V8

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V8 30th Anniversary

Highlights of the week of anniversary events were lunch at the White Horse pub in Woolstone followed by a walk on the Berkshire Downs nearby, a visit to Rousham House in Oxfordshire with a guided tour of the house, a personal tour with Ian Quarrington of the city centre in Cambridge, a tour of the independent Hook Norton brewery and finally the V8 Dinner at Sywell Aerodrome.

The **V8 Dinner** for seventy members and their guests at the art deco clubhouse at Sywell Aerodrome was a lively evening with the eight traditional four minute toasts. They included toasts from our guests John Day, entertaining members with his spirited toast to the "first motion shaft", and John James making a well received toast to the Club. Then Alan Kingwell (photo above with his wife Anne), a founder member of the V8 Register back in 1978, was in his usual good form with a colourful speech before proposing the final toast to the "parts downunder". So our many members in Australia and New Zealand were not forgotten. The Geoff Allen Cup was awarded to Steve James for his enthusiasm and hard work in developing the new offline and online V8 Database system to be launched as the V8 Grapevine in September this year. The evening was a splendid conclusion to the anniversary week and a convivial evening before the Club's annual International MG Meeting at Silverstone the following day.

V8 Gathering at Silverstone

Meeting up at the Club's major annual event is always an attraction for many V8 enthusiasts. This year the prospect of good weather attracted over a hundred V8s to park up alongside the V8 Marquee, with many more parked around the circuit. The V8BBQ on Saturday evening was very popular when Clive Wheatley's team of volunteer cooks served over ninety suppers. The diners narrowly missed a monumental storm which passed over Towcester, a few miles to the north, but mercifully the evening at Silverstone was warm and dry. On Sunday the V8 AGM was held at lunchtime when Al Barnett retired at the end of his term as V8 Chairman and the good attendance of V8 members elected a new committee for the coming year. The new committee is Dr Gavin Bailey, John Bolt, Jim Gibson, Howard Gosling, Ian Quarrington, Mike Russell, Victor Smith and Clive Wheatley.

BMH Body Plant tour

Later a tour of the BMH Body Plant at Witney was well timed as V8 members were able to see MGB bodies being assembled and finished by the skilled workforce. The V8 party was treated to a demonstration of an MGB wing being put together. For many it is a surprise there are so many parts in a wing and the skill that goes into assembling and hand finishing the part. Certainly it leads to a better appreciation of the value for money BMH panels and parts represent.

A really encouraging sight at the plant is two young new recruits who are learning the special handcrafting skills needed for some of the essential assembly and finishing work on panels and parts produced by BMH. John Yea, the plant director and V8 enthusiast, greeted the V8 Register tour party and

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it was clear that both John and the workforce like MG enthusiasts visiting the plant so they can see the good work and enthusiasm involved in producing very good quality replacement parts for our cars. The V8 Roadster shells in the finishing bay were of particular interest as they were for V8 conversions with reinforced inner wing cut-outs for exhaust manifolds.

V8 Track Day in September

There is a full entry of V8s and RV8s for the dedicated V8 track day sessions at the MGoT event at Castle Combe on Monday 8th September with some V8 enthusiasts joining the general sessions too. The Castle Combe circuit is an attractive place and easy to reach just northwest of Chippenham near Bath and close to the M4. Fellow V8 enthusiasts will be very welcome as spectators so do come along. One enthusiast who will be on the track with his V8 is Kai Knickmann. His car has been fitted with a balanced 3.9 engine which Kai finds very good, although he has to treat the gearbox with some care. Full details of the track day and location maps are on the V8 website – just click the track day link on the homepage.

V8s and RV8s for sale

Despite the gloom over rapidly rising fuel costs and the economy, the level of activity seen over recent months with sales of V8s and RV8s has been brisk compared with previous summer seasons. RV8 sales have been particularly active with some examples selling within a week on the V8 website. To help prospective purchasers we will be launching shortly two useful articles on what to look for when buying a V8 and an RV8. They will be part of the successful "How to buy" series that has been running in Safety Fast! over recent months. There will also be a general note as a guide on what to look for and the checks to make when buying any car. Another article explaining tyre sidewall markings has been released recently which will help you choose the right replacement tyres for your MG and spot the age marking too.

Registrations of ZT260V8s continue to come in too – we now have just under 60 registered – and also a number of SVs. The most recent SV registration was from RV8 owner David Reid in Edinburgh, who registered a very attractive SV-R (Red Hot Kinetic 0129) he has acquired. The car was at Silverstone this year alongside the V8 Marquee with a collection of SVs and ZT260V8s.

VED and excise duty rises

The stealth VED tax changes and the deferred 2p per litre excise duty increase on fuel have become major concerns for motorists as the full implications have become more widely recognised. They were spotted by Dr Gavin Bailey in early April and a useful thread developed on the V8 Bulletin Board. The retrospective VED increases will hit V8 enthusiasts with MGZT260V8 and SV models that have registered since March 2001. A number of these models have been registered in that period and very recently the liquidator of MG Sport and Racing has been auctioning off some unregistered MG SVs. Also fellow MG enthusiasts with other MG models registered in that period will be caught too.

A motion to end those tax increases was debated in Parliament in early July but defeated. It seems that behind the scenes rebel Labour MPs were given assurances from the whips that "the matter would be sorted". But a V8 member noted "why not do it now, and get some credit for it rather than leave it up in the air until the autumn budget statement?

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Pertronix electronic ignition conversion on a V8

Gordon Hesketh-Jones (Harvest Gold 1904) from Cornwall has clocked up more than 400,000 miles in his MGBGTV8 so has had a higher maintenance workload than many fellow V8 enthusiasts. He also uses his V8 for touring in Europe so reliability is a key concern for him and one area is the reliability of his ignition system. As an update on his earlier V8NOTES on this topic, Gordon reports his experience with fitting a Pertronix electronic ignition system.

I first wrote about the distributors for the MGBGTV8 in V8NOTE282 in March 2003 followed by V8NOTE317 in December 2004 and then in V8NOTE365 (February 2007) reviewed the various options for converting to electronic ignition thus doing away with the increasingly unreliable contact breakers. In the latter note I mentioned how dreadful the trace of both of my Holden-rebuilt distributors with conventional contact breakers looked on a Krypton analysis machine, but did not have the opportunity to compare the traces of the conventional distributor with the Pertronix replacement I had fitted to my V8 until the mini-disasters on a trip around France in January 2008.

I returned from France with a conventional distributor unit in situ and then went up to see Tim Kelly - the MG specialist near Truro - for the Pertronix unit to be re-fitted. I made a point of taking my camera with me so I could record the traces on his Krypton screen. Incidentally, the normal MoT station will no longer have a Krypton-type ignition analyser as all modern cars have had electronic ignition as standard since 1993, so the Mot stations now focus simply on analysing the exhaust gas.

The first photo of the Krypton screen shows the trace from a distributor fitted with the standard points in place. Plug No 1 is at the top of the screen, then the rest coming down the screen in firing order. On the horizontal scale it can be seen that there is a variation from 2.92 to 3.55 of the actual firing point. Note: this scale does not relate to 4° before top dead centre, it is a machine scale! The centre-line of the two extremes would be at 3.235, so the two worst cases represent variations in firing of a horrifying plus or minus 9.7%.

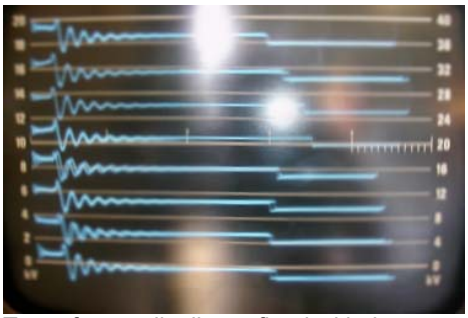
Engine produced a 10% improvement in mpg and was much smoother

The electronic unit takes away the variations caused by wear on pinion and cam of the distributor shaft and we no longer have to worry about contact wear or contact bounce. The engine visibly and audibly immediately runs far more smoothly when the electronic unit is working, with the further benefit that on our 721 mile round trip to Silverstone (550 miles of dual-carriageway and the rest in country lanes or stop-start motoring) we averaged 32.2 mpg - an absolute boon in these days of expensive petrol, and an improvement of around 3mpg or 10% on the figures achieved in our various long continental trips in recent years.

Incidentally we had a shock-horror situation when we first reinstalled the Pertronix kit - the engine turned over but would not start! It turned out that the brass contact strip had come off the rotor arm. Thank goodness it happened at Tim Kelly's place and not halfway down an Alp in France - even though I obviously carry spares.

It can be seen from the Krypton traces alongside that our standard coils give out approximately 8,000 volts but these Pertronix units produce a big fat 40,000 spark leading to greatly improved combustion, more power and better running.

This is V8NOTE379 released in June 2008. Copies of the V8NOTES mentioned in the article are available on the V8 website.



Trace from a distributor fitted with the standard points in place. On the horizontal scale it can be seen that there is a variation from 2.92 to 3.55 of the actual firing point.

Trace from a Pertronix distributor shows a very different picture with all the firing points totally identical. The engine visibly and audibly immediately runs far more smoothly when the electronic unit is working.

The Pertronix Ignitor system is a compact and neat installation fitting entirely within the distributor. No external box of electronics is required, but you do have to bring a 12v ignition feed wire (by-passing the ballast resistor) to the unit. The high voltage coils also require a full 12v supply.

Pertronix Igniters and High Voltage Coils

This is an American kit using the Hall effect principle that has been in production for a wide range of vehicles for nearly twenty years. Information on their website is a bit sparse but as I understand it they provide a circular plate into which they have mounted eight magnets, with the Hall effect device contained in an epoxy moulding which also fits inside the distributor cap - so no external box is needed. Their early products were for use on VWs then on Porsches so it is no surprise to find that their UK distributor for the 8-cylinder Pertronix Ignitors is Maxted-Page & Prill Limited of Halstead some 17 to 18 miles from Chelmsford, tel 01787 476338 (ask for Andy, also on 01787 477749) who are Porsche specialists - including racing success at the Le Mans Classic event.
Their model number for the MGBGTV8 is LU181 is priced at £79.95 plus postage plus VAT. Their high-voltage coils work out to £66 plus postage plus VAT and are designed for use with the Ignitor system. (Pricing information as at July 2008)

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Fitting dual petrol pumps to a V8

Gordon Hesketh-Jones (Harvest Gold 1904) from Cornwall uses his V8 for touring in Europe so reliability is a key concern for him and one area is the reliability of his SU fuel pumps. Here Gordon explains how he has added an additional fuel pump as a standby should the other one fail.

I have suffered four failures of the SU-Burlen petrol pump over a five year period - two of these failures whilst touring abroad when replacement on the side of the road is both inconvenient and difficult. So finally I decided to do the obvious thing - to plumb my spare pump into the fuel system rather than have it passively lying idle in my on-board spares kit. The additional pump is wired in so that it can be switched in should the principal pump fail.

To be fair to SU-Burlen, I have read in various online chatrooms how modern fuels are attacking rubber seals and/or aluminium, and we have to remember that BMW had to cope with many engine failures some ten or twelve years ago when their aluminium parts were damaged by the high sulphur content in UK petrol. So, I am not too critical of SU-Burlen and they did send me two new pumps free of charge.

Probably the first task is to decide where the second fuel pump is to be located, and to look at how the extra pipes will run. In my case, many years ago I replaced my twin 6 volt batteries with a single 12 volt battery located in the nearside battery box so I was then able to line the offside former battery box with ¾" marine plywood so that I could use it for carrying my spares. The rear-facing back of this box was an easy choice for me, but other alternatives would be in the unused part of the battery frame, or projecting inside the boot by making up a bracket as used on the rubber bumper MGBs and V8s. The materials to be used would be approximately 30" of fabric reinforced 12mm rubber pipe, some 12mm tee pieces and approximately 18" of the thin clear plastic pipe (and a Tee piece) as used on windscreen washers. All of these should be available at your local MG dealer or major motor accessories chains such as Brown Bros and Halfords.

Normal Jubilee clips (left) will not work because when you use the small diameter versions they assume an oval shape when tightened and petrol will seep out no matter how tight they are made. The unfortunate deformation can be seen quite clearly. The correct clips (right) for fuel lines have the bolt and captive nut at the side and do stay correctly circular.

So finally I decided to do the obvious thing - to plumb my spare pump into the fuel system rather than have it passively lying idle in my on-board spares kit

The most important parts are the correct type of hose clips. Normal Jubilee clips will not work because when you use the small diameter versions they assume an oval shape when tightened and petrol will seep out no matter how tight they are made - the photo show a leak from a Jubilee clip. The other photo shows the unfortunate deformation of a Jubilee clip quite clearly. The correct clips for fuel lines have the bolt and captive nut at the side and do stay correctly circular. I bought the correct mild steel clips from our local MG dealer for 50p each and later some spare stainless steel versions at Silverstone for 80p each.

The next decision relates to just where you will locate the switch to change over from one pump to the other. If you are feeling pessimistic then the switch needs to be on or under the dashboard for easy and quick access, but if (like me) you feel that by simply installing the second pump the immutable law of S.O.D. will apply and you will never have another failure, then the switch can be in the boot. The switch itself needs of course to be a changeover switch, with three terminals ON-OFF-ON. None of the standard switches on MGs conform to this pattern but Demon Tweeks list the LMA plastic version at £4.18 or the much better sealed version from Trillogy at £21.50. Locating the switch in the nearside channel of the boot means that you can easily use the existing 1 ½" diameter hole in the side of the boot for the cable run. You can even opt not to drill a hole for mounting the switch so as to avoid knocking or damaging it with luggage or tools, and bury it instead under the carpet, obviously insulating the terminal first.

Once you have thought through the job properly, it is simply a matter of spending a few hours on your back under the car, remembering to use good quality pipe and hose clips, and making sure that the rubber pipe runs are not too long so that they can create sharp bends and petrol flow restriction as they settle in. Remember too the standard trick when working on the MGB fuel lines - slacken off the nut holding the pipe into the tank union by approximately three quarters of a turn. This will allow some air in the pipe to create an air lock. Certainly some petrol will come out of the rest of the pipe when you undo it at the original pump, but it will be less than a cupful. Don't forget to re-tighten this nut when you have finished Cable ties were used to make sure that the rubber pipes stay in place properly.

This is V8NOTE380 released in June 2008. (Photos: Gordon Hesketh-Jones)