

# SIDE COVER GASKETS

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*In the following article, Mark Paget takes the owner through much of the little understood variations in the 'B' series engine side covers and their sealing. A great article that alerts the owner to the differences, their purpose and the effects of being unaware of same (at least one less drop of oil from your 'B'). Thanks Mark.*

Side cover gaskets, otherwise known as tappet cover gaskets. The plates to which they offer sealing, provide access to the tappets (lifters/followers). Not the rocker cover gasket, which provides sealing for the rocker cover.

An often insurmountable problem incurred by owners and some repairers (including 'specialists') is the side cover gasket. Both correct choice and installation. These and their plates are common throughout A, B, and C series engines, petrol or diesel, terrestrial or marine and the Blue Streak Six.

Yes, other vehicles out there which don't have a MG badge, use the same parts and repair procedures. More horrifying, it's actually the other way round! Cars with the MG badge utilise non-MG components and assemblies. No doubt totally confronting to readers who persist in chasing rabbits down octagonal holes.

There are a myriad of different side cover pressings. When produced and for what specific application. However, their general mounting dimensions are the same and can be separated into two basic designs:

- flat faced,
  - The gasket surface facing the engine block is flat.
- rolled edge,
  - The gasket surface facing the block has a rolled edge, towards the block, therefore 'cupping' any gasket or seal.
  - Specifically not those where a rolled lip is formed away from the engine. This is simply reinforcing. Providing rigidity to the otherwise flat sealing face.



Owner fascination/distraction/obsession points such as oil separator or breather tube are just that. Therefore of no consequence to the topic at hand. Three and only three types of gasket are available:

- thin cork,
- thick cork, and
- rubber.

Thin cork is intended for flat faced side covers. Providing a wider surface/contact area on both cover and block. Typically needing to be glued in place (to the cover) before installation. With time allowed for the adhesive to cure. Otherwise, with the material being so thin, it can easily distort. Any form of wet sealant only acting as lubricant to dislodge or deform the gasket.

Thick cork is intended for the rolled edge. Thicker yet narrower it can be pushed into the pressed lip. Rarely a perfect fit, particularly as a result of the gasket's squared edges. However the intent becomes obvious when the correct gasket is matched with the correct side cover.

How much natural cork is present within gaskets varies depending on the manufacturer. So called rubber, contains no natural latex and have been pink since inception. Nothing more than a more durable alternative to thick cork. Genuine or quality reproductions are moulded. Thus providing a slightly tapered edge, more suited to the rolled cover. Though certainly not a perfect fit either. Reproductions are sliced or stamped with square edges and easily spotted.

A quirk can be present with late 1960s B series motors. Where the oil separator has a flat surface and the plain cover has a rolled edge. Where either cork gasket is present, the side cover retaining bolt is sealed by a fibre washer. In turn protected from the bolt's head by a steel flat washer. As such their sealing capability (without assistance) is limited. With the arrival of rubber gaskets, a cup washer and seal are introduced.

Alignment of any of the components is not precise. Some covers may appear to align with the block's cavity. A test fit prior to application of sealant is wise. Gasket sets are not always comprehensive nor appropriate to the intended application. Despite assurances made by the purveyor. An experienced owner or repairer would, in addition to any 'set', order the specific side cover gaskets and centre bolt seals to suit the application.



Along with the other known items such as: rocker cover seals (not the gasket), paper thermostat gaskets in place of cork, lock tabs... Peace of mind for just a few dollars more. The experienced parts seller may well keep quiet. Lest he have to explain the meaning of life, repeatedly, to a client who has made no observations about or research into the repair at hand. Nor most likely could identify their car beyond chanting MG, MG... Basic application of the grief to profit ratio.

In present day applications, any of the three gaskets offer comparable sealing. Pure cork is almost unobtainable. Nitrile blend improves durability, resisting shrinkage and compression. Light application of a RTV sealant further improves the situation. Especially to areas such as the fibre washer. RTV can also act as an adhesive plus being available in a multitude of colours. Reproduction rubber seals are a poor fit but with perseverance, can be installed successfully.

Mark Paget.

*Submitted February, 2025.*









