

Comments from members on their V8 Register Feedback Survey 2010 forms

These comments were included on the feedback forms received from our survey. The comments in a blue font are the V8 Chairman's responses or clarifications to those queries.

V8 Website

- I think the website is way above average for a car club related site. The only shortcoming is that when the webmaster is away, the content stagnates. Since it is a voluntary job this is understandable but it might be better if there was a deputy who could not only monitor the site but also input new material or update existing matters. (Comment from a longstanding UK based V8 member with an RV8 – ref 088)

Comment

Finding another member with website maintenance skills is not easy but to avoid the problem you raise I took a small wireless enabled netbook with me to the Highlands in May earlier this year and did in fact make a number of postings on the V8 website in the evenings when I was back from the hills rehydrating in the bar. So it did not stagnate during the month I was up there. Maybe it was not as active as usual, but it was in fact maintained on a daily basis. Usually on average there are three new items a day posted on the Recent Changes log plus a great deal of general maintenance elsewhere, so the success we achieve in terms of volume and content is clear. So when there is either a quiet spell in terms of available material or the webmaster does not have much time, there appears to be less changing on the website. That even happens when I have consultancy work to do! So far as the V8BB is concerned there are two additional moderators - currently Ian Quarrington works alongside me and often spots and corrects poor spelling or grammar or he emails people to remind them to use capitals at the start of sentences and not just a lower case stream. Mike Russell is the other member with access and skills in V8BB maintenance. So the V8BB does not stagnate. You are very welcome to contribute material – a Memorable MG Route, a technical article, an RV8NOTE or a NEWS item – at any time to help keep the website active.

- The V8 Website is a useful adjunct to the Club magazine and other services and I appreciate the effort that is put into it by all involved. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 018)
- I think the quality and content of the V8 Website is excellent and commend all involved in the operation. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0118)
- Always remember the V8 Website is managed by true dedicated enthusiasts and in my opinion exceeds all expectations – thank you. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0128)
- When considering the purchase of an RV8 I was pleased to find masses of information about what to look for and avoid and also a selection of cars for sale. (Comment from a UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0198)
- I am very impressed with the V8 Website and am grateful to those who put in such a contribution in terms of both talent and sheer hard work. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0268)
- To have password access might encourage more people to register because why register if there is open access? (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0298)

Comment

This is an issue we have considered often but we have to balance our aim of providing a welcome to prospective members and visitors thinking of getting an MG V8, with a need not to make too many of our services available to those who want to freeload and take our services without joining the MG Car Club and paying a subscription. It is interesting that one unidentified respondent to the survey brazenly indicated he is not member of the MG Car Club but was happy to complete the survey saying how frequently he visited the website and V8BB and felt able to rate them! So as it appears the present level of freeloading is a small proportion of the visitors to our websites, I feel it is acceptable to continue our "open to all" policy given the clear benefits open access provides.

- Optically one could think about tidying up the V8 Website homepage a little. Maybe some of the items could be taken out and instead replaced by an index which one can click when looking for the topics such as the weather etc. (Comment from a longstanding Club member based in Germany with an RV8 - ref: 038)

Comment

For 2011 I am planning to carry out a refurbishment of the V8 website - both the design and functionality. The feedback from the survey will hopefully provide some useful guidelines. In terms of content the most recent addition is the RV8 Glovebox Notes series as we have had a number of queries by email and on the V8BB from RV8 enthusiasts who clearly need help in accessing the handbook and repair manual. The glovebox notes will at least provide the essentials. Over the last 15 months or so I have adopted the NEWS webpage format so a brief item in the homepage NEWS panel is linked to a NEWS webpage with more detail. The feedback from the survey indicates that was welcomed.

- More links with other sites please, like the Burlblers! (Comment from a UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 03308)

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- Your efforts in maintaining the V8 Website are very much appreciated. I think the mix you have is very good. (Comment from an Australian member with an RV8. – ref: 0418)
- A shortcut back to the homepage would be helpful for example. The only way back to the homepage from V8s for Sale” is the “GoBack” button. This is unsatisfactory. (Comment from a member with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 0458)

Comment

That is a fair point and will be picked up soon in the website review and updates.

- I consider the current access arrangements work very well from an interested RV8 owner’s viewpoint. I accept that only the webmaster could really confirm the degree of malicious or unwarranted access that may be attempted on the V8 website over time. (Comment from an Australian member with an MGZT260V8 and an RV8 – ref: 0428)

Comment

“Open to all” and password access is a topic which is inevitably a balance between wanting to show a welcome to non members but on the other hand there is sense of irritation with blatant free loading. So, as you saw, I included questions in the survey in two places – for the V8 Website and for the V8BB. Most responded Yes and No to open access and password control respectively, but not entirely so. I should add it is also a question for the Club website manager and my fellow V8 Committee member and now Club director, Ian Quarrington. Ian is chairing a subcommittee on Club IT and has highlighted open access and controlled member only areas as one issue to be reviewed.

- I always enjoy my daily log into this website. Everything is easy to find and invaluable to an RV8 owner. Many of my questions have been answered over the years by either going through the V8BB archive or by posting a new topic. (Comment from a UK based member with an RV8 - ref: 0468)
- Website content is great although the design looks cluttered. Given the increased use of larger screens it might be a thought to allow the webpage width to expand to fill the browser window which would make the site easier to read and navigate. (Comment from a UK based member with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 058)
- Just excellent! (Comment from a UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0528)
- I’ve never really used this type of forum before, but the help and friendly comments on the V8BB have been a godsend and it is really easy to use. The only slightly negative aspect is that it would be useful if you could buy several items from the shop in one go rather than a separate transaction each time. This caused me and your treasurer to resort to the old telephone backup on one occasion but it is a minor inconvenience and possibly needs a bit of IT to be joined up. (Comment from a new UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0538)

Comment

The online V8 Shop was set up many years ago and because funds were tight we had to go for a bespoke simple single transaction system without a shopping cart. The priority was to get a secure online payment system which would give our members confidence when using their card details online, so we changed to RBS Worldpay after an unacceptable initial experience with Paypal. We will include a review of the online V8 Shop and look at some of the convenient packages that are available and hopefully our modest funds will stretch to getting a new package incorporated in the V8 Website.

V8 Bulletin Board

- Is it possible to have photos incorporated into the posts? (Comment from a daily user of the V8BB who is an unidentified non member with an RV8 – ref: 028)

Comment

This would require major re-engineering of the bespoke V8BB system. I am not sure there is a large demand for photos on the V8BB. Where illustrations are useful, I have been in touch with the members who have posted contributions and in many cases prepared a separate note with photos and diagrams to illustrate the point. An added benefit then is that the note created remains as a reference on the V8 Website rather than being archived in the V8BB.

- I tend to read the V8BB postings on a more sporadic basis. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 0108)
- I was going to say and will that there is a very much “hands on” control of the whole V8BB site and with this in place it is an example to others and so very useful – thank you. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0128)
- It is a simple fact that the V8BB website gives support to enthusiasts who would struggle to find each other without this opportunity. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0268)

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- As the V8 Bulletin Board really caters for a relatively small number of interested readers – for example a significant influence for potential and actual RV8 owners and readers is limited to a considerable extent by the fact that only 2,000 RV8s were produced. I consider the current access arrangements work very well from an interested RV8 owner's viewpoint. I accept that only the webmaster could really confirm the degree of malicious or unwarranted access that may be attempted on the V8 website over time. (Comment from an Australian member with an MGZT260V8 and an RV8 – ref: 0428)

Comment

"Open to all" and password access is a topic which is inevitably a balance between wanting to show a welcome to non members but on the other hand there is sense of irritation with blatant free loading. So, as you saw, I included questions in the survey in two places – for the V8 Website and for the V8BB. Most responded Yes and No to open access and password control respectively, but not entirely so.

With the V8BB as a place where currently any visitor can place messages there are two issues – firstly moderating the V8BB to remove any grumping and flaring or other unwanted content, any unwanted self promotion and other postings that damage the quality of the V8BB, and secondly avoiding unwanted postings from spammers. Within six months of the launch of the V8BB several years ago, we had a serious spate of spam postings some of which were vile, so we introduced a password check before any postings could be made on the V8BB. That has been very effective since it was introduced as the password is a word most V8 enthusiasts would easily recall but fortunately not spammers. However we have had two enquiries from members asking for the key word!

- The Bulletin Board, although functional, lacks many advanced features that I would find useful. Implementing a new system doesn't mean the V8BB would become over technical or complicated. The www.series2club.info/forum/index.php and the www.m5board.com/vbulletin/e39-m5-c52-z8-discussion/ are examples of what can be achieved. The V8BB is still very slow to respond which sometimes results in double postings. (Comment from a UK based member with an MGBGTV8 – ref:0518)

Comment

Other bulletin board packages are under review so we will discuss your ideas with you. We will need to decide on priorities because revamping the V8 Website and a similar exercise on the V8BB will take considerable time and involve costs which have to be funded by the modest cash resources the volunteers generate from regalia, MGTV8s for adverts and workshop notes CD sales. Doing two major projects at the same time would stretch both manpower and cash resources very heavily.

- V8BB – one of the most interesting aspects. I use it daily. (Comment from a UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0528)
- The help from the V8BB has been fantastic and I love reading the projects that different people are working on. (Comment from a new UK based member with an RV8 - ref: 0538)

V8 Grapevine

- Experienced difficulty in the V8 Grapevine area of the website. Why does it need to be so complicated to log in? (Comment from a registered UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0018)

Comment

The approach we have had since the V8 Register was launched in 1978 is to be creative in producing information and support which fellow members of the V8 Register would feel were useful services. So in the early days we launched a series of V8NOTES (and later an RV8NOTES series) and also produced a periodic newsletter, both in printed book formats. They involved considerable cost and time to produce and distribute. When the internet became an established means of providing information I created a website and it was launched in May 2002. The benefits were enormous in terms of distributing information and at the initial stage we decided to run the website on an "open to all" basis as it would offer a welcome to prospective members and be a convenience for V8 Register members as they would not have to log in. When the V8BB was launched to expand the services and enable V8 enthusiasts to communicate through a bulletin board, we decided to continue on an "open to all" basis. At that time many other BBs or forums did require at least registration and then a log in system for each visit to gain access to view and/or post messages. There was some debate of the open to all approach at that stage for both the V8BB and V8 website - on the one hand some felt the quality and range of the information and services available should be restricted so it was clearly a Club membership benefit and others felt the open to all approach still had greater benefit in terms of the welcome and convenience. But the open to all policy was continued.

When we came to develop an upgraded offline V8 database to replace an ageing system, rather than just look at the project as a process based project, we looked at it with an eye on how the project could incorporate features which would add interesting and useful features for V8 enthusiasts generally and V8 Register members in particular. So several search options using the database were felt to be useful – particularly an ability to search an online database

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for MG V8 cars and a search for fellow members' contacts in an area, most likely in the area near the member making the search. We also felt that adding the registration and registration update facilities was a sensible thing to have there and we also felt that incorporating the copy of the Factory MGBGTV8 production records so online searches could be made was a useful option.

The V8 Grapevine search options are:

Search for an MG V8

This is available on an open to all basis, so anyone - Club member or non-member - can look up basic details of an MG V8 and see what records we have available.

Register an MG V8 with the V8 Register Update your existing registration with the V8 Register

These are open to all as we want to encourage people to join the V8 Register and MG Car Club, so avoiding any hurdles is clearly a good idea.

Full search for an MG V8

With the detailed search of the V8 database we felt it was entirely reasonable that this should be a "member only" service. So we had to devise an access system.

Search for a member or the members in your area

Again we felt that as a members' motor club, access to fellow members' contacts should be restricted to fellow members.

Search our factory production records

We took the view here that this was a service using a valuable resource and it was entirely reasonable that a charge should be made.

When you are involved in managing a database with personal data you have two duties - first a duty of common courtesy that the data will be handled as our members would wish (so we have always had a question on the registration form since 1978 regarding a member's wishes for the release of data to fellow members) but also we have to comply with the provisions and requirements of the Data Protection Act in terms of the safe handling of personal data. So in designing the search options for the V8 Grapevine where limited member data would be released to fellow members, we had to devise a system which would enable us to meet what we felt would meet the data handling requirements. This was done in three ways:

Separate offline and online database systems with an uploading link

By keeping all the data offline and having a system which only uploaded limited data (name, car details, telephone number and county but not address) and having a separate online database which could be accessed for the car and member search options, we believed we could meet our data handling obligations.

Search option access controls

Clearly to comply with members' wishes over data release - limited personal data made available to fellow members - some form of access control was necessary. The budget for creating these database systems was modest as it had to come from the funds the Register generates from modest trading activities to cover basic admin and the website maintenance costs, so we went for a simple system which would involve minimal administrative workload. So we devised a system which uses three pieces of data in a member's registration which should be relatively easy to remember - postcode VIN and Club membership number. We also have coded in a control that only members who have said "Yes" to the release of their limited data to fellow members may have access to fellow members' data. That principle of reciprocity seems entirely reasonable. The access control system is not foolproof but within our budget it is the best and simplest we could devise.

Data released

To try and release as much data as possible, information on cars is available on all searches but against records where the registrant has not agreed "Yes" to the release of data, the personal details are simply stated as "Withheld". So this complies with those members' wishes.

I have had no comments from other members that the access system is complicated. What particular aspect of the log in process is complicated when all you need to type in is your postcode VIN and Club membership number?

- I feel the V8 Grapevine should be available more than the present four visits per 3 months interval. (Comments from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0218)

Comment

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A further access control had to be introduced to stop anyone making **multiple V8 Grapevine member contacts searches** to obtain large amounts of data to create their own database for third party use. I think most members would want that control as many of us are pestered by cold calls from people who seem to have obtained our telephone number. So with the member only search option for fellow members' contacts, there is a limit on the number of searches you can make in any 3 months period. This is because we have seen from a control system included in the V8 Grapevine package that a repeated search using the online search facilities has been attempted by at least one person if not several. So unfortunately the control over the number of visits is clearly necessary.

- I have not been able to get into the V8 Grapevine. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0298)

Comment

You mentioned you have not been able to access the V8 Grapevine so I have checked the V8 Database and see we had **no postcode** for you and **the box for "the release of limited data to fellow members" was "No" by default**. So that means I had not received a "Yes" on your registration form. For your personal access code there are three parts - **postcode, VIN and Club membership number** plus there has to be a DPA = **Yes** in that data field. Without those four pieces of data your access code will not work. So I have added your postcode to the database and should be pleased if you could let me know whether you agree to limited data being released to fellow V8 Register members? If you agree to "Yes" then I will update the database and upload that item to the online system and then the access code will work. BTW there are three reasons for this - first common courtesy, second the Data Protection Act and third we believe access to fellow members' contacts should only be available to members who have themselves agreed to their data being available - the principle of fair reciprocity.

- The V8 Grapevine is very useful – as an overseas (West Australia) member I appreciate the contact facility and promote it to other V8 owners. (Comment from an RV8 member in West Australia – ref: 0378)

Workshop notes

- It would be nice to have workshop notes in hard book format to refer to in the workshop – never a computer in such places. (Comment from a UK member with an MGBGTV8 who had joined in the last 12 months – ref: 0048)

Comment

With 418 V8NOTES in 12 volumes and 335 RV8NOTES in 9 volumes the most economical production and distribution system is to supply the notes in PDF format on a CD. We have supplied approaching 700 CDs. Members wishing to have the notes in a hard book format can very easily take their CD to a local print shop, like KallKwik, and have the notes printed in a double sided format and then spiral bound with plastic facings to resist oil in the workshop. The logistics of minimum print runs, the serious amounts of cash resources needed to fund those runs, the space needed to store boxes of books and the workload in mailing out books is not something a volunteer organisation with modest means can take on. Finally based on the costings for the modest 60 page MGV8 Buying Guide I prepared for the V8 Register and MG Car Club, the cost of a nine volume set of books might easily be over £70 or £80 compared with the more modestly priced CD.

- As an RV8 owner I would suggest that the information has become better as more true enthusiasts buy that model. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0128)
- The two Workshop Notes series – what more can I say, a great service from a great Register! I heard at least one survey respondent was disappointed with the notes – what more does he want? (Comment from a UK based member with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 0508)

MGLive! – the MG Car Club's principal annual meeting at Silverstone

- The V8 Register facilities at MGLive! 2010 were disappointing compared with previous years and it is hoped that they will improve again in 2011. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0088)

Comment

We had two serious constraints on the V8 Register activities at MGLive! in 2010. First we could not have our usual area alongside the bridge over the Club Straight because the roadway through that area was needed for a temporary access to the paddock assembly area for the competition cars. Instead we were located as near as possible, but that location did not have the features which help the usual V8 Gathering be a success. Second we were given a clear warning that the scale of the non-profit catering operations we had carried out in previous years had been noticed by traders who were appointed caterers at Silverstone. They were not happy as they pay large exclusive franchise fees to Silverstone Circuit and they saw the scale of those activities as taking their trade. So we scaled back to a modest "bring and cook your own BBQ". Another factor was the team of volunteer cooks that Clive Wheatley has had working hard through the day preparing the V8BBQ and cooking on the night in previous years was not able to do so in 2010 because the health of one of their team. These constraints were mentioned to many members at the event and beforehand too by Clive who I feel sure would have mentioned this to you on one of your contacts with his workshops.

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We have not finalised our **plans for 2011** but we may need to consider alternatives for the Saturday evening - either joining the Main Club dinner at the Circuit or going out to a local pub in a nearby village for a V8 Supper. By way of research I went out to a pub between Sulgrave and Brackley on the Saturday evening during MGLive! 2010 which had been recommended to me and found they do a splendid supper which I felt was good value - and they have a private room which can cater for 40 plus diners. So that is an option - it means our plans will not be weather dependent as they are with a V8BBQ at Silverstone and we will not have the heavy burden of the catering logistics at Silverstone. Again the difficulty we have is our previous success tends to make a rod for our own backs as the fireside member who comes to Silverstone tends to expect a high standard each year as though it was being put on by Waitrose and not a small group of hard working volunteers.

- Visiting the V8 Tent at MGLive! this year (2010) I thought it looked a bit empty and apart from Clive Wheatley, as an overseas visitor I did not feel the same welcome as I received from other Registers in the Main Club Building. (Comment from an Australian member with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 0438)

Comment

I am sorry to hear you felt the welcome in the V8 Marquee at MGLive! 2010 was not as good as you felt was provided by other registers in the Main Club marquee. We have had a V8 Marquee at each of the Club's Silverstone meetings for more than 20 years now and usually the convivial atmosphere and facilities we have there provide a welcome that most V8 enthusiasts are pleased to enjoy. We have always felt it is difficult to provide that type of atmosphere V8 enthusiasts enjoy on a stand in a main marquee. In previous years many overseas visitors have enjoyed being in a marquee with fellow V8 enthusiasts so I wonder whether your visit was at a quiet time on one of the days? We had a V8 Regalia stall in the V8 Marquee and Bryan Ditchman was there as well with his parts advice along with Clive Wheatley and his team. During much of the day many MGV8s are parked up near the V8 Marquee and during the morning and at lunchtime many members had refreshments near the marquee. We also had a roster so V8 Committee members were alongside the V8 Marquee throughout the day. When I went to the European Event of the Year in Switzerland a few years ago as a visitor, I made a point of meeting up with fellow V8 enthusiasts and talking with them over the few days I was there, and of course many other MG friends too. That event was a tour so people were able to meet up in the cafe they had established in a marquee on the EEOY parking area which acted as a base for the event.

V8 Regalia

- Regalia is a difficult area but I for one would be prepared to pay more for better quality clothing. The current offerings are a bit downmarket and don't wear well. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0088)

Comment

As for V8 Regalia we all know it's the "graveyard" role on the V8 Committee as it involves a heavy workload in packaging and making trips to the local post office. Personally I am in favour of contracting it out to an established online clothing supplier as the MGOT team does. The online catalogue retailer offers a club service with logo'd garments. We are reviewing all options for 2011. As always any volunteers for the V8 Regalia role will be very welcome.

Services and support from the V8 Register

- As always, an object lesson to other registers. (Comment from a longstanding UK based member with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 0108)
- When looking to purchase an RV8 I scrutinised the internet for information and found the V8 Register was by far the most information and continues to be so. This was the deciding factor for my joining the MG Car Club. (Comment from a UK based member for less than four years – ref: 0278)

Services and support from the MG Car Club and Club Office

- Not too efficient at replying to emails. (Comments from a longstanding UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0218)

General comments from the survey forms

- I have been a member of the MG Car Club since around 1963 with my 1962 MGA MkII at that time followed by my 1954 MG TF 1250 and later, since 1999, my 1972 MGBGT and finally since 2008 an RV8. (Comment from a Swiss V8 enthusiast with an RV8 – ref 0098)
- Some scores are low as I have owned my car for 34 years and am not interested in purchasing another one as I am totally satisfied with what I have. Also living in the USA some things do not apply. (Comment from a longstanding member in the USA with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 0038)

Safety Fast!

- I find the Club magazine, whilst a useful source of tips for my MGZT and RV8, reads a bit like an old boys' club. Another club of which I am a member has a magazine which is an easier read but has less, almost no, articles on the RV8! (Comment from a new UK based member with an RV8 – ref: 0538)

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MG Car Club and the V8 Register

- I'm a member of the MG Car Club for two main reasons – MGLive! at Silverstone and membership of the V8 Register!
(Comment from a UK based member with an MGBGTV8 – ref: 0508)

Victor Smith
V8 Chairman