



### MG RV8 – twenty years on

Launched at the British International Motor Show at the NEC in October 1992 to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MGB and to keep the MG name alive for the revival of the marque, the RV8 was destined to become a classic. All the features of a classic sportscar were there – retro looks and open air motoring with the comfort of a luxurious finish with the very comfortable and supportive Connolly leather seats, elm burr trims and dashboard, plus of course the sheer pleasure of a V8 engine. Only just over 2,000 RV8s were produced and surprisingly 80% were exported to Japan.

The new MG - codenamed ADDER - was developed by a Rover Special Products team at Gaydon based on the MGB Heritage bodyshell produced at the Faringdon plant with subtle bodywork modifications and a luxurious interior. Under the bonnet the RV8 was powered by a 3.9 litre aluminium Lucas fuel injected V8 with a modern engine management system delivering 190bhp at 4,750rpm through a five speed gearbox and a Quaife differential. Telescopic dampers replaced the original lever arm units but the faithful live axle remained. The new model had a lower, sleeker appearance through a clever combination of suspension and evolutionary styling changes whilst still maintaining the unmistakable character of the classic MGB.

The retro links with the MGB, the best-selling sportscar of all time which ceased production some 13 years earlier, are clear, but that familiar MGB appearance with subtle styling changes hides the reality – the RV8 was a very new car. Although the RV8 was conceived and designed to use existing

MGB parts as far as possible, the surprising fact is the car contained barely 5% of the original components. Most of the parts, including the engine, gearbox, back axle, electrical systems, body and internal trim were either totally new or adapted from raiding every Rover parts bin the RV8 project engineers could lay their hands on at the time.

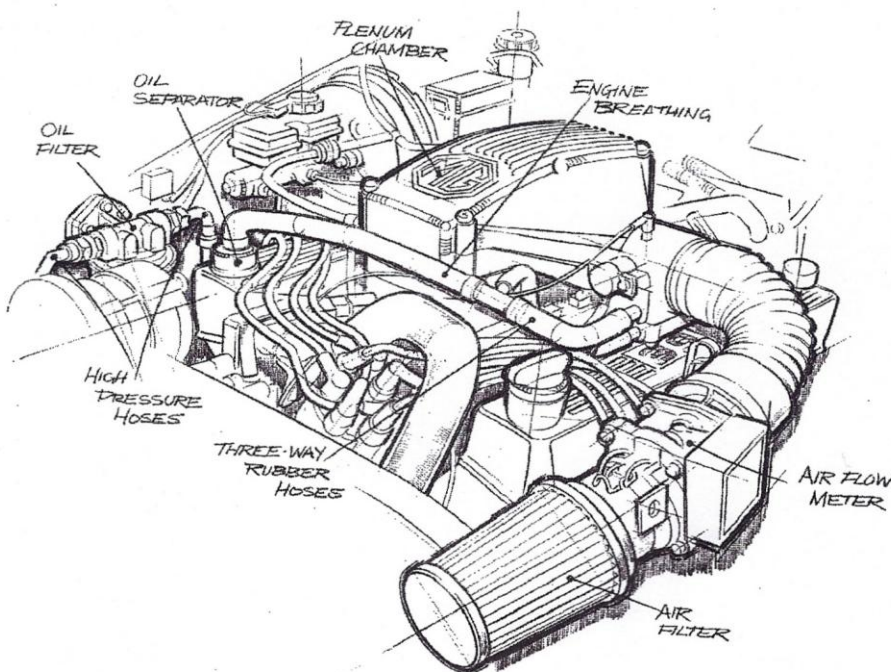
Reflecting on the RV8 project in 2003, John Yea (who had worked at RSP as project manager) commented "I don't think a retro type car built in an old bodyshell will be seen again – manufacturers don't keep the

tooling any more, it's just binned and gone for ever!" Timing was a factor for vehicle conformity – John Yea noted "another six months or so and the RV8 might not have met the increased "drive by" noise limits – it was that close! Projects like that just don't happen like that anymore".

The RV8 was aimed at well heeled "driving enthusiasts who had always wanted a classic British open top sports car to drive for pleasure" and priced at just under £26,000. The press reaction to the RV8 in 1992 was one of puzzlement and although Rover had made a point of emphasizing the car was not intended to compete with more modern sportscars, several reviews tried to compare the RV8 with the modern V8 powered TVR Chimera.

Today the RV8 is an increasingly popular classic car with its modern engineering updates, a luxury internal finish and a bodysell with vastly better rust proofing than the earlier MGB models. A flow of cars from Japan has increased the availability of the model in the UK and also in Europe and overseas. Good servicing and spares support is available in the UK from two "full service" specialists and also through a specialist in Australia where the model is also very popular.

A key feature of the RV8 market is the exceptionally low mileages of many cars with 20,000 to 35,000 miles not uncommon but other than a few high prices touted by "top end" traders for very low mileage examples, current RV8 prices are simply exceptional value for this classic MG.





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### RV8 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2012

To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the RV8 at the British International Motor Show staged at the NEC in October 1992, we have a small programme of interesting anniversary events.

#### RV8 Predevelopment Story - a talk by John Yea

John Yea will recall how the RV8 was conceived as the revival of an MG sportscar and developed into a credible low budget predevelopment proposition that the Rover Group recognised was important for the future of the MG brand. He will reflect on how market research was carried out and what it provided and how the project finally reached a stage where it was taken up as a technically and financially viable manufacturing project by MG Rover. The talk will reveal the human story too - the imagination and initiative of the people who played a key part in conceiving and developing the initial ideas and then building the predevelopment cars. Their motivation and sense of fun from an involvement in an exciting project was important too. The talk has been arranged for the Friday afternoon 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2012 of the MG Car Club's annual MGLive! weekend meeting. It will be held in the clubhouse at Sywell aerodrome starting at 4pm prompt. Early booking online or via the contacts above is essential.

#### RV8 20th Anniversary Dinner

The dinner will be held in the Art Deco dining room at the Clubhouse at Sywell aerodrome and will take the form of many of the earlier V8 Dinners with a three course dinner followed by eight short entertaining toasts. Dress: jackets but not formal. It will be a natural high point of the anniversary as

many members from the UK and overseas arrive for MGLive! on Friday 22nd June 2012 at 7pm for 7.30pm prompt. Booking online or via the contacts above.

#### Reproduction RV8 Key Fob

To mark the RV8 20th anniversary, the V8 Register is sourcing a batch of reproduction RV8 key fobs made for sale to RV8 enthusiasts. As original RV8 key fobs are very rarely seen for sale these days and have been advertised at astonishingly high prices, many RV8 members have been unable to obtain one. The reproduction RV8 key fobs will be marked on the reverse of the MG logo with "RV8 20th Anniversary 2012" to avoid confusion with the original fobs and will enable members to use one in their RV8 rather than keep a valuable original fob in tissue paper or even framed! Early reservation of a fob is recommended either online or via the contacts above.

#### RV8 20th Anniversary Display

The display will recreate a "period

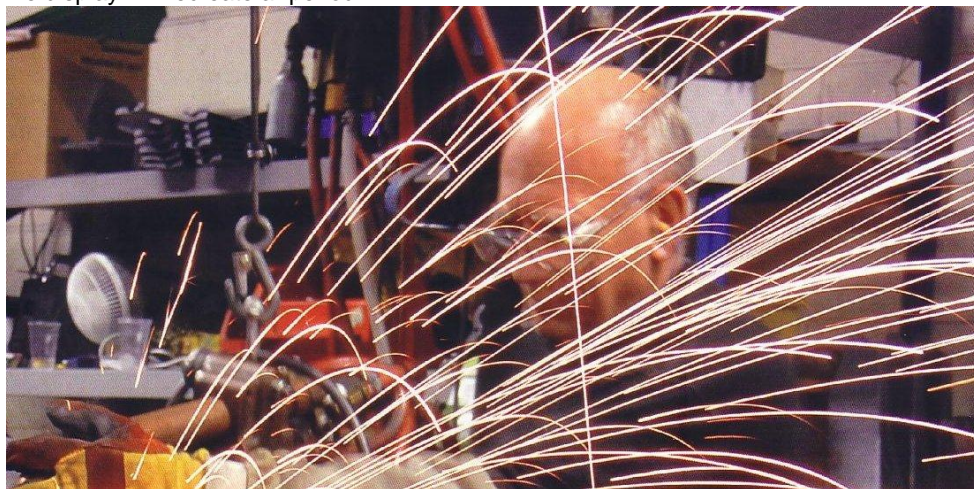
showroom" of an MG dealer shortly after the launch of the stunning new MG RV8 in 1992. Visitors will see a showroom window and a gleaming "new" RV8 with period brochures and posters advertising the car. The display will be in the main marquee at MGLive! held this year over the weekend of Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th June 2012.

#### RV8 20th Anniversary Tour of the BMH Body Plant at Witney

John Yea has indicated he would be delighted to provide a guided tour of the plant for a small group of V8 enthusiasts when we hope to be able to see bodyshells being worked on at the time of our tour. The production of an MGB wing is a particularly interesting manufacturing activity for visitors to watch as the sheer number of component parts that have to be assembled and the extent of the physical work and craftsmanship is extraordinary. Many visitors realise they had little idea of what was involved and can then appreciate the value of a wing in the light of the relatively modest cost! We may arrange a meeting place in the Witney area for breakfast as that would enable members to travel early and miss the peak workday traffic jams on their route to Witney. The tour is arranged for Thursday 27th September 2012 at 10.30am. Early booking online or via the contacts above is essential.

An **informal lunch** at the White Horse at Woolstone near Uffington, just SSW of Faringdon in Oxfordshire will follow the tour. This country pub, just below the White Horse on the Berkshire Downs does a delicious light lunch and there is good car parking. The route from Witney to Woolstone takes around 30 minutes. A route map is available online but for satnavs: SN7 7QL.

Full details of these events are online at: [www.v8register.net/anniversary.htm](http://www.v8register.net/anniversary.htm)







### There's a first time for everything!

Driving an MG V8 on the track at speed is an experience many V8 enthusiasts may dream of from time to time but few get round to trying. But it is both easy and safe at a well-run MGoT track day as Nic Houslip found as a novice on the track.

On Sunday afternoon June 12th 2011 the RV8 is ready; everything has been checked, tightened, topped up and packed in. But now I'm beginning to feel nervous, because having reached the age of 67, I'm not that used to being a novice, but here I am about to set off for deepest Wiltshire in the pouring rain to spend an evening with a business colleague about 15 miles from Castle Combe, where I am to have my first ever attempt at driving fast on a race track. Am I nervous? You bet I am.

Thoughts keep running thorough my head, what will it be like, will I make a mess of it, what happens if I go the wrong way or have an excursion into the grass? I decided that I did not want anyone I knew to be there in case I screwed up, so reluctantly, she had to stay home.

Come the morning of the 13th, Oh thank God, it's not raining! Having experienced a few back end twitches on the road on the way down, I was relieved that my first attempt would probably be in the dry. As I pulled into the circuit I could see a varied selection of MGs with people fettling and doing all the little things we all do when we are nervous. First things first, a cuppa and a bacon bap in the clubhouse seemed a good idea.

After chatting to a few friendly people, we got around to the important stuff, the sign on, the briefing, dispensing of armbands and the noise test [the RV8 passed] but it is more difficult than you think to hold the engine at a constant 4,500 rpm; it's not

something you do every day, so practicing it might have been a good idea.

Steve B, my Track Day Buddy, appointed by the MGs on Track committee (of which he is a member) was there to help and it was a great comfort to have him as a mentor to guide me through the process. Steve was also kind enough to take me round first as a passenger in his car.

My initial impressions? Aaagh! which way do we go? Where are the bends, what is the right line, what is the next bend? It is daunting, the track seems so big and so wide, and what's more you can use all of it if you want or need to, but you wonder how will I ever get all this sorted out? Unsurprisingly Steve knew how to do so and pretty soon we were going round the circuit at speeds faster than I thought possible, approaching bends fast and braking much too late, even though Steve wasn't really going that fast. I did find that the brake pedal on my side of the car was of no use whatsoever! No matter how hard I pressed, it didn't change the speed we were travelling one little bit, so I relaxed and let Steve get on with it. It was a great demonstration and almost immediately I knew I could do it.

So now it is my turn, I arrive at the track entrance at the beginning of the session, pretty near the end of the line, and after going down the pit lane, suddenly I'm on my own, everyone else is disappearing into the distance! Only one thing to do, I've got 3.9 Litres and 190 BHP, so I must use it. Having been advised about the approach to Quarry corner and that you must be absolutely sure you have done braking before the suspension goes light at the top of Avon rise, I turn in to the left, brake a little more and then to the right for Quarry, a very long right hander that seems to go on forever, but eventually get to the blue cone marking the apex and can accelerate away along Farm

straight and suddenly here I am at the Esses, which I don't do very well as I don't use the track correctly and then struggle through. The rest of it is a bit of blur, especially as some of the other drivers are now appearing in my mirror but I remember that they are all gentlemen and will not harry me in corners because I've got my "N" sticker on the back, No! N for Novice, not for Nic! Having let them past I then start to follow them to watch their lines and soon found that I can actually go a lot faster than I thought, and after having negotiated Old Paddock, Hammerdown, Bobbies, Westbury and Dean. I'm soon leaving Camp and can see other guys accelerating away to the start line so I follow them and note that I'm doing about 75 mph after leaving Folly and on towards Avon rise. I'm beginning to get the hang of this and I like it.

Now I have an appointment with Barry Evans, my instructor. Barry introduces himself and gives me a mixture of pep talk and warnings but seems to understand how nervous I am. "Now" says Barry, "I shall take hold of the wheel at times during our laps, which you may find disconcerting, but don't worry" It is disconcerting; but it soon becomes clear that not only does Barry know every inch of the course, he also knows exactly what my car will do and what I might do. As we proceed I get a string of useful information and a gentle tug on the wheel to make sure I'm using all the track, right down to the last inch before the grass and a restraining tug to stop me turning in too early. With almost continuous calls for "more power" and "don't brake yet", I become aware that I am much faster as we go round for 5 more laps, then all too soon the Chequered flag is being waved and after one more lap, a little slower this time to allow things to cool down a little, we come in.

A quick visit to the clubhouse for a drink and then it is my turn to go out again. This time I'm still apprehensive and the much talked about butterflies begin to manifest themselves, but as I go down the pit lane and open the throttle I forget all about them and start to get on with it. I let a few faster men past, some of the little cars are so fast and seem like slot racing cars as they flick first this way then that into and through Chicanes, but the next thrill comes when I find that I can really give it some Wellie as I go past the starting grid and build up speed through the long right-hander Folly. I find to my surprise that the speedometer is now approaching the magic ton as I start to brake for the end of Avon rise and the entrance to Quarry. Subsequent laps enable me to become better at it, just like the other



entrants and I don't think I held up too many people, although I must confess to enjoying being able to out accelerate many other better handling cars because I had the power to do so.

The superb organisation, marshalling, marking out of the track with cones placed to indicate the correct braking, turn in and apex points all combined to make a most exhilarating day out. Everyone in the MGs on Track team gets a great big vote of thanks for the time and effort they put in to make this a special day for me.

I would like to repeat, for the benefit of every novice and most of the subjects of the YouTube videos, what Barry told me after we were finished. A car is most stable when it is going in a straight line, not accelerating and not braking, so the more time you spend doing that, the safer you are and the faster you will get round. If you make sudden changes to speed, by braking or accelerating, the tyres are under greater stress and will lose their grip and you will lose time. You cannot deny the laws of physics, so learn to drive smoothly and you will be quicker. You will also be much less hard on the driveline, engine, brakes and suspension and save a lot of money of fuel. A short lesson on heel and toeing ensued, which helped a lot with braking into corners.

Until I can get to do it again I will relive the experience over and over. I have already reserved a place at Stowe in August and as soon as Castle Combe is open for the September I will reserve my place, because I'm hooked.

Photos: At Castle Combe in June 2011, Nic Houslip's instructor points to the apex and the line to take in the ex Bill Wallis Nightfire

Red RV8 and at Goodwood in March, Peter Kuruber with his new blue RV8 GT. (DE Photo)

### V8 Tour 2012 in mid Wales

Based at the four star Metropole hotel in the spa town of Llandrindod Wells in mid Wales over the weekend Friday 31st August to Monday 3rd September, the V8 Tour 2012 will have a programme of tours and visits. Further details of the tour and booking arrangements are available on the V8 website or from tour organisers are Carolyn and Bob Owen on 0118 933 2533.

### Another servo failure reported

Longstanding MGBGTV8 enthusiast, Mike Dunlop with Limeflower 0118, has reported a servo failure but fortunately it was detected on start up - the garage was filled with white smoke as the brake fluid burnt off as it leaked into the inlet manifold from the servo. Mike says "my experience was nowhere as scary as it might have been if the car had been travelling at speed. Fortunately it was in the garage when I found the problem. I was about to start up the old girl after her winter rest and as usual I tried the brake, clutch and throttle pedals before starting up. I noticed the brake pedal went straight to the floor. I checked the reservoir and it was empty. As the car was in the garage on chocks I started her up anyway and instantly there was white smoke everywhere, and I do mean everywhere as it was so thick I had to leave the garage to get some air. The car had started up fine on the second attempt (which is as usual) and the engine had sounded fine with the oil pressure at the correct point and steady as

a rock. At this point I had a panic and convinced myself that the car had a cracked head (the garage had been very cold over the winter months) as at that point in time I had not connected the white smoke with the loss of brake fluid.

Once the engine had cooled down I did a radiator check and looked at the dip stick and oil filler cap for the usual light grey sticky stuff associated with water and oil getting together, but all was fine. I went back into the house, had a strong cup of tea and told myself to think as a proper MG Car Club member would do. Then it came to me, the white smoke must have something to do with the brake fluid loss, marvellous thing the brain when used properly. It was then that I remembered the warning from the V8 Register as a note in Safety Fast about servo failure. The next thing I did was phone my mechanic to come round and take a look at the servo. As soon as he had taken the servo off the car, it was clear that the servo was the problem, the brake fluid that had not been sucked into the inlet manifold (hence the white smoke) was still in the servo.

The remedy was obviously going to be either refurbish the original servo or buy a new one. I spoke to my twin brother in New Zealand who had replaced the servo on his 1968 MCGT just before he had shipped it out of the UK and he thought the "buy new" was the best route, so that's what I did. I would have liked to keep the car original but on safety items I didn't want to take the risk. I purchased mine from Moss Group in Feltham and got a company called V-Tech to install it. This local company (Bracknell) is a two man team and the only guys who have ever been allowed to work on my car since I found them back in the 80s. The boss (Colin) did his apprenticeship on the V8 line at Abingdon on leaving school, but had never worked on a V8 since leaving MG and starting his own business until he met me. I have kept the original unit and possibly will get around to having it refurbished at some time.

This all happened around March 2011 and once the new unit was fitted I had trouble free motoring for the rest of the year. The brakes are now better than I can remember them being for some time, so perhaps my servo had been on the way out for a little while. I must admit I had topped up the reservoir a couple of times the previous year and had checked all the brake lines for leakage but had found nothing out of place. As the top ups had been only a teaspoonful at a time, I thought no more about it."

So get your servo checked – the leading MG V8 specialists carry new servos. Resolve to make the check this season now.