

LIVING WITH CLASSICS

MODS & CONSEQUENCES

MGB V8

These stylish GTs are already fun to drive, but can deliver even bigger thrills with the right modifications

It's rare for any home-built versions of a car to outnumber their factory siblings, but the number of MGBs powered by Rover V8s far exceeds the 2591 official V8 MGB GTs made – and the roadsters certainly do because they were never officially produced by the factory. Such is the car's popularity that there's even a book devoted to building

V8-powered MGBs and with Heritage bodyshells available it's possible to build a new V8 'B GT or Roadster from scratch, while specialist suppliers such as Clive Wheatley can provide all the parts needed. My own V8 GT, which regularly features in CCW's Our Classics pages, is a converted L8 with a Getrag five-speed gearbox and Frontline suspension, so I don't feel I have to wrap it in cotton wool as I might a concours original example. They are superb cars; adding a Rover V8 turns the 'B into a genuine Jaguar E-type rival for (relative) peanuts that's fairly economical and very easy to maintain. They even accommodate tall drivers (something the E-type struggles with) because the packaging

“Adding a V8 turns the 'B into a genuine Jaguar E-type rival’

was designed around 6ft 5in MG employee, F Wilson McComb. Modifications to factory V8s must be weighed against any possible loss of value but there's plenty of potential to subtly improve performance, reliability and safety. With a converted car the massive aftermarket world is your oyster and improving it will only increase its value. Wallet permitting, in fact, it's possible to build an MGB V8 that's as quick as a modern Porsche 911. **John Lakey**



FIT A MODERN HEATER £300

Clayton Classics offers a three-speed heater that properly demists the screen and warms the interior like a modern car. It's a bit of fiddle to fit, but it transforms a 'B V8, making it a properly practical winter car.

TWEAK THE FRONT SUSPENSION £1000+

Bespoke twin-wishbone front suspension systems using the original crossmember offer a great improvement and good but different systems are made by Frontline and Hoyle at just under £1000, and the MGOC at £1195.

FIT VENTED BRAKES £600+

There are many larger MGB ventilated front brake conversion kits from MGOC, Frontline and Wilwood from £600 to £1000. The MGOC four-pot conversion allows the standard 14-inch wheel to be retained, but some need a 15-inch wheel.

IMPROVE THE INDUCTION £35

Factory V8s used two SU carbs at the back of the engine on manifolds that curved forward. It worked well, but an Edelbrock/Weber 500 carburettor kit offers gains in both power and economy and doesn't need a bonnet bulge.

REBUILD THE ENGINE £3500

Factory V8 GTs used a low-compression 137bhp engine because the high-compression units were allocated to Rover. An RPI rebuild uses the later, more efficient post-1976 cylinder heads and HC pistons with a cam to suit.

FIT A LOUVRED BONNET £250

V8s can warm the MG's bulkhead unpleasantly and the only real solution is to find a way of allowing the heat to escape. Sports Car Metal Works can louvre a bonnet (which also looks great), although remember that it will need painting.

FIT A FRONT SPOILER £170

The BMC Special Tuning front air-dam, while effective, is a large and unsightly addition. However, Frontline has now produced an anti-lift front spoiler that looks good and greatly improves high-speed stability.

MGB V8 OPINIONS



THE CLUB

VICTOR SMITH
MG CAR CLUB'S V8 REGISTER

'Condition 1 prices have risen 110% since 2010'

"Whether a car is modified or original can occasionally become a heated topic for debate but the V8 Register welcomes all equally, whether factory cars or conversions. Most V8s will have been refurbished or restored and the opportunity for mods arises, some visible, some more subtle. Parallel markets have developed for original and modified V8s as increased buyer demand, partly driven by 'alternative investors', has seen Condition 1 prices rise by over 110 per cent since 2010. The main drivers are condition and originality."



THE INSURER

ANDREW EVANSON
LANCASTER INSURANCE

'For us the handling is what MGs are all about'

"As exclusive insurer partner to the MG Owners' Club, we cover a lot of MGB GTs, many of these being modified examples. Changing the carbs and upgrading the head and engine internals will certainly give the MG more power, so we're pleased to see that there are options to improve the braking. Upgrading the suspension can vastly improve the handling which, for us, is what MGs are all about. With us there would be no increase in premium for these modifications."

lancasterinsurance.co.uk

EXPERT VIEW

MIKE GREEN

Mike, proprietor of Suffolk-based MG T-Type and MGA parts supplier, NTG, has owned his factory V8 GT since 1985. He says: "I've done the two-tone paint MG experimented with and rebuilt the engine using the original 3.5-litre block with later heads and a fast-road cam, but I've kept the re-jetted SUs because as I like how easy they are to set up. The brakes are updated but still fit inside the original wheels, which I've modified with a spinner so they look like a centre-lock wheel. The full Frontline

suspension package greatly improves the comfort and handling, while the MGOC power steering kit makes it a real joy to drive. I love the car and wouldn't ever dream of selling it!"



LANCASTER INSURANCE QUOTE

1975 MGB GT V8, worth £25,000. Standard quote: £80.48 or £98.48 with agreed value. Modified quote: £80.48 or £98.48 with agreed value.

"Quotes based on a 45-year-old male marketing manager, access to another car, no claims or convictions, club member, 3000 miles per year, living in SP2 0HL. Disclaimer: Policy benefits, features and discounts offered may vary between schemes or cover selected and are subject to underwriting criteria. An additional charge may be payable."

CLUBS & SPECIALISTS

- MG Car Club, Oxon. 01235 555552, mgcc.co.uk
- MG Owners Club, Cambs. 01954 230928, mgownersclub.co.uk
- Wey Classics, Surrey. 01483 223830, weyclassics.co.uk
- David Manners, W Midlands. 0121 544 4040, jagspares.co.uk
- Moto-Build Ltd., Surrey. 01784 477477, moto-build.co.uk
- RPI Engineering, Norfolk. 01603 891209, v8engines.com

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John Lakey is an MGBGT V8 enthusiast and a contributor for the popular Classic Car Weekly paper out on newsagents' shelves every Wednesday. Here he has an interesting article noting "MGBGT V8s can deliver more with the right modifications" but adding "modifications to Factory V8s must be weighed against any possible loss of value but there is plenty of potential to subtly improve performance, reliability and safety". His own V8 is an MGBGT V8 Conversion with a Getrag five speed gearbox and Frontline suspension. With the tight availability of replacement parts for the original four speed gearbox with overdrive, the readily available option of a replacement with a Mazda five-speed gearbox from Vitesse will increasingly become the choice many owners will take. The performance improvements and reliability with the modern Mazda gearbox and the subtle impact of the replacement on a Factory MGBGT V8 of the replacement will be seen as real benefits. John Lakey sought the opinion of the V8 Register as the specialist MGV8 group.