

# REGISTER UPDATES

## V8

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Looking back on our 30<sup>th</sup> year, the V8 Register continues to thrive. The V8 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner in June and the V8 Yorkshire Tour in October were both popular social events. The V8 Website is now well established as a popular information and news source for many V8 enthusiasts with a flow of new workshop notes, news of spares availability and event reports. Visitors for 2008 were up 8% at over 112,000 compared with 103,335 in 2007 and running at over 300 a day. These are "unique hits" which ignore repeat hits from the same visitor in any day. The gross hits are over three times greater. The V8 Bulletin Board continues to thrive with a flow of good quality postings with members' queries and responses, many with useful maintenance and spares advice. The two workshop notes series for the V8 and RV8 are both thriving – the V8NOTES series has nearly reached 400 notes and the RV8NOTES at almost 300. So with a total of 700 contributed by fellow members over the years, that is a wonderful technical support resource for current and future MG V8 enthusiasts.

### V8 Website features

One V8 Website feature is the prompt review of the annual Budget statement in March highlighting the key features for classic car enthusiasts – the road tax and fuel duty

changes. The increases announced in the Budget 2008 caused real concern because whilst the pre-2001 VED rates increased by £5, with the rate for V8 engined MGs rising to £185, severe increases in the various CO2 bands were announced for 2001-2006 cars. The retrospective aspect of the changes was spotted rapidly by Dr Gavin Bailey and discussed on the V8 Bulletin Board well ahead of the mainstream press picking up on the adverse features of those heavy tax increases. The clear impact of would be raised motoring costs of many less well off motorists running those older cars on a tight motoring budget. Amongst their number are many classic car enthusiasts with large engined cars – for example members with MGZT260V8 and MGSV models. The other change was a 2p/litre increase in fuel duty planned for October 2008. In November a review of the Pre-Budget Report 2008 noted a welcome reprieve with reduced increases in VED rates for 2001-2006 cars but sadly a weasel word announcement on fuel duty changes. The Chancellor said "the reduction in VAT lowers the amount of tax paid on motor fuel. In addition, petrol prices have come down by 7 pence a litre last month alone. So I will offset the VAT reduction by increasing the duty by an amount which should keep the overall cost to consumers the same this year. Of course, if we see a stronger economy and increased tax revenues, we will review whether we need to take these tax raising measures." Well if you believe he would reduce them you must believe in fairies!

### Proposals of concern to classic car enthusiasts

Two reported announcements towards the end of the year caused concern – firstly

press reports of a misleading Department of Transport press conference of graduated fixed penalties for speeding offences and then proposals to encourage the scrapping of older cars with a "cash for old cars" scheme. The power to have graduated fixed penalties was contained in the Road Safety Act 2006, but has not been implemented. This proposal for its implementation was contained in a lengthy consultation paper which was launched at the recent press conference. So these measures were proposals for consultation and are not yet in force and will not be for some time. They may be introduced in a different form depending on how much notice they take of their consultees. It seems the minister was being disingenuous because many believe he is perfectly well aware of the true situation, but preferred to go for a bigger impact by not explaining the full picture. We do have to remember we are dealing with politicians here. The cash for old cars initiative is said to be targeted at 17 to 18 year old cars, the age at which cars in the UK probably tend finally to drop out of everyday use and are either scrapped or in a relatively few cases preserved and restored as a hobby car. So the proposals would probably be doing no more than slightly accelerating the natural wastage on economic grounds by introducing another economic factor. You would not expect to see specialist cars like classic MGs being in the slightest affected by what is bound to be a fairly small incentive. The main fear of classic car enthusiasts is whether there would be any compulsion to scrap old cars and that is not the case, although there are concerns that the Select Committee paper does make clear they see VED rate banding as very much a part of environmental policy.