



Search for a good MGBGT V8

Roger Aldridge has owned and enjoyed an RV8 in Oxford Blue for some years but with semi-retirement he was able to consider also owning a GTV8. He thought his wife would prefer a GT and he had always felt an MGBGT V8 was a car he would like to own. So about three months ago he started looking with a budget of £10,000 to £15,000 for a really good car to keep. Some years ago he had seen a car on the Hall's Garage stand at the MG Show at Stoneleigh which they had completely rebuilt. It was in Damask Red and was stunning so he always thought if he ever got the chance that would be the quality of car that he would look for. So Roger started looking for an MGBGT V8 and this is his story of his experience of trying to find and buy a good V8.

For my search I mainly used "Car and Classic.co.uk" and the V8 Register's "MGV8s for Sale" webpage to look for a suitable car. I checked them regularly. I also printed off the V8 Register's "buyer guide" and read up on what to look for. When I first started there was a Damask car for sale on Car and Classic, a concours winner, never restored and for sale at £14,000 in Lancashire. It looked pretty much exactly what I wanted so I spent two days trying to convince my wife of a budget nearer £15,000 than £10,000, and when she had agreed, I went back to find that the car was sold! Bugger.

I started looking at what else was available and then realised that I had never actually driven one, so I decided to look at a couple of cars at dealers where I thought I could drive them. The **first car** I went to see was

in Burton on Trent. It had been completely rebuilt in **Harvest Gold** with virtually no mileage since. The first problem I had was the dealer had small premises and was reluctant to move all the cars to get it out unless I was a definite purchaser. As I couldn't guarantee that was my position I settled for just looking. The dealer told me that he sold about half his cars via the internet without buyers actually visiting! I was to hear the same story at another dealer and I am sure it must be true. At £12,000 it was about right on the money, however the restoration was very average and it was a conversion from a rubber bumper shell. The cam covers had been painted orange, yes orange, it had a "pop up" sunroof and overall I did not feel it was special. So I passed without a drive.

Car number two in **Glacier White** (below) was for sale in Swindon at a van dealership which was selling the V8 for a customer! Again the car had been rebuilt, in fact twice, but to a very poor standard. The engine was painted blue (quite why I never discovered) and the engine bay paint was cracked and breaking off, the interior was tatty and they wanted £16,000 for it! Having said that I took it for a drive and it did drive well. The engine had been rebuilt, ported and polished and it showed, but it was well over-priced. So I moved on.

At this time the Damask car in Lancashire reappeared on the internet, but priced at £16,000 so became my **third car**. I spoke with the owner, the original sale had fallen through but he had had a lot of interest so had put the price up. I went to see it the next day and found it was very original and beautiful, drove really well and I was

smitten. However it was over my budget and I was worried about it not having been restored. I once bought an E Type, thinking it was sound and ended up paying for a complete respray, new sills and more. This was OK when I was working but now I had to be careful and I thought a fully restored car would be more my ideal. However the Damask car was stunning so I told the owner I might be interested at £14,000. He wouldn't move, so I walked away.

At this point I went to the V8 Anniversary Day in May just south of Oxford and found it really helpful meeting other GTV8 owners and looking at their cars. I started to see what a good car looked like. I met Geoff Insley there from Clayton Classics in Coventry who offered me a chance to drive his beautiful black rebuilt car. As I live in Worcester this was too good to miss. Driving Geoff's car, formerly owned by the longstanding V8 enthusiast Dave Wellings, really set the benchmark for me - it drove really well, quiet, quick and with no rattles. Geoff and his team also gave me a great deal of guidance on what to look for.

Next thing was the owner of the Damask car in Lancashire offered to drop his price. We agreed £14,750 but I wanted an inspection before completing the deal. At that time he told me there was a problem with a "ticking" sound from the engine which he needed to get fixed. We agreed that I would wait for him to do that then arrange an inspection. Subsequently he told me that despite changing the camshaft the problem would not go and suggested I look elsewhere as he was not sure when he would get it fixed. I have to say this really made me think twice about the car and I decided to keep looking.

Car number four was for sale at an "MG Specialist" in Suffolk. It was cheap at £11,000 having had a respray but as his reputation was good I drove 3 hours to see it. Within 5 minutes of arriving I knew I had wasted my time. The respray was poor in a non-standard colour (I did know that before I went), but there was rust in the boot, the engine compartment (still in the original colour) was a mess, the inside tatty and more - even the badges were missing.



We went for a drive and the car was a bag of nails, all over the place – the trader commented “I think the shocks need replacing” and when it cut out every time we stopped he added “must adjust the tick over” and so it went on. I said thanks but I’ll let you know.

Car number five was with a Croydon “MG Specialist” but I should have known by now this was not as reassuring as one might expect. It was a **Damask** car repainted and on offer at £11,000. The paintwork was pretty good but the engine bay was a disaster, it looked hand painted in places. The original Dunlop composite wheels all needed refurbishing and I was aware that would be £400 per wheel at MWS, so just too much work to do. The dealer sold it later the same day!

Car number six was on offer with a classic car restorer in Newbury at £15,000 for a newly rebuilt car in **Damask**. This was a pretty good effort, paintwork was good, a lot of panels replaced, engine compartment good but not correct - the cam covers were not painted for example. I went for a drive and it went quite well, but it was making noises on full lock and it was off tune. It had a tatty interior and the chrome on the windows was scratched and bent. Again I thought that it was an average restoration, not special and there were too many problems. As a newly restored car I think I would end up spending again. So no thanks.

At this point I was pretty despondent. I may be impatient but I began to think I will never find a car to my standard, so I started thinking about getting one built. I rang CCHL in Hull who advertised a complete rebuild of a donor car in stock. When I spoke with them they had sold their V8 donor car but would look to source and rebuild one for £20,000 to £25,000 depending on spec and it would be a 12 months wait.

I then rang Steve Hall at **Hall's Garage in Lincolnshire**. I knew he had restored several V8s with a strong reputation for quality and I had seen that earlier car in **Damask** at Stoneleigh. He quoted about the same money as CCHL for a rebuild to order, did have a donor car available but it would be about a 12 months wait. I said could the spec be the same as the car I had seen at Stoneleigh some years ago. Steve said yes but he could do better than that adding “that car is here for sale on behalf of the owner we restored it for. It is immaculate, has won numerous concours awards and for £20,000 you can buy it now. We haven't started advertising it widely yet”.

So yes I bought it. The car was presented in immaculate order and when I asked for a test drive, Steve said “well I wouldn't expect you to buy it without driving it”. What a difference. The price included a full service and MOT, a fresh waxoil and the owner threw in a carcoon and an indoor cover. Yes my wife is very understanding and I know some people will blanch at that price, but believe me it is worth it. The car is like new and has a full history since the restoration in 2006 including three concours wins. Perhaps the only fault was that **Damask 1422** was built in February 1974 (but not registered until August with an “N” plate) so no free road tax from April 2014! The car had been stored from 1980 to 2005 and is a nut and bolt rebuild to the original standard. Driving the car is a complete pleasure and I have been in touch with the previous owner who is just as fanatical as I am for detail and quality and is a real enthusiast. I am one happy owner.

I think the moral of my story is that **you**



get what you pay for and quality restoration comes at a price. Whilst I don't think the GTV8 is a technically difficult car to rebuild, too many restorers don't take the time to do it properly. If they don't even know the correct badging for example, what confidence do you have that the mechanicals will be correct? I think I was very fortunate to find Damask 1422 and feel very pleased with how things turned out in the end.

