



### MGBGV8 – forty years on

In 2013 we will see the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the “new” 120 mph plus MGBGV8 in August 1973 which offered a “combination of timeless good looks, high geared and effortless long distance travel and superb road holding and handling”. The BL press release further described it as “a thoroughbred Grand Touring car for the enthusiast” and “fitted with the Rover lightweight 3.5 litre V8 engine it gave MG’s most popular sports car almost twice the power and torque of the successful existing model”. Without the ancillaries the V8 was lighter than the four cylinder steel engine then used in the MGB models. The equipment included “clear instruments, adjustable cord covered bucket seats, tinted windows, overdrive and a large carpeted area for a great deal of luggage with easy access from the big tail door”.

In its press release just ahead of the launch, BL noted “a big plus for the V8 engine installation is that it was engineered in detail by specialists with an intimate understanding of the basic design of the model. Modifications have been properly planned and carried out. Steering, suspension, brakes and the main body structure have all received careful attention since the first studies were carried out in the Summer of 1971”.

The timing of the launch of the Factory V8 is so often mentioned in relation to the V8 conversions produced by Costello but it is clear market trends towards sports cars with engines above 2.5 litres had been seen at Abingdon. The six cylinder MGC had been developed and produced for that market

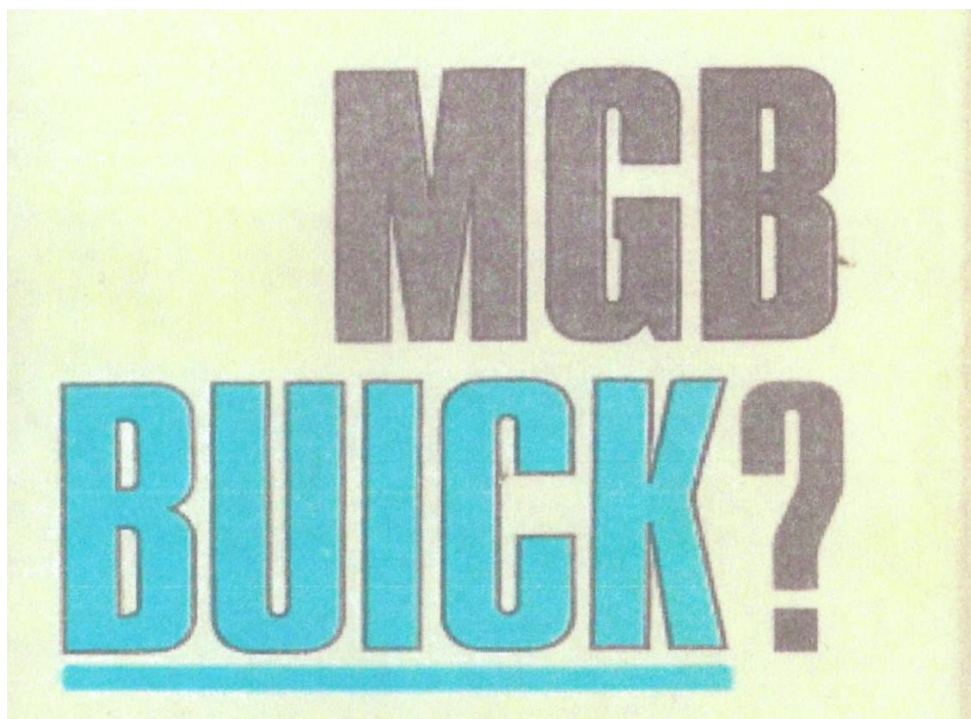
and the potential for using the “new” lightweight Buick derived 3.5 litre engine, was spotted by the MG team at an early stage. But whilst they clearly had the vision, energy and initiative to be innovative and develop a V8 powered model, the combination of the internal politics and ever growing corporate size of the BL group and the economic challenges for the motor

industry at the time had stifled development initiatives at Abingdon. That had delayed the development period of the new V8 model so the launch was much later than Abingdon wanted to see.

The Rover V8, brought over in a deal with GM, was a remarkable engine with the key features of hydraulic cam followers and light weight, but the manufacturing technology at the Rover plant was not geared to the methods of construction used by the engine’s original US designers and new methods of thin-wall aluminium casting had to be evolved to make the engine at Rover. A development programme was put in hand to devise appropriate methods of construction and to bring the engine up to the European standards at the time. The original engine developed 150 bhp gross at 4,400 rpm and by the middle of 1967 Rover had installed twin carburettors, reduced the compression ratio slightly and achieved 160 bhp gross. By the time the Rover 3500 appeared in production in 1968, power was up to 184 bhp gross at 5,200 rpm with outstanding reliability and a very long life. New pistons and different materials for the valve train, as well as for the bearing inserts and for the crankshaft, had been evolved during the search for these improvements. Further development at Rover continued later and several Rover V8 engine specialists have done more too.







### Australian MGB Buick V8 in 1967

Barely five years after the launch of the model, an MGB with an alloy Buick V8 nestling under the bonnet appeared in Australia. The conversion was carried out by Mark Keeley, a high performance American car importer in Sydney. It was reported in 1967 in a fascinating article by Al Lauder in an Australian car magazine, Sports Car World, with the caption "For go-manship, not show-manship, would you believe an MGB Buick?" It added "Disguise exercise: hide one 218 cube alloy Buick V8 under the bonnet of an MGB with no body mods and a single exhaust outlet. Change the final drive and hose off everybody. Understeer on corners? You must be joking sir, this mill is more than 50 lbs lighter than the original!"

Mark had his MGB Roadster sitting around at home doing hack service to the shops each day and runs to the club each weekend. The next thing he knew he had a spare 1962 3524 cc alloy Oldsmobile engine coupled to an automatic gearbox and in an idle moment found himself measuring the length of the Oldsmobile and the length of the B block. He soon discovered that if the B engine and gearbox were removed, there would be a sizeable hole up front which just happened to be big enough for the V8 engine.

The engine transplant was easier than expected – the only clearance problem was with the bulkhead and wheel arches. This was dealt with by cutting a section back into the bulkhead to allow room for the larger bellhousing and notching the inner wings to

clear the exhaust headers. The engine mounts were fabricated from sheet metal and the gearbox rested on the original mount after slight modification. The final driveshaft was shortened to suit and the exhaust pipes from each bank of the V8 met on one side between the engine and gearbox and ran into a standard MGB silencer and tail pipe. However the V8 needed more cooling, overcome by grafting an extra core width to the standard MGB radiator. The result was the Oldsmobile V8 engine looked as if it was made for the MGB

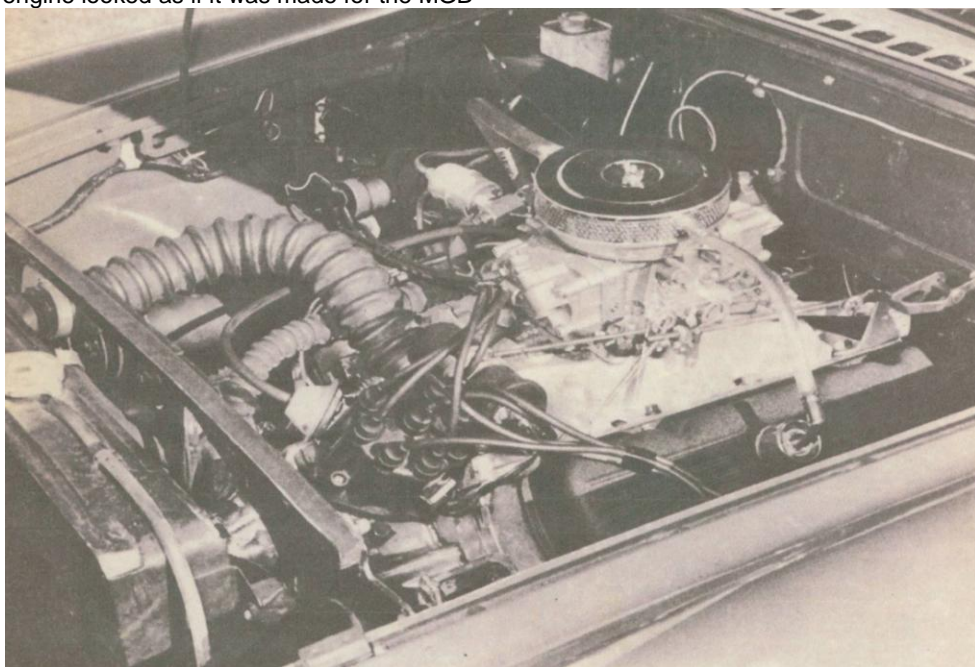
engine compartment.

On the road the car was a "genuine flyer". The car retained the normal MGB rear end gearing with a top speed of around 90 mph, however fitting proper gearing produced a top speed of 120 mph. Mark experienced around 20mpg but ran the engine with a four-barrel Holley carburettor, not the most economical set up but one he felt gave reasonable economy in return for such an increase in power.

Al Lauder's article is classic period piece too – his first few paragraphs are a sheer joy to read. Sixties nostalgia when a nimble MGB was real fun to drive before the mass market took to fast hot hatchbacks. He created a compelling tale to illustrate how the understated character of the seemingly standard MGB might be a surprise on the road.

"Imagine yourself whistling along the highway in something like a Falcon GT. You're sitting pretty close to the speed limit, restraining the beast under your right foot, drinking in the luxurious feeling of having power on tap whenever you need it. Of course you bought the car for the status symbol of the whole thing. The big look with big power. You flick a glance in the rear view mirror and note a dark green MGB in the distance. Although quite unconsciously, your top lip begins to cur, your eyelids droop a fraction . . . and you settle into your seat a little more. Ho hum, it feels sweet to know the Bee is going to follow your tail lights for the next umpteen miles.

Suddenly there's a raspy horn note behind you. Another glance in the mirror. Dammit,





doesn't that cloth-capped nit recognise the colour of the car? Can't he read the GT insignia on the tail? And still he acts like a pompous blighter . . . and wants to get by.

The low-slung car whips past like you were standing still, a green blur slipping by the window with a most unusual exhaust note. Your brow wrinkles. The lip curl turns to a sneer. Your right foot heads a little further to the floor. No impression. The green "thing" becomes smaller before your eyes. And smaller, and . . . it's gone!

Unreal. You search your mind for something you may have noticed as it passed you. Nope. Same height. Sure it had fat wheels, but so do a lot of MGs you've seen lately. No bubble in the bonnet, no straps holding the bonnet shut like boy-racers do. So, what's all the noise about? That's it. The noise. That burbling sound. He must have been going 15 mph faster, yet he burbled along. Nothing like the normal Bee sound at all. Something smells, Sherlock!"

Al Lauder then describes how Mark carried out the conversion but what an enticing introduction! You can see a copy of the full MGB Buick article on the V8 website.



### Overheating – it may be a tired radiator cap

Whilst this small tip may be one of the shortest notes in the V8 Workshop Notes series it is sound advice nonetheless. Radiator caps are often seen as a long life item and indeed many give service for many years, but eventually they grow tired and no longer perform well holding the pressure in the cooling system. The cap may not be seen as a likely cause of overheating as a cursory glance at the cap may reassure you it is fine, but if it is been in service for many years then it could contribute to the cooling system not functioning well. With a V8 there is not much margin for poor cooling performance. So routine replacement of the cap is wise at periods of say ten years. A replacement cap GRC110 costs less than a

fiver including VAT.

### Factory MGBGTV8 sold

George Eagle has recently acquired a Factory MGBGTV8 from Douglas Griffin who had owned the car from new in 1973. Fellow V8 owner Dennis Wharf gave George a lift in his V8 to Whittlebury, just around the back of Silverstone, to collect the car. Dennis says "looking at the two V8s standing alongside each other, it struck me how rare it must be for two completely original 39 year old cars with just four owners between them to be seen in this way. The coincidence of how George came to own Glacier White 0581 almost mirrors my own with Blaze 1189. The sound from the two V8s winding through the lanes on the return journey was wonderful."

Douglas Griffin has been a member of the V8 Register for many years and a great V8 enthusiast. He was a very keen motor cycle trialist in the fifties and sixties, competing in many major events including the Scottish Six Day. When the original MGBGT was revealed, Doug decided this was the only car for him and ordered one of the very first in 1966, an Old English White model. He owned it until he decided to buy a V8 shortly after the new model was launched in 1973. At that time V8s were quite rare in the dealerships and Doug was very keen to buy one so when he and his wife Ann spotted a

brand new V8 in his favourite colour on a delivery car transporter one day, he simply followed it until the transporter arrived at a dealer in Banbury. Fortunately it was quite close to his home so Doug went straight in and concluded the deal on the spot!

He still has a few of his old bikes, but with little strength remaining in his fingers, tinkering is limited these days. Dennis noted "you could tell parting with the V8 was an end to a big part of their lives. Both George and I promised to drop by on occasions and take them for a run in our V8s".

### V8 lunchtime meeting at Hazeley Heath

The next Sunday lunchtime meeting at the Shoulder of Mutton on Hazeley Heath, north of Hook in Hampshire, will be on 19<sup>th</sup> August. It's a popular meeting with V8 enthusiasts. Contact Bryan Ditchman for details on 0118 932 6346.

### V8 Tour 2012 in mid Wales

Around 60 members have booked in at the four star Metropole hotel in the spa town of Llandrindod Wells in mid Wales for the annual V8 Tour over the weekend Friday 31st August to Monday 3rd September. The tour organisers are Carolyn and Bob Owen on 0118 933 2533 and they have arranged an interesting programme of tours and visits.





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### Three V8 anniversaries in 2013

Next year will not only see the 40th anniversary of the launch of MGBGT V8 model in August 1973 but also the 35th anniversary of the formation of the V8 Register in October 1978, so there are plans for several events including a V8 Dinner. Later in the year we hope to have a reception one evening before dinner at the European Event of the Year 2013 to be held in Scotland in August 2013 based at Aviemore. Further details of the anniversary events will be released later this year to enable overseas members to plan a visit to the UK to join fellow V8 enthusiasts for the celebrations. Later in the year there will also be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the MGZT260V8.

### MGZT260V8 launch anniversary

It seems time has flown as the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Mustang V8 powered ZT260 in September 2003 arrives later next year. We have over 110 ZT260V8s registered with the V8 Register.



### New V8 Committee

At the V8 AGM held on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June by the V8 Marquee at MGLive! 2012 a new committee of eight members was elected for the next year. Two new members were elected - Debbie Brading who volunteered to take over the role of V8 Secretary and Nic Houslip, a member who contributed the "Newbie Track Day" article in Safety Fast! earlier this year. The other six members elected were John Bolt, Howard Gosling, Ian Quarrington, Bob Owen, Victor Smith and Clive Wheatley. Thanks go to Jim Gibson, immediate past chairman and former V8 Treasurer, who handed over the V8 Register finances to Bob Owen shortly after the end of 2011. Jim had carried the role of V8 Treasurer for many years, making a major contribution. Julian Holmes also stepped down after several years running the V8 Regalia as he was posted overseas but we very much hope to see him back in the future. The clothing side of the V8 Regalia activities has been reorganised by Bob Owen so the range of goods is now sourced and handled by a specialist contractor, Top Signs. See the Online V8 Shop for further details of the range and how to get items online.

### V8 Tour of the BMH Body Plant

To mark the 20th anniversary of the launch of the RV8 at the British International Motor Show staged at the NEC in October 1992, John Yea has indicated he would be delighted to provide a guided tour of the BMH Body Plant at Witney for a small group of V8 enthusiasts. We hope to be able to see bodyshells being worked on at the time

of our tour but it will depend on production schedules at the time.

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. After a visit to the BMH Body Plant 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 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. As the numbers on the plant tour are limited, all V8 members and indeed fellow Club members will be welcome to join the lunch. If you do plan to join the lunch then do let the V8 Scribe know so we can let the pub have advanced warning for catering. 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)

### Classic cars do need an MOT

The Department for Transport (DfT) announced the results of the Historic Vehicles MOT Exemption Review it had been conducting earlier this year saying it "is in favour of exemption for pre-1960 vehicles. The DfT has proposed this exemption will take effect from 18th November 2012. Owners of exempted vehicles will be able to take them for a voluntary test under the new regulations". Whilst many classic and historic car owners may feel the exemption is a welcome development there could be some unintended consequences. Ron Gammons comments "the point about pre 1960 vehicles having to be maintained in a roadworthy condition is very important. Recently I drove a car which had a valid MOT but had not been driven very much in the past two years. The MOT had virtually expired and when the car was put onto brake rollers the front wheel cylinders were virtually seized. Now both I and another experienced T type driver drove the car and did not notice anything amiss, admittedly the brakes were not used in anger. Without the



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car having been subjected to a brake roller test the brake defect was clearly not obvious." A clear example of why the DfT MOT exemption proposals for pre 1960 vehicles are not such a good idea. Will there be a change in the DfT decision?