

SECTION B

THE IGNITION SYSTEM

Description.

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DESCRIPTION

The distributor is mounted at the front of the engine on the left-hand side and is driven from the front of the half-speed shaft.

The automatic advance device is housed in the distributor unit, and it consists of a centrifugally and vacuum-operated mechanism by means of which the ignition is advanced in proportion to the engine speed and load. The combined effects of the centrifugally and vacuum-operated timing controls give added efficiency over the full operating range of the engine, with a corresponding economy in fuel consumption. A micrometer adjustment is fitted by means of which fine alterations to the timing can be made to allow for changes in running conditions, e.g. state of carbonization, change of fuel, etc.

Like the rest of the electrical equipment, it is wired on the 'positive earth' system, which results in longer sparking plug life.

A completely sealed, metallized paper capacitor is fitted to the distributor. This has the property of being self-healing in the event of a breakdown, so that trouble arising from this source should be very infrequent.

The high-tension pick-up brush in the distributor cover is of composite construction, the top portion consisting of a resistive compound and the lower of softer carbon to prevent wear taking place on the rotor electrode.

The resistive portion of the brush is in circuit between the coil and distributor and gives a measure of radio interference suppression. Under no circumstances must a short, non-resistive brush be used as a replacement for one of the longer, resistive type.

Section B.1

LOCATING THE CAUSE OF UNEVEN FIRING

Start the engine and set it to run at a fairly fast idling speed.

Short-circuit each plug in turn by pulling the insulator sleeve up the cable and placing a hammer head or the blade of a screwdriver with a wooden or insulated handle between the terminal and the cylinder head. No difference in the engine performance will be noted when short-circuiting the plug in the defective cylinder. Shorting the other plugs will make uneven running more pronounced.

Having located the cylinder which is at fault, stop the engine and remove the cable from the terminal of the sparking plug. Restart the engine and hold the end of the cable about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (4.8 mm.) from the cylinder head.

If the sparking is strong and regular, the fault probably lies in the sparking plug. Remove the plug, clean it, and

adjust the gap to the correct setting (see 'GENERAL DATA'), or alternatively fit a new plug.

If there is no spark or if it is weak and irregular, examine the cable from the sparking plug to the distributor. After a long period of service the insulation may be cracked or perished, in which case the cable should be renewed.

Finally, examine the distributor moulded cap, wipe the inside and outside with a clean dry cloth, see that the carbon brush moves freely in its holder, and examine the moulding closely for signs of breakdown. After long service it may become tracked—that is, a conducting path may have formed between two or more of the electrodes or between one of the electrodes and some part of the distributor in contact with the cap. Evidence of a tracked cap is shown by the presence of a thin, black line. A replacement distributor cap must be fitted in place of one that has become tracked.

Section B.2

TESTING THE LOW-TENSION CIRCUIT

Spring back the securing clips on the distributor and remove the moulded cap and rotor. If the rotor is a tight fit it can be levered off carefully with a screwdriver.

Check that the contacts are clean and free from pits, burns, oil, or grease. Turn the engine and check that the contacts are opening and closing correctly and that the clearance is correct when the contacts are fully opened.

Correct the gap if necessary to between .014 and .016 in. (.35 and .40 mm.).

Disconnect the cable at the contact breaker terminal of the coil and at the low-tension terminal of the distributor, and connect a test lamp between these terminals. If the lamp lights when the contacts close and goes out when the contacts open the low-tension circuit is in order. Should the lamp fail to light, the contacts are dirty or there is a broken or loose connection in the low-tension wiring. The procedure for isolating the fault is detailed in Section B.3.

Section B.3

LOCATING A LOW-TENSION CIRCUIT FAULT

Having determined, by testing as described in Section B.2, that the fault lies in the low-tension circuit, switch on the ignition and turn the engine until the contact breaker points are fully opened.

Refer to the wiring diagram and check the circuit with a voltmeter (0–20 volts) as follows.

NOTE.—If the circuit is in order the reading on the voltmeter should be approximately 12 volts.

- (1) **Battery to starter switch terminal.** Connect the voltmeter to the starter switch terminal and to earth. No reading indicates a faulty cable or loose connections.
- (2) **Starter switch to control box terminal 'A' (brown lead).** Connect a voltmeter to the control box terminal 'A' and to earth. No reading indicates a faulty cable or loose connections.
- (3) **Control box terminal 'A1'.** Connect a voltmeter to the control box terminal 'A1' and to earth. No reading indicates a fault in the series winding of the control box.
- (4) **Control box terminal 'A1' to terminal on ignition switch (brown with blue lead).** Connect a voltmeter to the ignition switch terminal and to earth. No reading indicates a faulty cable or loose connections.
- (5) **Ignition switch.** Connect a voltmeter to the second ignition switch terminal (white lead) and to earth. No reading indicates a fault in the ignition switch.
- (6) **Ignition switch to fusebox terminal 'A3' (white lead).** Connect the voltmeter to the fusebox terminal 'A3' and to earth. No reading indicates a faulty cable or loose connections.
- (7) **Fusebox terminal 'A3' to ignition coil terminal 'SW' (white lead).** Connect a voltmeter to the ignition coil terminal 'SW' and to earth. No reading indicates a faulty cable or loose connections.
- (8) **Ignition coil.** Connect a voltmeter to the ignition terminal 'CB' (white with black lead) and to earth. No reading indicates a fault in the primary winding of the coil and a new coil must be fitted.
- (9) **Ignition coil to distributor (white with black lead).** Connect a voltmeter to the distributor low-tension terminal and to earth. No reading indicates a faulty cable or loose connections.

- (10) **Contact breaker and capacitor.** Connect the voltmeter across the breaker points. No reading indicates a fault in the capacitor.

Section B.4

HIGH-TENSION CABLES

The high-tension cables must be examined carefully and any which have the insulation cracked, perished, or damaged in any way must be renewed.

To fit the cables to the terminal of the ignition coil thread the knurled moulded terminal nut over the lead, bare the end of the cable for about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (6 mm.), thread the wire through the brass washer removed from the original cable, and bend back the strands over the washer. Finally, screw the terminal into the coil.

To make the connections to the terminals in the distributor moulded cap, first remove the cap and slacken the screws on the inside of the moulding till they are clear of the cables. Cut the new cables off to the required length, push them completely home, and tighten the securing screws.

The cables from the distributor to the sparking plugs must be connected up in the correct firing order, which is 1, 3, 4, 2. Secure them firmly to the connectors.

Section B.5

CONTACT BREAKER

The distributor has a pre-tilted contact breaker unit. The moving contact breaker plate is balanced on two nylon studs and the angle through which the plate may be tilted is controlled by a stud riveted to the moving contact breaker plate locating in a slot in the base plate. The plate carrying the fixed contact is secured by one screw only.

After the first 500 miles (800 km.) and subsequently every 6,000 miles (9600 km.) check the contact breaker as follows:

- (1) Rotate the crankshaft until the contact breaker points are fully opened and check the gap with a gauge having a thickness of .014 to .016 in. (.35 to .40 mm.). If the gap is correct the gauge should be a sliding fit. Do not alter the setting unless the gap varies considerably from the gauge thickness.

To adjust the setting keep the engine in the position which gives maximum opening of the contacts, then slacken the fixed contact plate securing screw and adjust the contact gap by inserting a screwdriver in the notched hole and turning clockwise to reduce the gap and anti-clockwise to increase it. Tighten the securing screw.

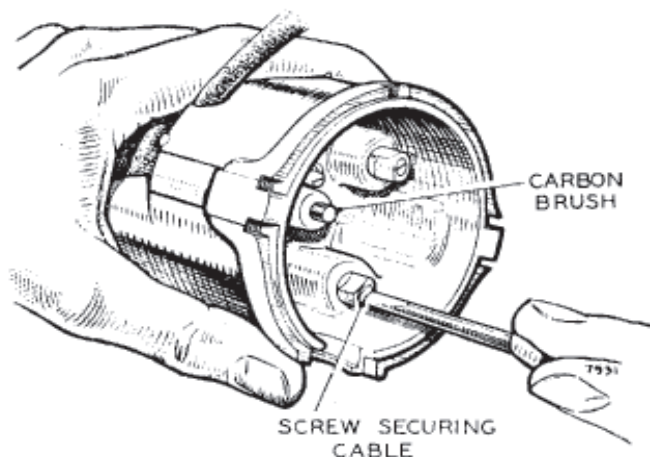


Fig. B.1

The method of connecting H.T. leads

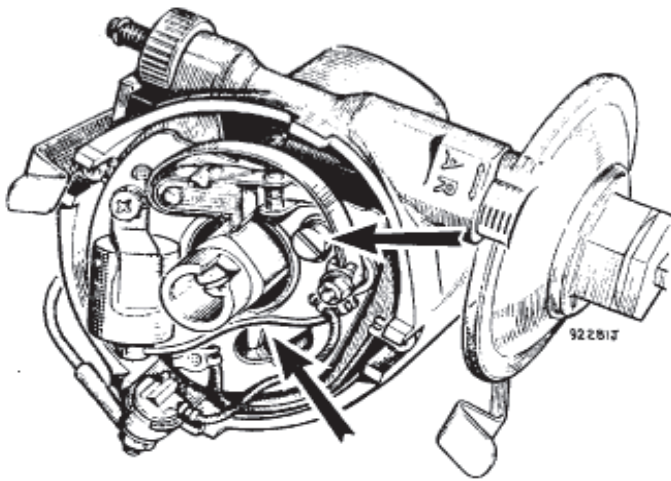


Fig. B.2

The arrows indicate the fixed contact plate securing screw and the adjusting notch

- (2) If the contacts are dirty or pitted they must be cleaned by polishing them with a fine carborundum stone and afterwards wiping them with a cloth moistened with petrol (gasoline). The moving contact can be removed from its mounting in order to assist cleaning. Check and adjust the contact breaker setting after cleaning the contacts.
- (3) Check that the moving arm is free on its pivot. If it is sluggish, remove the arm and polish the pivot pin with a strip of fine emery-cloth. Afterwards clean off all trace of emery dust and apply a spot of clean engine oil to the top of the pivot. The contact breaker spring tension should be between 20 and 24 oz. (567 and 680 gm.) measured at the contacts.

Section B.6

REMOVING AND REPLACING THE DISTRIBUTOR

The distributor can be removed and replaced without interfering with the ignition timing, provided the clamp plate pinch-bolt is not disturbed.

To facilitate the replacement of the distributor remove the distributor cover and turn the engine over until the rotor arm is in a position pointing to the segment for No. 4 cylinder plug lead to provide a datum for replacement.

Disconnect the low-tension lead from the terminal on the distributor. Disconnect the suction advance pipe at the union on the distributor.

Extract the two bolts securing the distributor clamp plate to the distributor housing and withdraw the distributor.

To replace the distributor insert it into the distributor housing until the driving dog rests on the distributor drive shaft. The rotor arm should then be rotated slowly until the driving dog lugs engage with the drive shaft slots, both of which are offset to ensure correct replacement. Turn the distributor body to align the clamping plate holes with those in the housing. The remainder of the assembly is now in the reverse order to that of removal.

NOTE.—Provided that the crankshaft has not been turned, the rotor arm will be opposite the segment for No. 4 plug lead. The high-tension leads can then be replaced on their respective plug terminals in the order of firing, i.e. 1, 3, 4, 2, remembering that the distributor rotation is anti-clockwise when viewed from above.

Section B.7

STATIC IGNITION TIMING

The ignition timing **must** be set to satisfy the requirements of the grade of fuel used. (See 'GENERAL INFORMATION'.)

After timing the ignition it is essential that the distributor advance mechanism be checked as described in Section B.13.

To set the distributor proceed as follows:

- (1) Turn the crankshaft in the direction of rotation until No. 4 piston is at T.D.C. on its compression stroke. This can best be effected by turning the engine and observing the valves. When the valves are 'rocking' (i.e. exhaust just closing and inlet just opening) on No. 1 cylinder No. 4 piston is approximately at T.D.C. on its compression stroke. If

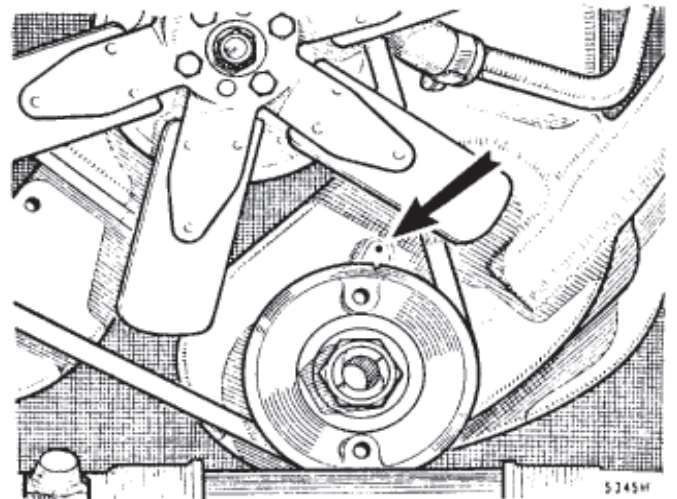


Fig. B.3

When the groove in the crankshaft pulley coincides with the small projection on the timing case Nos. 1 and 4 pistons are at T.D.C.

the engine is now rotated until the notch in the rear flange of the crankshaft pulley is in line with the small projection on the timing chain case the piston is exactly at T.D.C. (see Fig. B.3).

- (2) Set the contact breaker points to .014 to .016 in. (.35 to .40 mm.) when in their position of maximum opening.
- (3) Insert the distributor into its housing, and engage the drive dog lugs with the drive shaft slots (both of which are offset) by slowly rotating the rotor arm.
- (4) Screw in the two bolts securing the distributor clamp plate to the distributor housing but do not tighten them. **Failure to leave these bolts slack will cause misalignment of the distributor resulting in excessive wear of the drive gears.**
- (5) Position the distributor so that the vacuum control unit side of the body is uppermost with the unit diaphragm to the rear.
- (6) Rotate the distributor body anti-clockwise until the points are fully closed. Then slowly rotate it in a clockwise direction until the points just commence to open. Secure the distributor body in this position by tightening up the clamp plate pinch-bolt and nut, give the engine a few turns to allow alignment of the gears to take place, and then fully tighten the two clamp plate bolts. Check that the rotor arm is opposite the correct segment for the cylinder which is at the top of its compression stroke.

IMPORTANT.—To obtain an accurate setting an electrical method should be used to determine the actual position at which the points break, and the following method can be used:

With the low-tension lead connected to the distributor, turn on the ignition switch and connect a 12-volt lamp in parallel with the contact breaker points (i.e. one lead from the distributor low-tension terminal and the other to earth) and turn the distributor as detailed in paragraph 6 until the lamp lights, which indicates that the points have just opened.

- (7) After locking the distributor, re-check the timing.

Section B.8

DISMANTLING THE DISTRIBUTOR

The contact breaker plate may be removed as an assembly to give access to the centrifugal weights without completely dismantling the distributor. To do this remove the rotor arm and withdraw the slotted nylon low-tension terminal post from the distributor body.

Take out the two screws which secure the plate

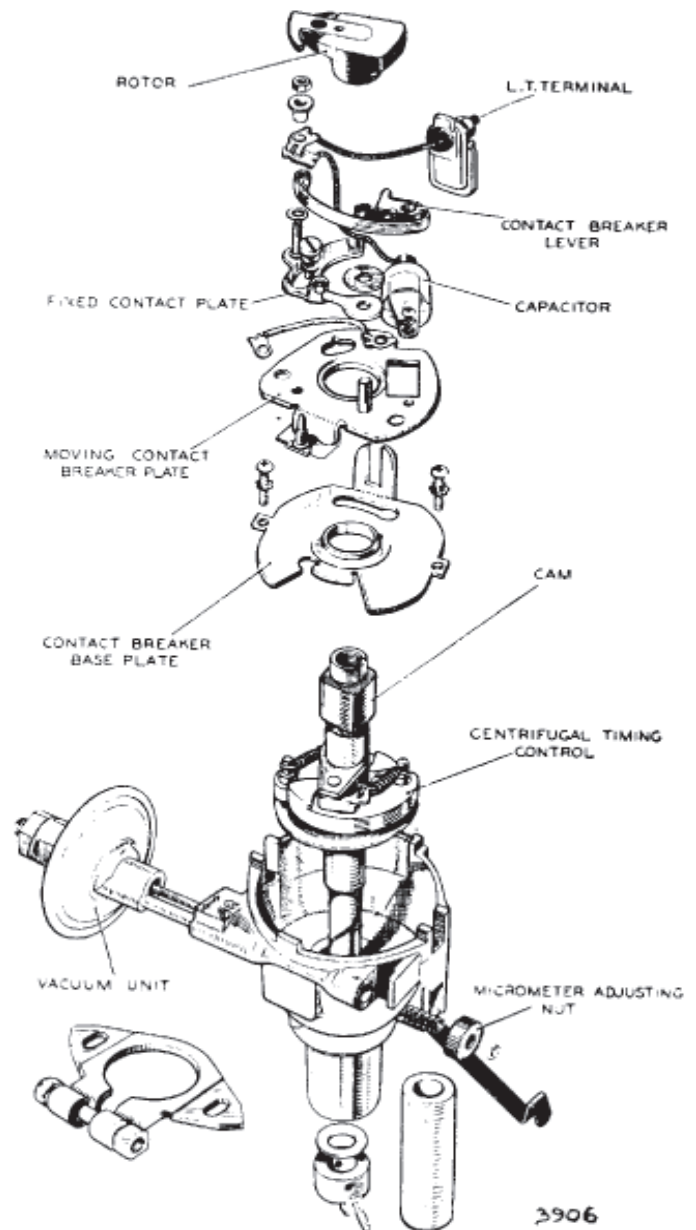


Fig. B.4

The components parts of the DM2.P4 distributor

assembly to the distributor body, ease up the plate, and unhook the flexible actuating link connected to the contact breaker plate.

The following procedure is necessary if the distributor is to be completely stripped. Before dismantling, note the positions in which the various components are fitted in order that they may be replaced correctly.

- (1) Spring back the clips and remove the moulded cap.
- (2) Lift the rotor off the top of the spindle. If it is a tight fit it must be levered off carefully with a screwdriver.

- (3) Remove the nut and washer from the moving contact anchor pin. Withdraw the insulating sleeve from the capacitor lead and low-tension lead connectors, noting the order in which they are fitted. Lift the moving contact from the pivot pin and remove the large insulating washer from the anchor pin.
- (4) Take out the screw, spring, and flat washer securing the fixed contact plate and remove the plate.
- (5) Remove the securing screw and the capacitor.
- (6) Extract the two screws securing the base plate to the distributor body, noting that one also secures the earthing lead, and lift out the base plate.

Unhook the flexible actuating link connecting the diaphragm in the vacuum unit with the moving contact breaker plate.

IMPORTANT.—Note the relative position of the rotor arm drive slot in the cam spindle and the offset drive dog at the driving end of the spindle to ensure that the timing is not 180° out when the cam spindle is engaged with the centrifugal weights during assembly.

- (7) Take out the cam retaining screw and remove the cam spindle.
- (8) Take out the centrifugal weights. These may be lifted out as two assemblies, each complete with a spring and toggle.
- (9) To release the suction advance unit remove the circlip, adjusting nut, and spring. Withdraw the unit. Take care not to lose the adjusting nut lock spring clip.
- (10) To release the spindle from the body drive out the parallel driving pin passing through the collar of the driving tongue member at the lower end of the spindle.

Section B.9

CAPACITOR

A .2 microfarad metallized capacitor is fitted and the eyelet on the cable connected to the contact breaker terminal post is squared and slotted to prevent it twisting round and short-circuiting against the distributor.

The best method of testing the capacitor is by substitution. Disconnect the original capacitor and connect a new one between the low-tension terminal of the distributor and earth.

Section B.10

REASSEMBLING THE DISTRIBUTOR

Reassembly is a direct reversal of the dismantling procedure given in Section B.8, although careful attention must be given to the following points.

- (1) As they are assembled, the components of the automatic advance mechanism, the distributor shaft, and the portion of the shaft on which the cam fits must be lubricated with thin, clean engine oil to Ref. D.
- (2) Turn the vacuum control adjusting nut until it is in the half-way position when replacing the control unit.
- (3) When engaging the cam driving pins with the centrifugal weights make sure that they are in the original position. When seen from above, the small offset of the driving dog must be on the right and the driving slot for the rotor arm must be in the six o'clock position.
- (4) Adjust the contact breaker to give a maximum opening of .014 to .016 in. (.35 to .40 mm.).

Section B.11

COIL

The coil does not require any attention beyond seeing that the terminal connections and the coil mounting bolts are tight, and that the exterior is kept clean and dry, particularly between the terminals.

Section B.12

SPARKING PLUGS

Inspect, clean, adjust, and renew sparking plugs at the recommended mileage intervals (see 'MAINTENANCE ATTENTION').

When sparking plugs are removed from the engine their gaskets should be removed with them and replaced on the plugs, which should be placed in a suitable holder. It is advisable to identify each plug with the number of the cylinder from which it was removed so that any faults revealed on examination can be traced back to the cylinder concerned.

When examining the plugs place a new plug of the same type beside the others to afford a ready comparison of the relative condition of the used plugs.

Examine for signs of oil fouling. This will be indicated by a wet, shiny, black deposit on the insulator. This is caused by oil pumping due to worn cylinders and pistons or gummed-up or broken rings. Under such conditions oil from the cylinder walls is forced up past the rings on the suction stroke of the piston, and is eventually deposited on the plugs.

A permanent remedy for this cannot be effected, the only cure being the fitting of a new piston and rings, or in extreme cases a rebore may be necessary.

Next examine the plugs for signs of petrol (gasoline) fouling. This is indicated by a dry, fluffy, black deposit which is usually caused by over-rich carburation, although ignition system defects such as a run-down

battery, faulty distributor, coil or condenser defects, or a broken or worn-out cable may be additional causes. If the plugs appear to be suitable for further use proceed to clean and test them.

First remove the plug gaskets and examine them for condition. A large proportion of the heat of the plug is normally dissipated to the cylinder head through the gasket between the plug and the head. Plugs not screwed down tightly can easily become overheated so that they operate out of their proper heat range, producing pre-ignition, short plug life, and 'pinking'. On the other hand, it is unnecessary and unwise to tighten up the plugs too much. What is required is a reasonably good seal between the plug and the cylinder head and the use of a torque wrench is recommended to tighten the plugs to a figure of 30 lb. ft. (4.15 kg. m.).

If the plugs require cleaning it is preferable to make use of a proper plug cleaner of the type recommended by the plug manufacturers, and the makers' instructions for using the cleaner should be followed carefully.

Occasionally a blistered insulator or a badly burnt electrode may be noticed when examining the plugs.

If the plug is of the type normally recommended for the engine and it was correctly installed (down tightly on the gasket), this condition may have been brought about by a very lean mixture or an overheated engine. There is, however, a possibility that a plug of another type is required, but as a rule the recommended plug should be adhered to.

After cleaning carefully, examine the plugs for cracked insulators and wear of the insulator nose due to excessive previous cleaning. In such cases the plugs have passed their useful life, and new plugs should be installed.

Examine the insulator for deposits underneath the side electrode which have possibly accumulated and which act as a 'hot-spot' in service.

After cleaning the plugs in a special cleaner blow all surplus abrasive out of the body recesses, and off the plug threads, by means of an air blast. Next examine the threads for carbon. Any deposits can be removed and the threads cleaned with a wire brush. A wire buffing wheel may also be utilized, but reasonable care must be used in both methods in order not to injure the electrodes or the tip of the insulator. The thread section of the plug body is often neglected when cleaning the plugs, owing to the fact that it is not generally realized that, like the gaskets, the threads are a means of heat dissipation and that when they are coated with carbon the flow of the heat from the plug is retarded, producing overheating. This simple procedure will also ensure absence of binding on the threads on replacement and also obviate unnecessary use of the plug spanner.

When replacing a plug always screw it down by hand as far as possible and use the torque wrench for final

tightening only. Whenever possible, use a socket to avoid possible fracture of the insulator.

Examine the electrodes for the correct gap (see 'GENERAL DATA'). Avoid an incorrect reading in the case of badly pitted electrodes.

Remember that electrode corrosion and the development of oxides at the gap area vitally affects the sparking efficiency. The special cleaner can remove the oxides and deposits from the insulator, but the cleaner stream does not always reach this area with full effect owing to its location, and cannot necessarily deal with corrosion effectively as this sometimes requires too strong a blast for proper removal.

When plugs appear worthy of further use it is good practice to dress the gap area on both centre and side electrodes with a small file before resetting them to the correct gap. The intense heat, pressure, explosion shock, and electrical and chemical action to which the plugs are submitted during miles of service are so intense that the molecular structure of the metal points is eventually affected. Plugs then reach a worn-out condition and resetting the points can no longer serve a good purpose. When points are badly burnt it is indicative that the plug has worn to such an extent that its further use is undesirable and wasteful.

Before replacing the plug in the engine test it for correct functioning under air pressure in a plug tester, following out the instructions issued by the makers of the plug tester. Generally speaking, a plug may be considered satisfactory for further service if it sparks continuously under a pressure of 100 lb./sq. in. (7 kg./cm.²) with the gap between the points set at .022 in. (.56 mm.). It is essential that the plug point should be reset to the recommended gap before the plug is refitted to the engine (see 'GENERAL DATA').

While the plug is under pressure in the tester it should be inspected for leakage by applying oil round the terminal. Leakage is indicated by the production of air

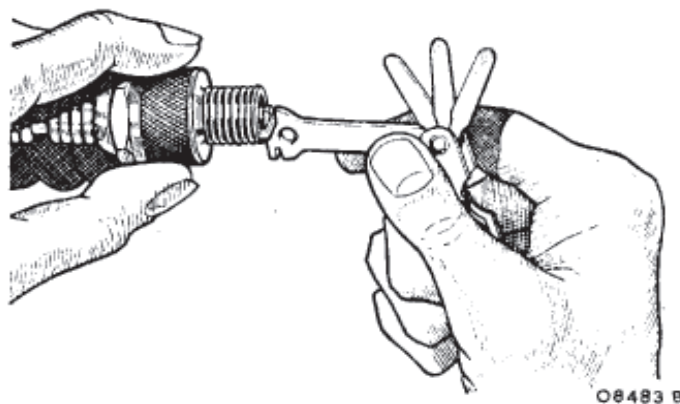


Fig. B.5

Adjusting the plug gap with the Champion setting tool

bubbles, the intensity of which will serve to indicate the degree of leakage. The leakage gases have a 'blow-torch' effect when the engine is running which rapidly raises the temperature of the plug to above its designed heat range, thus producing overheating, preignition, and rapid electrode destruction.

The top half of the insulator is frequently responsible for poor plug performance due to the following faults: splashes, accumulation of dirt and dust, cracked insulators caused by a slipping spanner, overtightness of the terminals.

Examine for a cracked insulator at the shoulder and the terminal post and remove any accumulations of dirt and dust.

Section B.13

NEW-TYPE DISTRIBUTOR

A new distributor (Part No. AEJ41), having a roller weight mechanism with a positive stop (to prevent over-advance) and no vacuum advance mechanism, has been introduced. When this distributor is fitted, the vacuum advance pipe must be removed and the union blanked off with blanking plug (Part No. AEH1289).

Instructions for timing the distributor are given in Section B.7.

Before fitting a new distributor the distributor drive shaft gears must be checked for backlash as described in Section B.14.

Section B.14

CHECKING DISTRIBUTOR DRIVE SHAFT BACKLASH

When fitting a new distributor it is most important that there should be no excessive backlash in the distributor drive shaft gears. The backlash is checked as follows:

- (1) Fabricate a pointer as shown in Fig. B.6 and secure it to a disused rotor arm with a nut and bolt.

- (2) Remove the header tank hose to give access to the distributor.
- (3) Lock the automatic advance mechanism by removing the cam retaining screw and refitting it with a washer underneath its head. The washer may be made from a piece of wire .030 in. (.76 mm.) diameter and 1½ in. (28.57 mm.) long formed into a circle.
- (4) Fit the rotor and pointer to the distributor and ensure that the rotor is tight on the spindle.
- (5) Rotate the crankshaft until the pointer is over the flange of the camshaft cover (Fig. B.6).
- (6) Turn the pointer by hand in an anti-clockwise direction and mark the limit of its travel on the camshaft cover flange; then turn the pointer clockwise, and again mark the limit of its travel.
- (8) If the distance between the two limits exceeds $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (8 mm.) the distributor drive gears must be renewed before a new distributor is fitted.

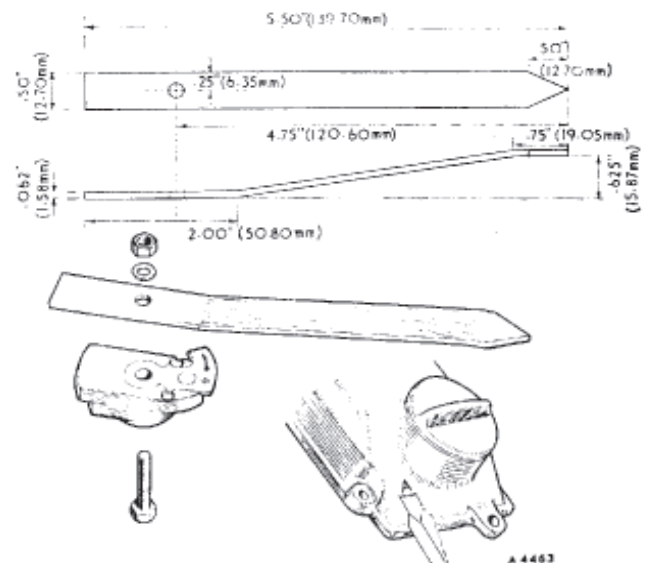


Fig. B.6

Checking the distributor drive shaft backlash

While the plug is under pressure in the tester it should be inspected for leakage by applying oil round the terminal. Leakage is indicated by the production of air bubbles, the intensity of which will serve to indicate the degree of leakage. The leakage gases have a 'blow-torch' effect when the engine is running which rapidly raises the temperature of the plug, raising it above its designed heat range, thus producing overheating, pre-ignition, and rapid electrode destruction.

The top half of the insulator is frequently responsible for poor plug performance due to the following faults: splashes, accumulation of dirt and dust, cracked insulators caused by a slipping spanner, overtightness of the terminals.

Examine for a cracked insulator at the shoulder and the terminal post and remove any accumulations of dirt and dust.

Section B.13

CHECKING THE IGNITION TIMING

To prevent any excessive ignition advance, the vacuum advance pipe must be permanently disconnected and the manifold union blanked off with blanking plug (Part No. AUC1289). The vacuum union on the distributor must be left open to atmosphere and the micrometer scale permanently set to zero.

To ensure that the ignition timing is correct throughout the speed range of the engine, the distributor advance

mechanism must be checked with a stroboscopic timing light and the results checked against the following table.

Crankshaft r.p.m. . .	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000
Maximum advance . .	24°	26°	26°	26°

If the advance figures are exceeded, the static ignition setting may be retarded to a maximum of 3° A.T.D.C. Check the new setting against the table.

If the advance is still outside the limits, renew the distributor and re-check the setting.

If the advance is still not within limits, renew the distributor drive gears (Part Nos. AEH450 and AEH500).

Section B.14

NEW-TYPE DISTRIBUTOR

A new distributor (Part No. AEJ41), having a roller weight mechanism with a positive stop (to prevent over-advance) and no vacuum advance mechanism, has been introduced. When this distributor is fitted, the vacuum advance pipe must be removed and the carburetter union blanked off with blanking plug (Part No. AEH1289).

This distributor has been fitted to engines having the following Serial Nos.:

2011	2040	2200 to 2206
2028	2041	2209 to 2219
2038	2188	2222 onwards.

Instructions for timing the distributor are given in Section B.7.

NOTICE: -- This is page B.8 from the earlier Issue 2 of the MG Series Twin Cam Workshop Manual. Section B.13 here gives instructions for setting ignition timing with the earlier distributor (vacuum advance model). For that model it was deemed important to set the maximum spark advance at higher engine speed using a strobe light.

There is a Confidential Service Memorandum MG301, 24 February 1960, dictating dealer change to the later model distributor for all Twin Cams. However, most cars never had the distributor changed, so the earlier release page including the technique for timing the earlier model is included here.