V8

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News of interesting MGV8s

Clive Wagerfield acquired Glacier White 0096, one of the five pre-production development V8s built in late 1972 from Norman Ward earlier this year. Clive has the original receipt for the car when it was bought by Norman for £875 direct from Factory in April 1976. His father, Robert Ward, was Plant Director at the Assembly Plant at the time when the car came up for release. Clive is actively researching the history of this car, particularly during its 4½ years as a test car at Abingdon including some speed testing in France. There is a reference to this V8 in the book 'MG by McComb'. Norman mentioned to Clive that the following excerpt was verified by both his father and the late Geoff Allen: "Although no figure for maximum speed in overdrive was quoted, a perfectly standard car had been taken to France for tests by Alec Hounslow, foreman of the development department workshop and one-time riding mechanic to Nuvolari. He got a genuine 222 kph maximum and realized with some astonishment that he was traveling at 138 mph." In the words of MG's former chief, John Thornley, "the V8 was a quite stupendous motor-car. From my own experience, when you were doing 100 mph in overdrive top and put your foot down on the accelerator, you got a push in the back. Now, that is motoring!"

V8s seen in showrooms and on forecourts

With a spate of interesting MGV8s appearing for sale, a new series of reports called "V8s seen in showrooms and forecourts" was launched on the V8 Website. Yet another interesting car seen for sale by Chris Butler, with ZT-T260V8 in XPower Grey 0468, was a low mileage supercharged ZT-T385V8SE in Ignition Blue at an interesting price at SMC in High Wycombe. At only £12,995 with only 15,083 miles it was an attractive buy which appeared to have already been reduced by £3,000 (18.75%) from £15,995! So clearly there was some room for negotiation there.

Two exceptionally low mileage RV8s have been up for sale over recent months. The first was advertised on the V8 Website and sold with 28 days. It was Caribbean Blue 0764, an immaculate and very original UK spec vehicle with an only 4,250 miles from new and on offer at £20,000. The car was originally bought from a Rover dealer in Mere in Wiltshire, registered in August 1994 as M 11 MGR and had always been garaged and only driven on dry days. All the original documents and tools were included. It had been stored on blocks and the engine inhibited as the owner had been away in Australia for many years. This exceptional car is believed to have been sold to a Danish MG enthusiast for close to the asking price. The second RV8 was another UK spec example in the popular colour Nightfire Red and registered as L 900 MGR with only an extraordinary 1,528 miles. It was spotted by David Biddle for sale in Aberdeenshire for £16,995 with Ewens of Cornhill in Banff, former MG Rover Dealers who had owned this vehicle since new. The car was in exceptional condition as it had been garaged all its life under a car cover.

Another RV8 was spotted for sale in Trondheim in Norway by Angus Munro, an RV8 enthusiast in Stavanger. Angus says "at 140,000kr, or offers (about £13,200) this would appear to be terrific value. Such a car would not have benefited from Veteran Car import taxes but would have been subject to the awful tax that is based upon vehicle weight, engine capacity and BHP (kw)".

Robert MacGillivray from Strathclyde has acquired an MGBGTV8 conversion (Island Blue 3169) from Mark Bennett. It is a good looking car first registered in 1976 and converted by Pete Dickinson in 1990 with a 4.6 litre V8 engine from DJE Services, a Cosworth gearbox and a Sebring bodykit.

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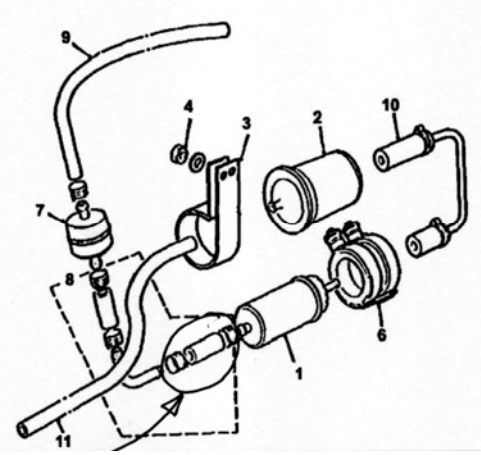
Safety check on RV8 fuel pipes

Max Porter was replacing the fuel filters on his RV8 recently and spotted a split in what appeared to be an "as-new" length of rubber fuel hose. This note highlights a useful safety check.

Next time you have the offside rear wheel off on your RV8, I suggest you closely inspect the short piece of rubber fuel hose which goes between the inlet of the fuel pump and the metal elbow, which then connects via another short piece of hose to the small, pre-pump fuel filter.



The short length of rubber hose is identified by the arrow head above. (Image: RV8 Parts Manual page J109. See item 8: a set of parts within the hatched box listed as ZKC5060 elbow assembly - pump to filter)

Generally the fuel hoses on my car look in as-new condition, but this short piece of hose was found to have longitudinal splits in it to approximately half the thickness of the hose, probably down to the reinforcing membrane. I think this is due to the fact that while the hose is a good fit to the front of the fuel pump, it is a tight fit on the end of the metal pipe elbow, causing fatigue to the rubber.

Should a leak occur here then the entire contents of the tank could be lost together with the risk of a fire and or breakdown on the road. I shall replace this section just to be safe.

Using stainless steel bolts on an MGBGTV8

Pete Jevons posted a query on the V8 Bulletin Board saying he was “just about to refit a new timing cover and water pump to the V8 but I note that the pump to block long bolts should be lubricated with a special Rover grease (Part No 608591). Speaking with Rimmer Bros today I was advised that this product is no longer available but "Copperease" is a good substitute”. Pete sought fellow members’ views.

Kai Knickmann responded saying the thread coating material “is a sealant rather than a grease in order to keep water and oil out of the thread which passes through the block. When working on my engine for the first time some years ago, I couldn't get hold of the specified sealant for the long bolts through the usual MG spare part sources anywhere, but finally found a tube of it at a local motor factor. That tube will probably keep me running for another twenty engine rebuilds now!”

Max Porter added that “Kai is correct in thinking that it is a sealant that is recommended for the threads of the four long water pump bolts. Rover recommends Loctite 572 for those bolts which is a low strength thread sealant. I used it on my RV8 and managed to get some from an engineers supplies store here in Norwich”.

Geoff Harris then noted “the problem with using stainless steel bolts is that the stainless steel, when in contact with carbon steel, becomes contaminated by the ferrous content of the carbon steel. The contamination of the stainless steel means that the anti-corrosive layer on the stainless steel is "breached" by the ferrous content and the stainless steel surface effectively becomes a black steel at the content area. Corrosion then occurs and the result is rusting and seizure between the carbon and stainless steels. In an ideal world there should be no contact between the two metals but practically we can at least help to protect the stainless steel protective oxide layer by introducing a third metal with lubricant between the carbon and mild steels - thus we use Coppaslip or similar, normally Moly based greases as the barrier”.

Robin Gell concluded the V8BB thread saying “I would strongly advise you against using stainless steel bolts in your aluminium engine. We think of stainless as corrosion free, but aluminium is not, and the aluminium corrosion you get when it is in contact with non stainless steel, which manifests itself as white oxide, is actually worsened with the use of stainless. It is the electrolysis which is produced with dissimilar metals which is the problem. Aluminium corrodes quicker in contact with stainless than it does in contact with non stainless. Stainless looks nice and shiny, giving good detailing, and won't rust in itself obviously, but really, normal steel or zinc coated fixings are more practical for longevity. After all, when you think that you can take a 30 year old vehicle apart without too much difficulty with the fixings, and these were put together with no lubrication at all, when you rebuild it and use copper grease, you will easily be able to maintain it over another 30 years!

Copper grease is a good anti-seize layer for assembly, but use it sparingly, not in great wads. It is actually possible to "hydraulic" blind tapped holes with wads of the stuff inside the hole, and crack something. Yes, the stuff which is specified for assembly of the V8 engine is a thread lubricant and sealant. Alternatives are available as suggested”.

RV8 breakdown flare

Kevin Doran posted a query on the V8 Bulletin Board seeking help finding a red breakdown flare originally fitted to the passenger legwell of his reimported RV8. Dr Gavin Bailey responded that they are supposed to be removed when Japan spec cars arrive in the UK as reimports. He believes they are not legal for use in the UK and in any case a flare will have an expiry date (much like yachting flares) and may well become unstable as they age. His advice is not to fit one although some RV8 enthusiasts seek them out to maintain originality.

Then Lindsay Caffin added that he recently brought his RV8 (Woodcote Green 1398) home to Australia after driving it for two years in Japan. He thought that the authorities would have removed the flare during the shipping process, but it is not always the case. He spoke with the shipping company who drive the cars from the ships to the docks in Australia and they remove them when the get to our shores. They pose a risk to starting bush fires if used in Australia. He took a flare out of his reimported Toyota and fired it and found it burned for about ten minutes with an intense red flame. It is lit by striking the end on a material that looks like a big match. The flares are used in Japan to warn drivers when you are forced to stop on a busy road. They burn so intensely that rain will not affect them. To preserve his RV8 flare Lindsay removed the internal powder stick, it was like a huge fire cracker and glued with some amazingly tough glue. The soft plastic case is intact and looks original. Ian Quarrington noted he has a red torch fitted in the legwell clip which is fine.

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Topping up the carburettor damper on an SU HIF

Topping up the dampers on the twin SU HIF carburettors fitted to an MGBGTV8 is a very worthwhile simple service routine which can make driving the MGBGTV8 so much more enjoyable. The benefits are a smoother pick up and acceleration and a less frisky engine at slow speeds. Enthusiasts not familiar with SU carburettors may not be aware of the need for regular damper topping-up or what to do, so this note is a straightforward guide.

Unscrew the black plastic cap at the top of each carburettor suction chamber and gently lift the piston and damper up to the top of their travel. Do not attempt to pull it right out. Fill the circular opening at the top of the suction chamber with engine oil (preferably 20-50 multigrade) until the oil level is just visible where there is a slight change in the internal diameter of the tube (marked above). Carefully push the damper down until the black cap contacts the top of the suction chamber. You may need to repeat the process to achieve the oil level noted above and then screw the black cap on firmly on the suction chamber.

The use of "gently" above is a caution when lifting the piston damper because care must be taken not to dislodge the damper retaining clip which is pressed into the top of the piston rod. So just lift the black cap very carefully and park it whilst you add oil.

A small traditional engineer's oil can with a moderately long flexible spout and convenient lever actuating a pump mounted in the handle is the ideal piece of equipment for leaning across from the wing and directing a gentle flow of oil into the damper. The pumping action on that type of oil can provides the ideal level of control for this operation.

This procedure is set out on page 58 of the MGBGTV8 Driver's Handbook AKD8423.

What is the function of the damper?

The basic function of the carburettor dashpot is to lift the large diameter piston in the bell shaped suction chamber for a given pressure differential across the upper and lower faces of the piston. Underneath the piston is the airstream from the aircleaners through the butterfly valve and on to the engine as air/fuel charge for combustion. The underside of the piston is connected to a tapered needle extending down into the jet below which governs an accurate supply of fuel into that airstream. That fuel mixes with air and passes through the butterfly valve and on to the engine.

Above the piston in the dashpot assembly there is also a guide rod and piston damper. The function of the guide rod is to guide the piston accurately within the bore of the suction chamber. The damper damps or moderates the movements of the piston in the suction chamber and consequently the changes in fuel supply governed by the needle in the jet.

The function of the damper is twofold: first it prevents the piston from following the fluctuations of the air flow at low engine speeds thereby keeping the piston steady and second, when the throttle is opened rapidly, it prevents the piston from rising rapidly in unison with the throttle opening. When the piston rises rapidly, the fuel/air mixture becomes weak because the air has less inertia than petrol. By damping the movement of the piston when the throttle is opened rapidly, the piston movement is retarded to cause a momentary enrichment of the fuel/air mixture which gives the engine a prompt pickup.

The damper operates in a column of oil. Failure to maintain an adequate oil level in the damper will cause carburettor piston flutter and adversely affect pickup and acceleration. So there is a need to top up the carburettor dampers regularly using the simple service routine described in this note.

A useful reference book with a very clear guide to tuning SU carburetors and full needle charts is a paperback with the title **Tuning SU Carburettors** published by Speedsport Motobooks.

RV8 handbrake modification

Hugh Boddington found the position of the handbrake grip in the off position on his RV8 was too high and uncomfortably close to the bottom edge of the steering wheel. Hugh decided the only way to lower the grip was to re-profile the handbrake lever. See RV8NOTE291 on the V8 website for a link to a detailed two page PDF document with a set of photos and description of this modification.

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The original cable from the Otter switch is removed from the righthand terminal of the cooling fans relay above and refixed to a new piggy back spade connector (blue above) which also carries the lead (black above) from the new override switch.

Fitting a cooling fans override switch to an MGBGTV8

Many V8 enthusiasts have longed to be able to turn on the cooling fans in anticipation of a heat build up as they reach slower traffic conditions. Here Victor Smith describes a simple modification to provide a useful override switch which is a straightforward job.

Over many years of enjoyable motoring with my V8 I had often thought it would be good if I could switch on the cooling fans when I sensed the approaching traffic conditions would cause a build up of heat in the engine bay. I wanted to be able to get an artificial gale blowing through the radiator matrix well before the Otter switch clicked in. Well at last the job has been done and my word it does feel better to be in control of the fans!

If you remove the spade connector from the Otter switch and touch it to earth on one of the studs on the thermostat housing, the fans come on. This provides the clue as to how the override can be carried out. If you trace that cable back (marked BO, black with an orange trace, on the wiring diagram in the Driver's Handbook AKD8423), you will find it crosses the offside rocker cover and ends up on a terminal on the cooling fans relay fitted to the offside inner wing next to the fuse box. So popping in some new wiring to a simple switch mounted near the driver which earths that connection will provide the override.

So first thread through some black 5 or 8 amp cable from a point near the ignition switch in the cockpit, through the rubber grommet in the bulkhead behind the brake master cylinder reservoir and along by the main wiring harness to the relay. Take care with that rubber grommet because ageing may well have removed much of the flexibility and it can easily fall out. Then locate a simple toggle switch within convenient reach of the driver. There are two useful locations - either mounted in a switch bracket fixed to the fixing screw on the top side of the radio speaker casing in the driver's legwell or alternatively in a convenient hole in a substantial metal bracket located just below the dashboard and to the right of the steering column. Then connect one of the switch terminals to a spade connector on a short length of cable with the other end fixed to a convenient earth nearby. The end of the black cable threaded through the rubber grommet earlier then has a spade connector fitted which is pushed onto the second switch terminal. The two cables are then tidied away.

Returning to the cooling fan relay, pop a new piggy back spade connector (blue in the photo above) on the end of the black cable threaded through earlier. Then pull off the spade connector of the cable (black with an orange trace) from the Otter switch from the relay terminal, locate the piggy back connector on that terminal and then push the Otter cable connector onto the additional terminal of the piggy back connector. You then need to tape the new black cable onto the main wiring loom with black insulating tape to tidy up the job.

Switch on the ignition and test - operating the toggle switch from the driving seat should turn the cooling fans on and off. Earthing the lead on the studs next to the Otter switch should cause the fans to come on. Run the engine up until the needle reaches around the 4pm position on the temperature gauge and wait for the fans to come on as the Otter switch clicks in. That will complete your tests.

Where can I get an MGBGTV8 bodyshell?

A posting on the V8 Bulletin Board a few weeks ago indicated a member wanting a new body for his Factory chrome bumper MGBGTV8 was having difficulties finding one or even getting a firm delivery date. The BMH body plant at Witney runs batches of the various bodyshells, including both Roadster and GT shells for a V8, but they are produced very much in batches and are not generally available off the BMH shelf. Some of the BMH approved specialists may have one in stock in primer but if not then you will need to order one. If you contact the plant they will try and help you and give you an indication of when the next MGBGTV8 shell run at the plant is scheduled.

The BMH website has useful information on the Heritage bodyshell programme and a news item that "you can now order your Heritage bodyshell direct from BMH at the plant either primed or in your choice of final paint colour". The new shells from the plant have the three stage rust proofing applied during production which is very good indeed. You can visit the BMH website at www.bmh-ltd.com/ which indicates the suggested retail prices for an MGBGTV8 shell are £6,250 (primed) and £9,250 (painted). BMH will supply direct to the retail customer or through

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the usual BMH approved suppliers channel.