Emma's Safety/Security Switches:

It is very easy to 'hot-wire' and steal an old car without a steering lock; a lead with a crocodile clip on both ends is all you need. Clip one end on any live positive (+), connection and the other end to the positive connection on the coil, a quick push start and you're away. "No I didn't pinch cars in my youth, but I sometimes started them for friends who had lost/misplaced their keys." Some vehicles were very easy to hot-wire; e.g. some early cars had an electrical socket on the dash consisting of red and black female sockets that normally took an inspection lamp that was an optional extra. To start the car you pulled the wire off the wiper motor (normally fastened inside the car above or below the windscreen), and stuffed it in the red socket. As the wire to the wiper motor was powered by the ignition the simple act of applying power to the wiper motor lead fed reverse power to the ignition.

Several of us young mechanics carried a universal key, a short length of wire with a small crocodile clip on one end and a split pin on the other end; the crocodile clip went on the windscreen wiper motor terminal and the split pin in the red socket, you now had ignition and a working press button starter.

Many vehicles just had two glass fuses spaced about a 1/4" apart, if you pulled out either fuse and pressed it in the gap between the two fuses then again you had ignition. For vehicle with three or more fuses there was invariably a position where you could place one fuse next to another and achieve the same result.

So what can the owner of old cars like ours do to prevent the casual thief? If you are building a new kit or restoring an old car then don't use glass fuses. Two things that I have done on nearly all old cars that have passed through my hands is to fit two security switches. The easiest one is a CB points earth switch which is used as an anti theft device. You simply take a wire from the negative side of the coil and feed it to a hidden switch, the other side of the switch goes to earth; the result (when switched), is no make-or-break of the low tension circuit and hence no spark at the plugs. Ignition coils usually have double Lucar connectors at both positive and negative terminals but if you are wiring your car from scratch you can hide the extra wire in the loom, the only thing to remember is to connect the wire into the cable that runs from the coil negative to the distributer? Please see the diagram.

The second switch is a battery master switch which for maximum protection needs to be as close to the battery as possible.

Of course you don't have to stop at two! Other anti theft measures include; a steering lock, an electric or manual fuel cut off tap, an isolator switch for the fuel pump and a cut out switch for the wire powering the starter solenoid (wire it through a relay). If you put the switches in a row you don't even have to hide them! Simply put some of the switches upside down and remember the position sequence to get everything working; when parked leave all switches in the up position to confuse the casual car thief.

If you adopt any of the above procedures it's worth having, and memorising, cockpit checks before starting and stopping, it saves embarrassment when you churn it over on the starter motor and then realise that the CB Points switch is in circuit. "I've lost count of the number of times Margaret has shouted out '**switch**' when the car doesn't start on the first attempt!"

In the above text I am particularly referring to pre-IVA vehicles, the current IVA Test requires two methods of anti-theft security which don't operate on the braking system, or include a manual

battery master switch. To comply you need to read the latest IVA Test Manual which is available as a free download.