Top tips for a new MGBGTV8 enthusiast

Many new owners of the classic MGBGTV8 model are keen to pick up the tips that fellow enthusiasts who have known the model for many years can pass on, so here we have a checklist of the top tips for a new MGBGTV8 enthusiast. Although many new enthusiasts buying a V8 are people who had experience of cars in the mid and late 1970s when the V8 was produced, there is an encouraging increase in younger members buying an V8. For them the V8 will feel like a car from an earlier age in terms of its handling and maintenance, so routine maintenance like topping up the SU carburettor dampers with engine oil may not be something they will know is very worthwhile as it makes the V8 so much more enjoyable to drive, with a smoother pick up and acceleration and a less frisky engine at slow speeds. These top tips start with some safety checks and we would particularly draw you attention to the need to have your brake servo checked, or better still replaced.

- **Check the bare thread of the bolt on the back of the carburettor airbox**
  There is bare thread of a bolt that passes through the back of the airbox on the nearside that must be secured as there is a risk the bolt may come free and fall into the nearside carburettor. You need to secure it with a spring washer and a nut. Although V8NOTE53 was released in 1979 amazingly there are still MGBGTV8s around with a bare thread! Do it now!
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE53.htm
  Still not convinced there are still some V8s without that essential modification – well on looking at the engine bays of two V8s at a European event in 2008, both had bare threads so there are still V8s out there needing this modification as a matter of urgency!

- **Check your coolant expansion tank is not overfilled**
  It is essential you do not overfill the expansion tank. It should be between a quarter and a third full when cold. If it is too full then you can get syphonage from the radiator and then consequent overheating.

- **Replace the plastic filler plug on the radiator with a brass unit**
  The original coolant filler plug on the top of the V8 radiator was produced in plastic as part number **ARA2634** and many members have reported problems with it over time. Most V8 enthusiasts replace that plastic filler plug with a much better unit made in brass with a rubber sealing washer, part number **ARA2404**. See the Moss Europe MGBGTV8 parts supplement MGL001B, page 20. You can see a copy of the supplement on the V8 Website.
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/v8workshopmanuals.htm
  http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8WN/MGBGTV8%20Parts%20Supplement.pdf

- **Have your brake servo checked or better still have it replaced – an important safety check**
  Fortunately brake failures from servo problems are rare but, unlike difficulties with slave cylinders where early warning signs can usually be detected, early warning signs of potential servo failure are few. The key feature of a series of alarming servo failures reported by members with Factory MGBGTV8s is the loss of braking is very rapid indeed as the servo swallows the brake fluid! Fortunately they have been at low speeds and without damage to the car or personal injury. The modest cost of a servo replacement is a small price to pay for something which might save a serious incident.
  More on brake servo failures
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/servofailurecaution.htm

  How does a V8 brake servo work?
  http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8WN/Brake%20servo%20working%20note%20190109.pdf

- **Change your engine oil regularly**
  The importance of regular oil changes with a V8 engine cannot be repeated too often because the system is a low pressure-high volume system and the oil passageways to the rockershafts are prone to sludging up. So an oil change every 3,000 miles or at least annually is vital.

- **What are the normal oil pressure figures on an MGBGTV8?**
  The MGBGTV8 Driver's Handbook AKD8423 page 66 says the normal oil pressure is 30 to 40psi. The typical oil pressures you will see with the V8 engine in a Factory MGBGTV8 are mentioned on page 4 of the six page MGBGTV8 Buying Guide as 42psi in normal running conditions, falling to 20psi or so on idle when hot.

- **Remember the V8 engine in an MGBGTV8 is a low revving engine**
  The Rover V8 engine in the standard form used in the 3.5 MGBGTV8 model and later in the 3.9 injected RV8 version is a low revving engine with good torque characteristics. These characteristics give the RV8 and MGBGTV8 a relaxed feel which is a major source of the appeal of a V8 powered MG. So for normal driving trying to rev over 4,500rpm is unnecessary as most performance for normal road use is available in the rev range 2,500 to 3,500rpm. The gearing quoted on page 67 of the MGBGTV8 Driver's Handbook AKD8423 for overdrive top gear is 28

mph/1,000 rpm. So at 70 mph in top overdrive is 2,500 rpm, at 80 mph is 2,857 rpm and at 90 mph is 3,214 rpm. The idle speed is quoted on page 66 as 800 to 850 rpm.

- **Care with tightening the MGBGTV8 sleeved wheel nuts**
  It is worth reminding V8 enthusiasts that the V8 wheel nuts are sleeved and do not provide self centreing when the road wheel is offered up onto the studs and the nuts replaced. It is a poor design feature which can result in wheel balance problems. When refitting a V8 road wheel it is therefore necessary to centre the wheel on the studs by the use of two standard MGB conical seating wheel nuts acting as slave nuts on opposite wheel studs before tightening up two sleeved V8 wheel nuts on the other two studs. As the conical seating of the wheel nut presses onto the outer face of the stud hole, it has the action of locating the V8 wheel so it is centred on the studs. Once the two V8 wheel nuts are on, then undo the two slave nuts and replace with the other two V8 wheel nuts and tighten to the recommended torque. This has been a standard routine for longstanding V8 enthusiasts (see V8 Workshop Note 138) for many years but is well worth drawing to the attention of newcomers to the model – both owners and some "more recent MG specialists". You can get hold of a pair of conical seating wheel nuts very easily – they are the type used on the standard MGB 1800 model part number **BHH1087**.
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE453.htm
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE291.htm

- **Which MGBGTV8s have overdrive on third gear as well as top?**
  Over the years many MGBGTV8 enthusiasts have been puzzled over quite when overdrive on third was discontinued because it is clear that cars with chassis numbers (or Car Nos.) of up to around GD2D1 1200 G and possibly a little higher have overdrive on third, whereas some much earlier cars do not. The myth that overdrive on third was discontinued early in the production run can be laid to rest - see our note. We have a live online survey where members provide data to enable the change point in terms of vehicle chassis number to be identified.
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE368.htm

- **Top up your carburettors with oil**
  Topping up the dampers on the twin SU HIF carburettors on an MGBGTV8 is a very worthwhile simple service routine which can make driving the MGBGTV8 so much more enjoyable with 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 benefits of regular damper topping-up or what to do, so this note is a straightforward guide. This procedure is set out on page 58 of the MGBGTV8 Driver's Handbook AKD8423. 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 them 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. 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.

  What is the function of the damper in the SU carburetor?
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE387.htm

- **Replacing an exhaust system on an MGBGTV8**
  One important point is to take very great care when fitting an exhaust system to the cast iron exhaust manifolds on the Factory MGBGTV8. You need to pull together or jack out the branches of the exhaust system so when they are offered up to the manifolds they line up exactly. You must not bolt them up with the intention of pulling a branch of the exhaust system into place, however small the variance. It is very easy to fracture the cast iron flanges and then you are faced with either getting the flange welded up or in a bad case trying to find a replacement manifold which is not easy at all. Most V8 enthusiasts fit a stainless steel as the original replacement mild steel systems rotted out in two to three years so very few would fit them now. With a twin silencer stainless steel system there is hardly any difference in the quality of the sound and the noise level.

- **How can I upgrade twin 6 volt batteries to a modern single 12 volt battery?**
  This upgrade is one most enthusiasts can undertake themselves and there are several options. See our workshop notes.
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTEbatteryconversionindex.htm

- **How can I tell how old my tyres are?**
  The tyre sidewall markings have an elongated circle within which is the data of manufacture – week number and year. See our useful guide which shows you how to read the tyre sidewall markings including the speed ratings.
  http://www.v8register.net/articles/Tyre%20sidewall%20markings%20explained%20SF%20R9%2021.7.08.pdf

- **Replacement tyres – what tyres are popular with V8 enthusiasts?**
  There is an ageing effect on tyre rubber which reduces the flexibility of the rubber to something that feels like wood with consequent effects on grip, handling and ride. So by the time your tyres are around seven to eight years old the

suppleness of most tyres is reduced to a level which will be compromising the ride and handling. Even though there may well be plenty of tread remaining on tyres fitted to a classic car covering modest annual mileages, they will need replacing for both safety reasons and to enable you to enjoy the improved bump absorption and grip that new rubber will provide. But what tyres do you choose as replacements? Well currently the Continental Contact 2 tyre is popular choice for MGBGTV8 enthusiasts and it is available in a **175/80 R14 88H** size with the correct speed rating for the model. See our replacement tyre webpages and archived V8 Bulletin Board discussions on the topic.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/tyrereplacementV8BBthreads1.htm

- **What tyre pressures are suggested today for an MGBGTV8?**
As tyre technology has moved on a great deal since the less than impressive Grand Prix radial tyres originally fitted to the V8 at the Factory in 1973-76, it is proving very difficult these days to find authoritative information of the pressures for the modern tyres in sizes which fit the MGBGTV8. So we contacted Ron Gammons at leading MG specialists Brown & Gammons in Baldock for his views on the pressures he feels are appropriate for a modern tyre in the original size and profile on an MGBGTV8. Ron says "personally I tend to run the fronts higher than the rear, trying to dial out some of the understeer. So my preference, depending on tyre and load, is normally say **30 (F)** and **28 (R)** but if the car is really loaded or you are driving hard, at least 30 rear as well."

The MGBGTV8 Driver's Handbook (AKD 8423) states the following pressures on page 68 under General Data: Normal conditions: **21 (F)** - **25 (R)** Gross weight **26 (F)** - **32 (R)**	Suggestions from Ron Gammons at Brown & Gammons, MG RV8 specialists at Baldock: Normal conditions: **30 (F) - 28 (R)** Gross weight: **30 (F) – 30 plus (R)**

See our note:
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news291210tyrepressures.htm

- **What are the key issues to consider when deciding whether to fit 175 or 185 tyres on an MGBGTV8?**
See our useful note on the four sets of issues you will need to review in assessing your tyre choice.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news110718replacementtyres.htm

- **Where does the distributor vacuum line connect to the inlet manifold on a Factory MGBGTV8?**
New members sometimes ask "where does the distributor vacuum line connect to the inlet manifold?" A PDF with diagrams from the MGBGTV8 Supplement is available on the V8 Website and provides the answer.
http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8/MGBGTV8%20top%20tips%20for%20new%20enthusiasts%20120410.pdf

- **What manuals and handbooks are available for the MGBGTV8 model?**
We have a useful checklist of the manuals and handbooks, some of which you can download on the V8 Website.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/v8workshopmanuals.htm

- **Which brake fluid should I use on an MGBGTV8?**
This is a subject where some people hold strong views for silicon or mineral fluids. We have a comprehensive six page article on the advantages and disadvantages prepared by a fellow V8 member, Bob Owen.
http://www.v8register.net/articles/Brake%20fluids%20article%20R5%20Bob%20Owen%20230109.pdf

- **Can I use unleaded fuel in an MGBGTV8?**
Can I use unleaded fuel in my MGBGTV8 with the original heads? It's a regular query from members so our note provides a clarification.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE216updated.htm

- **Concerns with current antifreeze formulations with classic cars**
The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs has identified concerns over the latest formulations and their unsuitability for classic cars. See our news item on this current topic.
Update: http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news010410antifreeze.htm
Original article: http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news090310antifreeze.htm

- **Where can I get an MGBGTV8 serviced by an MG specialist who knows the model?**
We maintain a listing of service specialists and spares suppliers which have been recommended by fellow members. It's called the V8LIFELINE and you can access it online via the V8 Website.
http://www.v8register.net/lifeline.htm

- **Checking the steering rack mounts for signs of cracks developing**

Routine inspections at Brown & Gammons of the steering rack mountings on a V8 Roadster built from a LHD rubber bumper MGB roadster reimported from the US **and** on an RV8 have revealed serious cracks in the steering rack mounts on the crossmember. As the consequences of a complete failure would be serious, members with MGBGTV8s, V8 Roadsters and MGBGTV8 conversions need to have the mounts inspected as a matter of urgency. The cracks are in the "U" shaped mount and not on the welded joint with the crossmember. The leading RV8 specialists will include a crack check as part of service work on your car. It needs a very bright inspection lamp and a close examination to see hairline cracks developing.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE241.htm
There is a strengthening kit – details are described in RV8NOTE242.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE242.htm

- **More useful information on maintaining an MGBGTV8**
  See our webpage of links to more useful information.
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/profileMGBGTV8index2info.htm

If you are an enthusiast wanting to get an MGBGTV8 then we having a buying guide online and as a book
Online buying guide - there is special website for enthusiasts thinking of buying an MGBGTV8 at:
http://www.buyinganmg.com
http://www.v8register.net/v8/index.htm

Buying guide – we have a useful 60 page book called “So you want to buy an MGBGTV8 or MG RV8?” available from our Club Office at £9.95 including UK P&P.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news160410booklaunch.htm

See our V8 Workshop Notes series
See our spares and maintenance tips contributed by fellow members in a successful series running since 1978!.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8det.htm

If you need further help and advice then you can:

- **Contact the V8 Helpline** via the link on the V8 Website homepage and speak with an enthusiast who knows the model.
  http://www.v8register.net/buyershelpline.htm

- **Search for the topic** using either the key word search box on the V8 Website homepage or the detailed Index to the popular V8 Workshop Notes series which has been running since 1978. There is a useful note with tips on searching for information on the V8 Website or V8 Bulletin Board.
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/v8bbsearchtips.htm

- **Post a query as a message on the V8 Bulletin Board**
  http://www.v8registerdata.net/default.asp

- **V8 Workshop Notes series** – you can see the contents online, download a free copy of the detailed Index and order a copy of the series using our Online V8 Shop. The Online V8 Shop is closed from time to time.
  http://www.v8register.net/V8Shop/v8publications.htm

Benefits of joining the V8 Register and MG Car Club
Whilst we run the V8 Website and V8 Bulletin Board on an “open to all” basis, we do that to provide a welcome to new enthusiasts and to encourage them to join the V8 Register and the MG Car Club. The benefits of membership are very worthwhile and the annual subscription, which includes a monthly 100 page colour Club magazine. We do urge you to register your MGBGTV8 with us and join the MG Car Club.

Joining the MG Car Club
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/subscriptions2.htm

Joining the V8 Register, part of the MG Car Club
http://www.v8grapevine.net/

V8 Website is a wonderful resource
The V8 Website has over 3,000 webpages or files and gets over 10,000 hits in a typical rolling 30 day period. Those hits are what are known as “unique hits” which do not include repeat hits from the same visitor in any individual day. With a large website packed with information it is essential to use the search tips to find answers to specific queries. So do use our search tips. For new members we have a “New Visitors’ Content Guide” which explains what information is available with links to the major sections. Our aim is to enable members to reach the information they need in two to three clicks so

you will see there are many useful links on the V8 Website homepage which take you straight to the area you need. Finally we have a feature not seen on many websites – a Recent Changes log – which provides you with links on a daily basis to all the new webpages or significant webpage updates. On average there are about three update links per day, so this facility enables frequent visitors to be able to go straight to the new content on the V8 Website.

V8 Register report for 2011
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news301210v8reportA2010.htm

Feedback is always welcome
So let us know what you feel. The V8 Register is a members' group and contributions to the workshop notes series or other items are welcome to provide useful information or help for fellow members. The successful V8 Workshop Notes series, now into its 12th volume, is a clear example of that!
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/anycommentscard.htm