

Vehicle mileage checks

Seller's mileage indications

With a classic MG, the maintenance record is important but the accuracy of the mileage is also of interest to a prospective buyer, particularly if one of the key selling features is a low mileage. This is often the case with reimported RV8s. Unfortunately this gives any unscrupulous trader or private seller an incentive to falsify mileage readings. If you buy a car with a falsified mileage, you will not only pay over the odds but you will have been misled and quite likely not have the maintenance history. So consider your purchase very carefully if a seller, particularly a trader, is not prepared to guarantee the mileage of the car.

Dealers are legally obliged to "take all reasonable precautions" and "exercise all due diligence" to ensure that they do not sell you a car that has been "clocked." This generally means looking at sale and servicing records, and if they are not the supplier of the vehicle, should include contacting prior keepers to establish an audit trail. They may do this themselves or use a service like the national mileage register. If the seller says the mileage has been verified, ask to see proof. If you see a vehicle which has a disclaimer sticker on or near the odometer, exercise particular caution – it will be difficult to argue that the odometer reading shown was either "a false description" or part of the description of the vehicle. On the other hand, if a dealer knows that a mileage reading is wrong, and by roughly how much, they are obliged to tell you. If you decide that mileage is not important to you, and you realise that the vehicle may have covered a significantly greater mileage, then this should be reflected in the price you pay.

Checking the mileage

Buyers can check the mileage in two ways – examining the mileage records shown in the seller's car history file and buying a vehicle data check which includes a mileage check.

A careful examination of a good history file with the car should enable a buyer to trace back through the annual MOT certificates and service invoices to see the

gradual progression of the accumulated mileage on the car. In the relatively rare cases where a replacement odometer has been fitted, a responsible trader carrying out the work will state on the service invoice what the mileages were on both the old and replacement units when the work was completed. That will enable the owner to maintain a good record which will be available for inspection at subsequent sale of the car.

Buying a vehicle data check which includes a mileage check with the national mileage register from one of the leading providers – the AA, Autocheck, eBay, Experian, HPI, Vehicle Check (Autotrader) or the RAC – can provide a reassuring mileage report. But there are some cases where no vehicle provenance check is able to help. History prior to import and odometer changes are two key cases where providers can have difficulties providing data.

Data check providers have to be very cautious with odometer changes – some on vehicle imports with changes from kph to mph or others where a replacement for a faulty unit has been necessary, but it may not always be so as odometer changes can be used to disguise more sinister activities. So fairly rigorous rules are imposed by the database manager in running the mileage register and, whilst they try and resolve any queries over mileages promptly, sometimes they can take several weeks. Buyers considering an imported MG or one with a replacement odometer need to be aware a mileage check may not be straightforward and may suffer delay.

Keeping the original odometer with reimported cars

Where an MG has been reimported and has had the original odometer, calibrated in kilometers, changed to one calibrated in miles for registration in the UK, a buyer will naturally want to establish the true aggregate mileage. This applies to reimported MG RV8s and MGFs and TFs. Usually the specialist trader preparing the car for registration in the UK will retain the

original odometer with the car to provide reassurance for the buyer as to the claims made for the overseas mileage. The buyer will want to retain the original odometer as part of the history file for the car as future buyers will want to see it as part of their prudent mileage checks.

Example of mileage check problems with a reimported RV8

A Club member, John Davies, decided to have a mileage check after studying the comprehensive RV8 buying guide article in *Safety Fast!* and "all the stuff I could read on the V8 website". So having settled on a car he liked and agreed a deal with the seller, he then found his vehicle data check came back with a mileage of 112,000 miles on the clock! This was clearly incorrect as John had seen every MOT certificate since 1999 when the car was reimported from Japan showing the steady progression of mileages up to 18,000 when the car was put on the market for sale in the UK. So the owner selling the RV8 then made representations to the mileage check provider which meant he had to send them all the MOT documents as proof. The provider then agreed that their mileage record was incorrect but stated that it could not be altered because a new odometer had been fitted to the vehicle. John noted "as you are aware, all cars coming in from Japan have new odometers!" so that is not an unexpected modification. This left an ambiguous situation and a question mark over the vehicle because even with that evidence the provider would not record the accurate mileage of 18,000. However the provider did send John an explanatory email for his own records and for the car's history file which stated "I can confirm that the mileage of 112,000 miles has been reviewed and the above vehicle has no discrepancies against it on our database."

John says "you can imagine how long this took to sort out - almost a month - and potentially it jeopardised the sale of the car to me. Luckily, the seller was very helpful and sorted this matter out which only he could do as the seller." John finally got his RV8, but it is an issue a purchaser of an import needs to watch very carefully.