

**V8****VICTOR SMITH**

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### V8s at Spa Francorchamps

Victor Rodrigues, from the Swiss V8 Register, says the highlight during the European Event of the Year in Belgium was the opportunity of driving three laps on the Spa F1 circuit. Evelyne and Victor felt the event was well organised and they enjoyed meeting many old and new friends with their cars. He reports there were some fifteen MG V8s at the event – seven RV8s, four MGBGT V8s and four MGBV8 conversions.

### V8 Hampshire Tour 2011

Bob and Carolyn Owen report bookings for the next V8 Tour for the long weekend of Friday 23rd to Monday 26th September 2011 are going well. The tour, based at the Norton Park Hotel near Winchester in Hampshire, is primarily aimed at MG V8s, but MGCs are also welcome as are any other models of the "Marque of Friendship". Full details of the long weekend programme and booking arrangements are on the V8



Register website at [www.v8register.net](http://www.v8register.net) or alternatively you can email Bob and Carolyn at [v8events@v8register.net](mailto:v8events@v8register.net) or phone on 0118 933 2533. You can book online or by mail order.

### V8 Sunday lunchtime gatherings at Hazeley Heath

Another Sunday lunchtime meeting at the Shoulder of Mutton on Hazeley Heath in North Hampshire is on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2011. Bryan Ditchman lives nearby and will be pleased to see you there from noon. For further information call Bryan on 0188 932 6346. Visit the Rolling V8 Calendar on the V8 website where there is a map showing you how to find this rural pub.

### Classics in the Walled Garden

Ian Quarrington reports this year's event in the historic Walled Garden on the Luton Hoo Estate in Bedfordshire was markedly quieter than previous years with many less entries and only a handful of MGs but plenty of Jaguars celebrating the E Type 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. John Bolt, Karl Foot and Julie Best brought their Nightfire Red RV8s and enjoyed a wonderfully relaxed mid-Summer evening with Bill and Sally Silcock and Paul Plummer with their T-types.

### Good weather at Silverstone

The weekend got off to a good start on Friday with lunch at the Sun Inn at Hook Norton followed by a V8 supper at the Three Conies in Thorpe Mandeville, not far from

Silverstone. It was an enjoyable evening for 40 members in the pub's spacious restaurant with a good choice of dishes. The V8 Rebuild MGBGT V8 completed by Barrie Jones was on display in the V8 Marquee together with a very early RV8 used for sprint events. At a well attended V8 AGM on Sunday members elected Jim Gibson (chairman), Bob Owen (treasurer), Ian Quarrington (secretary), Julian Holmes (regalia), Clive Wheatley (technical) and Victor Smith (webmaster and scribe).

### Biofuel concerns with classic MGs

Since the introduction of ethanol in motor fuels in the UK and overseas there have been concerns over the effects of biofuel on older cars, particularly classic cars. There seem to be three areas of concern with biofuel in classic cars - corrosion, compatibility issues with rubber components and seals, and combustion issues.

The **corrosion concerns** are because biofuel in petrol attracts water leading to corrosion in classic car fuel storage tanks and fuel supply systems, particularly when fuel is stored for lengthy periods if a car is laid up during the winter months. The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs or FBHVC is actively working on these issues and has commissioned tests of corrosion inhibiting additives. The Federation has plans to encourage the distribution of an inhibitor for classic car enthusiasts once those tests are satisfactorily completed.

The **compatibility concerns** are over adverse effects of biofuels on the rubber components and seals in classic car fuel systems. A number of members have experienced difficulties with damage to those parts so we are trying to get clarification of what damage biofuels cause and what replacement parts are recommended by key suppliers like Burlen and other spares suppliers for SU fuel systems and where can they be obtained.

The **combustion concerns** are more complex and under serious technical debate. Current motor fuels are designed to suit modern fuel injected engines and may cause some tuning issues for carburettored engines together with other combustion issues. Petrol currently available at pumps in the UK contains a different mix of hydrocarbons to the mix in fuel available in the 1970s when the MGBGT V8 with its twin SU carburettors was manufactured. As these issues affect a range of classic cars we await clarification from fellow Club members with relevant technical knowledge of the complex combustion issues and the views of the FBHVC.



## Sebring MGBGTSV8 conversion

Nick Smallwood has developed his car with a series of modifications into a road going MGBGTSV8 conversion with a Sebring body kit and fully independent Jaguar XJ6 suspension. The result is an extraordinary MG V8.

The car was originally a 1973 1800cc, MGBGT in Damask Red purchased in 1988 for £400 with several months' tax and MOT. After a few days large chunks of filler began to fall from the wings and sills and it soon became apparent that it was not going to pass its next MOT test. The car finally drew its last breath after Nick was stopped by the police who noticed the well ventilated appearance of the bodywork. Originally intending just to replace the sills and wings, a large workshop was acquired and the strip down began. The decision was then made to undertake a V8 conversion. Unfortunately the suspension and brakes on the last MG V8 conversion Nick owned were not up to the job and Nick ended up with brake fade, a blown differential and torn out leaf spring hangers. This called for a major rethink, when all the available after market suspension set-ups were investigated.

Looking for something that really would be able to handle the abuse his previous example had to endure needed some careful thought. After much deliberation the Jaguar independent rear suspension was selected for the rear and two years later the car finally sat back on four wheels. At this point with different tracks and stud patterns on each end of the car, Nick decided to go the whole hog and fit the Jaguar front suspension as well. Since he liked the Sebring GTS's aggressive lines and large flares, using its extra width made the suspension conversion a lot easier. So the MGB slowly developed into a sort of a mongrel, stealing all the best features of the MGB, MGC, GTS and V8 models and the best British suspension from that era, the Jaguar independent system.

Nick's vision of what the car would be has changed to a classic that rides and handles like a modern car, albeit at the expense of ultimate performance - not too low, lots of sound proofing, powered steering, fully independent suspension, engine and ignition management, and replacing just about every component on the car with a modern equivalent. After twenty three years of work it is now a good looking car packed with interesting modifications and modern components.

Nick has a website with a great deal of information and many photos of the individual modifications including the front and rear Jaguar suspension, the Sebring



wings, the power steering installation, fast filler cap, an RV8 4 litre Serpentine engine with a Piper 285 cam kit, twin plenum injection, twin exhausts, DTA management, gearbox, wheel choice, remote oil filter, engine tie bars, extra cross member, XKR Brembo brakes, reinforced steering rack mounts, an underslung relocated remote oil

filter and more. It's all at [www.mgbv8.co.uk](http://www.mgbv8.co.uk) and well worth a visit.

The car is finished in Jaguar British Racing Green with subtle Sebring GTS logos on the tailgate, an MGC bonnet, a sunshine roof and an orange valance unit at the front.

Photos: Nick Smallwood







### What's happening to MG V8 prices?

Over recent months the market for MG V8s has seen several trends – a general shortage of Factory V8s on offer, a modest flow of RV8s of good and average condition with a couple of truly exceptional cars and a modest flow of V8 Roadsters. Prices have generally held although there are signs that some traders have decided the rise seen in good quality MGC prices should carry over to the MGBGT V8 and RV8 models. For an enthusiasts' group like the V8 Register which has seen the MG V8 models as having been very affordable for active MG enthusiasts it would be a sad day in many ways to see prices rise so that "chequebook investors" move in on the models. But many of us would accept privately the MG V8 models are undervalued at typical current prices when you consider their performance and ease of maintenance and spares availability.

With good quality **Factory MGBGT V8s** there has been a general shortage of cars for sale with very few appearing on the V8 website's MG V8s for Sale webpage over the first six months of 2011. Clearly the demand has been illustrated by several "wanted" adverts. On eBay this scarcity was illustrated when researching this piece as there was only one MGBGT V8 alongside five RV8s, five V8 Roadsters and four ZT260 V8s. The Factory V8 on offer there was a low mileage car (51,000 miles) in a popular colour Teal Blue and priced at a typical condition 2 price of £6,750. Several specialist traders mentioned they had seen few Factory V8s recently and would be

pleased to see one in their showroom. In March earlier this year a very good concours quality 1975 rubber bumper MGBGT V8 was sold for at a Bonhams auction for £12,075 inclusive of the buyer's premium and then within ten days it reappeared on offer at an astonishing price of £29,995 with the rather grandly named Nutley Sports & Prestige Cars in East Sussex. Recently another high priced Factory V8, a chrome bumper car Damask 1024 with 31,000 miles, was on offer at Beau Cars in Belgium at around £19,000.

**RV8s** have been trading in modest numbers with eight sold through the V8 website in the first six months of this year at prices ranging from £10,500 to £13,500 depending on condition and body colour. A couple of exceptional cars appeared recently – first an RV8 in Woodcote Green in June, with only an astonishing 998 miles on the clock, offered at £20,995 and then in early July a UK spec low mileage RV8 in Nightfire Red, a popular colour, offered at £16,995. It will be interesting to see how



they sell as there are definitely private buyers in the market looking for top quality cars. Whether the premium for such a low mileage is worth that much is a key question but a car with less than 1,000 miles is truly exceptional.

The market for **V8 Roadsters** is difficult to follow as the quality of conversion and specification are such key variable factors in addition to mileage and condition. In the first six months we saw a modest flow of V8 Roadsters for sale including a good example in Primrose Yellow on offer in Sussex, but one V8 Roadster in Tornado Red stood out as exceptional on all counts. It sold through the V8 website in barely ten days.

With the **ZT260 V8** models there is a growing awareness they are likely to become very collectable and at current prices represent exceptional value for the specification and wonderfully flexible V8 power. They are not economical cars in comparative terms but with modest use they are an affordable MG V8 muscle car in a seemingly modest bodywork package.

So where might prices go? Well a specialist trader said "I noted the Nutley car but if one is realistic it is the way V8 prices will go, after all we are talking of rebuild costs significantly more than that and that wouldn't include the car! They are very good performers, limited production, ample spares and good servicing coverage from specialists - what more could you desire. Whether these two are worth the money they ask one can only tell by inspection but it's about time they took off. Sadly we don't have any in stock . . . at present!"

### Crackdown on uninsured driving gets underway

There can be few classic car enthusiasts who do not agree that the scourge of uninsured drivers should be tackled and rigorously but for a seasonal classic car user it is very easy to overlook the insurance if the car is parked up and off the road in a garage for several months. Under the new Continuous Insurance Enforcement (CIE) requirements now being applied by the DVLA, there are concerns that owners of seasonally used vehicles may park them up in a garage or barn and then, because they are not intending to use the vehicle on the public highway for some months, may forget when their motor insurance cover expires. Under the CIE a vehicle owner that has not declared a SORN (statutory off road notification) for a vehicle must have active motor insurance cover for that vehicle even if the car is garaged or in store off the public highway. The law has changed – it is now an offence to be the keeper of an uninsured



vehicle that is not on a current SORN **as well as** to use an uninsured vehicle on a road or other public place. The DVLA now has systems which enable it to run checks on both their vehicle records database and the Motor Insurance Database (MID) and by comparing the data from the two databases they can very easily identify vehicles that are uninsured but not on a SORN. Firm action is promised in those cases.

From June 2011 registered keepers identified as having an uninsured vehicle which is not on a current SORN will be sent a letter telling them that their vehicle appears to be uninsured and warning them of the consequences if they fail to take action. Those who do not act on this warning - either by taking out insurance or declaring their vehicle off the road - will receive a £100 fixed penalty and could have their vehicle clamped, seized and destroyed if it is found on the road. They may also face a court prosecution if the fixed penalty is not paid. The DVLA has released a two page fact sheet with guidance and advice for owners of vehicles used on a seasonal basis so they can comply with the tougher requirements of the new regime. A copy can be found on the Club's [buyinganmg.com](http://buyinganmg.com) website using the link below.

The costs of the scourge of uninsured drivers were set out in a DVLA press release in June. The latest estimates are that around 4% (around 1.4 million) of motorists in the UK drive uninsured. The penalty for driving without insurance is a maximum fine of £5,000 and 6-8 penalty points or possible disqualification. Around 200,000 offenders are convicted for uninsured driving every year. Currently every responsible motorist pays an average of £30 each year within their premiums to cover crashes involving uninsured and untraced drivers. It is estimated that uninsured and untraced drivers kill 160 people and injure 23,000 every year. Measures already introduced in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 gave police improved access to the MID and powers to seize vehicles driven without insurance. In 2009 around 180,000 uninsured vehicles were seized.

The Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB), which launched a national advertising campaign in June to raise awareness of the new law, has seen a 20 per cent rise in the number of successful searches by motorists who have checked their insurance details are recorded on the Motor Insurance Database (MID). When motor insurance cover is processed by insurers, details of the vehicle are posted to the MID so the current insurance status of the car is recorded on that database. All vehicle owners and drivers can check their

vehicle insurance details are recorded correctly for free at [www.askMID.com](http://www.askMID.com) – and a check is very worthwhile doing as the accuracy of the database relies on your insurers putting details of your insurance cover there. There have been cases where either data for a driver's insurance cover had not been recorded or a mistake in the record had been introduced. In those cases an askMID search for the vehicle would have produced an uninsured record - "X No- your vehicle is NOT showing as insured on the MID" - which would put you on notice there is a problem. Unless that mistake is spotted in good time, when a DVLA database comparison is run that car would show up as "uninsured" and trigger the warning letter system for you!

Keeping the key data for your car in a safe place for easy reference seems a good idea, so we have produced a set of credit card sized forms on which you can make a note of the tax/SORN renewal date, MOT expiry and the insurance renewal date for your car. Just download the PDF document, fill in a form and then cut out the form and pop it in with your debit and credit cards where it will be a useful reminder. That document can be downloaded on the Club's [buyinganmg.com](http://buyinganmg.com) website where there are links to a gateway webpage providing links to several useful websites for a DVLA vehicle enquiry, an askMID insurance search, records of MOT test results together with links for online taxing and SORning. Just visit: [www.buyinganmg.com/vehiclechecks.htm](http://www.buyinganmg.com/vehiclechecks.htm)

## V8 run to Caves Beach in New South Wales

Stuart Ratcliff reports sixteen RV8s joined a run to Caves Beach, a typical Australian surf beach on the NSW central coast (near Newcastle, 120 km north of Sydney), run by the RV8 Register with the Sydney Centre of the MG Car Club. A brunch was organized by registrar Alan Heritage and fellow member Dominic David. The RV8 party met up with local Club members resulting in a gathering of RV8s, MGBs and a ZT260 – Stuart's new toy! Brunch at the Caves Beach surf club was a full English type breakfast affair with much RV8 discussion.

In Stuart's two photos alongside - Dan Hickey in his Oxford Blue RV8 and Stuart's daughter, Courtney Ratcliff, alongside his XPower Grey ZT260V8.

