

Increased interest in MGBGTV8s

There are signs that the understated qualities of the MGBGTV8 model continue to attract MG enthusiasts as registrations flow in to the V8 Registrar. News of a recent acquisition came from Dennis Wharf, chairman of the Club's Midget Register, as he registered Blaze 1198, a car that originally belonged to John Hardisty and then his son. Dennis reports the MGBGTV8 is in very good condition and has just been serviced by Beers, who have maintained the car almost from new. They also did some light refurbishment which included some paintwork and currently the car sports no outward V8 identification, except for the very distinctive wheels and exhaust note. In this state Dennis feels "it is a wolf in sheep's clothing if ever there was one" but he adds "I intend re-fitting the grille badge, but as for the others, I'm not sure at present although Malcolm Beer handed me the various badges to re-fit, should I wish to". Well full details of the positioning of the V8 badges on the nearside wing and tailgate are set out in the V8 Workshop Notes series!

Another well known Club member, Paul Batho a leading light in the Club's Z Magnette Register, reported he had acquired an MGBGTV8 conversion previously owned by Nick Parrott.

Registrations of MG V8 models - MGBGTV8s, Costello V8s, V8 Conversions, RV8s and ZT260V8s - have been running at an average of 17 a month in 2007 so the total for the year is likely to reach 200.

Fitting anti-tramp bars to a V8

Chris Armitage (Tundra 2066) from Hampshire posted a note on the V8BB with useful information on fitting anti-tramp bars in conjunction with softer leaf springs which have led to significant improvements in handling and ride quality.

In my opinion the standard V8 springs are too hard - their increased rate over the 1800 items being a compromise to give the axle better location to allow for the extra torque of the V8. So a few months ago I fitted standard 1800 MGBGT rubber bumper rear springs as an experiment. I had to have these lowered by around 1.25 inches and re-shaped, by Brost Forge in London, as new springs today are often of poor quality. The result was vastly improved ride comfort - a HUGE improvement. But the axle was not now mounted firmly enough, the softer springs allowing too much axle movement, meaning that the car steered from the rear under



acceleration and deceleration. The softer springs also exposed the front (standard) anti-roll bar as being too soft, allowing the car to 'wallow' somewhat. I tried replacing the rubber spring pads (between the spring and the axle) with polyurethane items which gave only a marginal improvement.

For the next stage of this exercise I fitted anti-tramp bars (rubber bushed ones from Moss), with low expectations after negative comments from others, but in the event they have absolutely transformed the handling of the car. They are reasonably straightforward to fit, no harder than fitting replacement rear springs. The only modification to the car is the need to drill four small holes alongside each front mounting of the rear spring, to accommodate the bolts which locate the front bracket.

The result is a car which feels more solid and 'together'. Steering direction is unaffected under all power on - power off conditions and the comfort level is, compared to the standard V8 springs, a 'magic carpet ride'! Another benefit is much improved cornering, partly due to the softer rear springs. At least one original road test alluded to the harder rear springs impairing the handling. I have also now re-fitted my 'Ron Hopkinson' thicker front anti-roll bar, which originally, in conjunction with the standard V8 set up, had made the ride unacceptably rough. However, with the softer 1800 rear springs I now seem to have the perfect combination, giving just the right level of taut feel to the handling without harshness.

Despite my initial expectations there is no detectable additional vibration or noise transmitted through the anti-

tramp bars. I am generally not a great fan of performance modifications as the negatives usually outweigh the positives in my experience, but I would completely recommend the above changes.

Three final footnotes:

First my V8 has always ridden higher on one side (especially at the rear) than the other - as many seem to do. As part of the above changes I inserted spacers (amounting to about three quarters of an inch) between the spring & the axle on the 'higher' side to level it up. Usually this disparity would cause an uneven twist of the axle under acceleration and even more rear-end steer, but the anti-tramp bars take care of that issue as well.

Secondly, anti-tramp bars are primarily marketed to limit 'tramp' or wind up and violent reaction of the axle under hard acceleration. This has never afflicted my car even with the 1800 springs fitted, as I value my standard powertrain too highly to risk damaging them, but the bars confer the other benefits as described here which are not mentioned in their marketing material. They should also make the springs last longer as they are no longer subject to the same violent twisting forces from the axle under load.

Finally, MG RV8s had anti-tramp bars fitted as standard and presumably therefore have rear spring rates appropriate for maximising ride comfort and handling rather than for axle location purposes. It is possible that the Factory MGBGTV8 would have been given this set up if BL's development budget in 1972-3 had been greater.

RV8s at Staplefield for the annual Veteran Car Run

A group of V8 enthusiasts met up at Staplefield in Sussex to watch the veteran cars pass by on their annual run from London to Brighton on Sunday 4th November and got rather more than they bargained for! The gathering of V8s, organised by the Norwich Burlers, arrived at The Victory Inn in Staplefield early in the morning to have breakfast together. On leaving the pub, they found the village absolutely full of vintage and classic cars! There were literally hundreds of cars of all types and ages - it is clear the village has become a very popular place indeed for enthusiasts of all marques to watch this annual event. It was a huge "vintage and classic car show" with the excitement of the Veterans passing through the middle resplendent with polished brass, shining coachwork, blanketed passengers and begoggled drivers!

Stuart Middlemiss reports the atmosphere was akin to the annual Classics on the Common meeting at Harpenden, especially as it was a brilliantly sunny day, but with the added spectacle of the Veterans. As many photographs were taken of the vintage and classic cars as were taken of the Veterans.

The London to Brighton Veteran Car Run is held each year on the first Sunday morning of November. See the organisers' website at www.lbvcr.com. Both the village pubs in Staplefield, The Victory Inn and The Jolly Tanners, open for breakfast at 8am for spectators and remain open all day - booking for breakfast is advisable. Definitely worthy of a note in your diary for the morning of Sunday 2nd November 2008!



Marion Quarrington (below) arriving at Staplefield in Sussex for the V8 gathering to watch the annual London to Brighton Veteran Car run. Ian was unable to attend as he was playing the organ at a christening back home in Cambridgeshire. Marion enjoys driving the RV8 and enjoyed attending the event.

ZT260V8 Workshop Notes series launched

There are clear signs that secondhand examples of the ZT260V8 model are beginning to pass to enthusiasts who have recognized that not only is the model a well specified and an enjoyable car to drive but also it represents extraordinary value for money at the price levels seen recently. Over 40 ZT260V8s have been registered with the V8 Register and in October we launched a new workshop notes series for the model to provide a useful source of maintenance and spares tips based on members' contributions.

V8 Grille Badges & Lapel Badges available again

New supplies of the V8 Grille Badge and the small V8 Lapel/Tie Pin are available again. Mike Russell has been able to re-source them from a competitive supplier and maintain the price which includes the recent increases in UK postage rates. In addition we now have an "iron-on" V8 Cloth Badge. See the Online V8 Shop for full details or contact Mike Russell on 01628 531343 at sensible hours.



Searching for a good MGBTV8

Norman Merrells from Surrey decided he wanted an MGBTV8 and particularly a good one in Condition 1. His search took him to view thirteen V8s but finally he found one – in Holland! Norman has joined the MG Car Club and the V8 Register.

Earlier this summer my son and I were visiting a local shop when we saw a green MGB Roadster for sale nearby for £8,000 which was between Condition 1 and concours condition. This sparked off his interest and we began browsing the net just generally looking at classic cars and we came across an 1800 MGBGT in Flame Red similar to the one I had owned over thirty years ago. Sadly my old MGBGT had rusted badly as I had nowhere to keep it and it was reluctantly sold. My son loved the look of the car and said that when he was old enough to earn a salary, he would buy himself an MGBGT. I started to think about MGs again and thought what fun it would be to buy him one as a treat for his hard studying even though he would not be able to drive it for a few years other than on private land. We finished up buying a 1980 MGBGT in Snapdragon Yellow in Class 1 condition and we have had great fun during the summer months on club runs in the South of England.

My interest got slightly out of hand as I continued to look at MGs comparing our bargain with others for sale and noticing the odd MGBTV8 here and there. I felt that as I came to retirement age it is probably a good time to buy a classic car which would give me another interest in the days ahead with time on my hands!

So off searching for V8s we went, first on eBay, then the MGOC and finally the MG Car Club where I placed a "V8 wanted" advert on the V8 Website run by the V8 Register. Victor Smith was exceptionally helpful and gave me much guidance. I was not sure what I had let myself in for at this stage as it soon became apparent that there were not many Factory V8s made. At first I searched for both rubber bumper and chrome bumper versions and prices varied considerably. The first one that took my interest was a black rubber bumper on eBay previously owned by a lady who had restored the car using a new Heritage shell, new engine, brakes wiring, reconditioned gearbox and axle and more. It went for £6,000 very quickly and before I had a chance to make an offer.

I soon started to view cars that were advertised in magazines and in my journey to find a good V8 have



physically viewed thirteen vehicles around the UK including Wales, Birmingham, Peterborough and Portsmouth. My advert was a little vague in that I was looking for a V8 in exceptional condition and I had programmed a figure into my mind that about £6,000 would be the figure I could expect to pay for a very sound one. The problem then arose as to the subjective view of condition. What one person describes as Condition 1 may be totally different to another person's view. This was what I found at my first viewing of a V8 in Cardiff. The owner described the car as Condition 1 but on seeing it took me only a minute to realise that only 10% of the vehicle seemed to fall in to this category!

The next car was a private sale and the owner had driven the car from new when it was owned by his employers. It was very original in Harvest Gold and unfortunately this car did not fair very well as the asking price was £8,000 and although in good mechanical condition, the paintwork and trim were showing their age with so much surface rust that it would have cost a further £4,000 to tidy it up.

So I travelled further. The following week I went to Birmingham and from the photographs this next one looked the business - privately owned Snowberry White, Webasto sunroof, black leather and priced at about £6,000. My first impression was how great the car looked, but again it did not take long to see major faults that would cost a great deal of money to put right. The wings and sills had been replaced over the years but this one was poorly welded between the A posts and sills. The nearside A post

had rust bubbling through from inside and although this was not noticeable when the doors were closed, it rang alarm bells for me. The exhaust manifolds were leaking when the car was started from cold which obviously improved as the engine warmed. Rust was also appearing from the lower part of the body panels which meant new wings and cills. It did not take long to realise that the body is the most expensive part of a classic car to restore followed probably by the engine.

My next visit was close to home – a privately owned V8 in Damask. The photograph in the advertisement looked stunning and was probably taken many years ago when the paintwork was renewed. My first impression when I arrived was a no-no as there was no connection between the photo and the real thing. It was just a tatty heap with micro blistering on the paint all over and the rear full up with rubbishy spares.

So then onto Monmouthshire and what a pleasant part of the world to have to view a car. This time the seller was a dealer who dealt mainly in prestigious cars but not classics. His MGTBGT V8 was repainted in Rosso Red some 15 years previously and again looked stunning from photographs. At £12,000, not much attempt had been made to valet the car prior to my arranged viewing. The car started well but took longer than expected and while it was ticking over the temperature rose alarmingly. Once driven however, the temperature came down to normal but again the car did not like hot starts and the dealer claimed I had flooded the carburettors.

Cosmetically, the car was poor when inspected closely. The front leather seats did not match the rear dark blue cloth and the chrome ring that held the leather around the gearstick was held down with zinc plated bolts. "Oh, I hadn't noticed that" commented the dealer.

So on and on I went with my search and I even sent a wanted note by email to club secretaries around the UK and did view one car in Gosport as a result. One member mentioned by email that he wished me luck as he had himself been searching for one for the past two years without any luck. Fortunately I keep reminding my son that my lifelong motto is "never give up" and sometimes when you crave for something special, it is not going to be gifted to you on a plate.

So my hard work finally paid off and I received a telephone call from a gentleman called Bas Speekenbrink in Amsterdam who had seen my advertisement on the V8 Register website and wanted to know if I would be interested in buying his MGBGV8 – Blue Royale 0302. It had been restored by him and was finished three years ago and had since won first prize last year at the annual concours show at Harrogate. Wow! This seemed too good to be true so I kept in touch and decided that I should at least view the car although I was expecting disappointment as before. I contacted Bas and he said that another person from Switzerland had first chance to view the car so he would let me know the outcome.

A week later, Bas phoned and said I could now view the car as the Swiss gentleman had not attempted to make any offers. The asking price was Euro 26,500 and this was way over my budget but it would be well worth the trip just for the experience. I hastily booked a cheap flight from Gatwick and thought about the comments made by friends in the trade who thought I must be mad. And why had the gentleman from Switzerland not purchased the car if it was as good as it seemed from the photos? Bas met me at the airport and we spent a relaxing morning viewing the car and talking about his four year bare shell restoration project. The photographs of the work at each stage were very impressive and no expense had been spared bringing the car to its "as new" state. There were a few modifications – the car had been finished in Blue Royale (dark blue) paintwork (not a Factory V8 colour) and new dark blue quality carpets had been fitted with no V8 rubber mats. It had tubular stainless steel manifolds and exhaust



and a larger capacity radiator (although the same size as the original) to assist cooling in very hot temperatures.

It took over a week to negotiate a price between us and, whilst he had set himself a minimum of Euro 22,000, he was eager to make a deal as he wanted to start a restoration on a 1934 Morris Ten-Four. I had also set myself a maximum well below his minimum and I mulled over the thought of searching for months ahead and always finding something nowhere near the standard I required. His car was stunning and although there were a few minor items to replace on the trim, everything else was perfect.

Private restoration is a labour of love and very costly when standards are

set high. The cost can never be recovered fully from a sale as there is always the market that determines the approximate price range for any given product. Even so, I had thought about all the V8s I had seen from £5,000 to £12,000 and none of them could have been improved to the standard that Bas had reached for anywhere near the price I was finally going to offer. The cost of viewing in terms of fuel and business lost time becomes quite relevant when viewing many cars, so this became a factor in determining my final agreement of Euro 21,000. Cheap at the price when I think of my dear wife's horse riding hobby!! So "buy now, enjoy now and pay later is my secondary motto".

Pre-production Development V8 has reappeared

Within three weeks of Rob Cook advertising Bronze Yellow 0095 for sale on the V8 Website, Mark Richardson contacted the V8 Registrar for information on the car. From the copy of the Factory production records maintained by the late Geoff Allen, our former V8 Historian and Archivist, we were able to provide information to help Mark check the vehicle and identify the car. In fact it is ADO75 95G the fifth of the Pre-production Development cars. These early cars were built as far as they could be as 1800 MGBGTs on the Factory production line, less engine and gearbox. They were then towed to Development Department to be completed as V8s for development purposes. It was first registered for the road in June 1973 although Geoff notes it "would probably have been

used on trade plates before then. It was finally dispatched from the Factory in September 1973 when Development had finished with it and then sold on to a Works apprentice, George Saxon".

Mark reports the car is in need of serious refurbishment work so he regards it as a five year restoration project!



Replacement RV8 windscreen glass

Brown & Gammons has a limited quantity of new replacement RV8 windscreens in Pilkington glass. They offer a fitting service and can hold a screen for you.

Mystery of V8 seen near Oslo solved

The MGBGT V8 seen by Jonathan and Vibeke Smith on the E18 just south of Oslo in July has been solved by Angus Munro who works in Stavanger. It belongs to Trond Jonassen, and Per Gerdrum before him, in Norway who has registered Brooklands Green 2747.



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Some additional material as filler if needed where photos cannot be cropped and resized to adjust copy to fit.