a vehicle owner. The standard ignition barrel and switch is not designed to bare any significant weight. Optional steering lock added another two keys in a different sequence. Plus a different inner and outer steering column and sundry other parts. This assembly was typically found in the German market as standard equipment. Why the steering lock was even available in Australia before it was compulsory is a little odd. Considering that market rationalisation was a prominent factor for all production. The concept of option or accessory really doesn’t suit. At best a special order.

The cost of discarding the normal column assembly precludes steering lock from being a dealer fit or post delivery purchase. Factory logic as to which cars received the feature appears lost to time. A similar situation affects local Mini, Sprite… though the lock is usually only found on the high-end variant. The design truly looks like an afterthought for the standard column. When present, the lock assembly is under the dash. Requiring the user to reach blindly in the direction of their right knee. The barrel (key slot) faces the general area of the driver.

Two lock mounting designs are present. The earliest requires the lock assembly to be slid over one end of the outer column. Secured in a pinch-bolt arrangement. All further designs clamp to the column with two halves and shear bolts.

Two period switch (barrel) types are present, one with Roman numerals on the faceplate. The other with positions marked in German (HALT GARAGE FAHRT START or AUF ZU…). In both instances the reverse has Lucar terminals and DIN numbering. A multitude of brands and styles of lock were supplied by the company in later years as replacement parts. Essentially the outer column diameter being the only determining factor. Later WASO steering locks have no position markings and a raw finish. Period keys are Neiman or WASO depending on the lock manufacturer.

Steering locks would not be compulsory till 01 January 1972. Therefore late 1971 production would be expected to have one. The period optional petrol cap also utilised the FS key series. However there doesn’t appear to have been a provision to order them by key number. Nor to order additional (replacement) barrels. Thus adding another two keys to the collection and most likely in the same head style as one of the others.

Wilmot Breeden Union

Period replacement

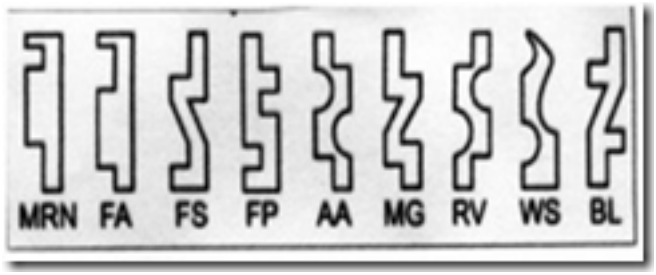
Neiman

WASO

WBH

SILCA

FS starts with 876 through to 955.



Profiles of various key types

Adapted from the Jaguar XK 140 FHC Part & Assembly Information website