

ANTIFREEZE PROBLEMS

I decided to change to flush the cooling system on my MGB and replace the antifreeze. Thinking I was doing the right thing, I bought 5 litres of Carplan 'Red' antifreeze (see photo) which is supposed to have a 5yr life. I flushed the system used a 50/50 antifreeze/water mixture and everything seemed OK, although I did notice that some of the hose connections tended to weep a bit.



I later came across an article that said that red OAT (organic acid technology) antifreeze, although used in most modern cars, is not recommended for classic cars because of the mix of metals and materials in the old cooling systems. It also said that it can attack certain types of head gasket. When I looked on the label on the container sure enough it said 'uses latest OAT technology'.

The internet also said that OAT antifreeze is more 'searching' than traditional antifreeze, which may explain my weeping hose connections.

I'm not sure how serious the problem with OAT in classic cars is, but there is quite a lot of discussion on the internet about it, so I decided the safest thing was to replace the OAT with something more traditional. The problem is finding a suitable replacement. According to the internet, silicate antifreeze is recommended for classic cars. I found that Halfords sell 2 litres for £12, and Wilkinsons sell 1 litre for £4. On the Wilkinson's website there was a comment from someone who had used their silicate antifreeze in his old Jag with no problems, so I decided to give it a go (see photo – but why do Wilko use such silly labels!).



It is usually not recommended to mix different type of antifreeze, so I first drained and thoroughly flushed the system with a hosepipe. I then filled the system with clean water and ran the car up to temperature before draining it to clean out any remaining old antifreeze solution.

Before I re-filled the system I decided to descale the heater matrix to improve (hopefully) the heater performance. I connected hoses to the inlet and outlet connections on the heater and put some kettle descaler in for about 1hr (see photo). I then flushed the heater matrix out with clean water from both directions, until the water ran clear.



Finally I filled the system with a 30% silicate antifreeze/water solution (if you do this, don't forget to make sure your heater valve is open to prevent air locks) and checked for leaks.

The silicate antifreeze is the traditional blue colour, although I believe antifreeze can come in a variety of colours, so colour is not necessarily a guide to suitability.

I'm still not sure if this work was entirely necessary, and it has the downside that silicate antifreeze is only recommended for 2yrs use compared to 5yrs for OAT, but better safe than sorry I suppose.

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