



Would I sell this V8?

Would I sell an MGBGT V8 that came out of the MG Factory that was built by Cliff Humphries for himself? **Mike Authers** says these were the words my friend and Workshop advisor Geoff Clark mentioned during a tea break. Geoff had a few photos of the car from a previous visit to Cliff's home near Wantage that showed it had US style running lights on the wings which isn't to everyone's taste over here. I could see the V8 engine minus the air filters which were in the boot. Yes I was interested as I do like unusual spec cars and am always happy to advertise cars on my website for customers.

Geoff knows Cliff rather well having been given a lift to the Abingdon Factory for over 15 years by Cliff in a variety of works competition cars taken home to get some miles on the clock and sort out any problems. A visit to Cliff's house was arranged and although Cliff is 90 on his next birthday his memory about the cars he had built was excellent. Cliff chatted happily about all the famous works competition cars he built at Abingdon.

Cliff then explained he had built a few cars at home which he then sold on. One was a Mini which had an ex works bodyshell as he built a new works car using the chassis plate and number plates after just one event. So there were always numerous bodies outside which were then cut up by the tea boys. Cliff explained the MG Plant would only sell obsolete parts to employees, not new. The V8 he built for himself back in the 1970s was one such car.

The Factory had two LHD USA Spec V8 bodyshells built, these were painted and trimmed at Cowley and fully glassed. But when management shelved the idea of an export model these two bodies sat outside for two years before Cliff managed to buy one for the princely sum of £100. He then set about sourcing the other parts needed to fully build the car. A V8 engine and gearbox were bought from the Development Department for another £100 and a V8 rear axle for £20. The engine had only been run on the dyno in development and produced 148bhp. It has an unusual engine number and Red rocker covers, so it was different from standard production engines. I've subsequently discovered that the engine number means it was produced by Buick and shipped to Rover where they gave these engines a 2158 number, meaning 215 cubic inches and 8 cylinders.

As Cliff had built numerous competition engines he stripped the V8 engine and rebuilt it so he knew it was to his standards. Cliff bought a damaged two month old MGB Roadster from Bob Neville to source a few other donor parts. When finished and inspected by

the local licensing authority and the local police to make sure it was all genuine, they insisted it had to use the registration and chassis number of the MGB Roadster number and capacity of the V8.

At that time all legal and above board, although it sounds unusual now to have a MGB Roadster chassis number. The body does have its original LHD US spec V8 body number. Cliff kept all the receipts for parts bought from the Factory as he knew that at some point he could prove it was all bought not 'acquired' as some employees might have done! Genuine V8 wheels and tyres were bought new and the car still wears these today. The only part not original is the stainless steel exhaust.

Ken Costello gave Cliff one of his grilles as he was a good friend and did want Cliff to go into business with him building V8s. Cliff kept this V8 for himself and used it sparingly so it's only covered 24,000 miles.

With Cliff's failing eyesight meant it hadn't been driven for over ten years and Cliff had removed the air filters to replace perished fuel hoses which are all in the boot. Cliff had the forethought to completely waxoil the car everywhere he could, drilling holes beneath the kick plates to make sure the sills were fully protected.

After a good chat for an hour or so I came away being the second owner of this rare car! My son Max and I collected it a few days later and it's now in my workshop awaiting re commissioning.

Cliff Humphries

Cliff joined MG back in 1954 along with his best friend the late Geoff Allen and they both worked in rectification. After a two year spell in an MG dealership in Hollywood he was offered a job in the Abingdon competitions department where he stayed until 1970 as chief development technician. He then worked as a line foreman until moving to Austin Rover Motorsport in 1978 and was workshop foreman and chief development technician. Cliff finished his career developing and building engines for the 6R4, eventually setting up on his own building and developing these engines.

Body & Assembly Division, British Leyland UK Limited M.G. Plant Abingdon-Thomas, Berkshire OX14 1AU Telephone: Abingdon 251 Telex: 83125 Telegram: Engine Abingdon		Invoice No. 6 51/A 004074 DATED 10 DEC 1975 SUPPLIER CODE No.
10 CUSTOMER'S ADD. DATA 11 SUPPLIER'S DEPT. 12 SUPPLIER'S REF. No.	13 TAX POINT (Gross amt) 14 NET	15 EX-FACTORY PRICE 16 DELIVERY CHARGE 17 TOTAL PRICE
18 QUANTITY 19 UNIT 20 EXTENDED PRICE	21 TOTAL EXCLUDING VAT 22 VAT @ % 23 TOTAL	

6 Absolute trimmed V8 Body Shell LHD
 Body No. GUTSD 1001 CR1 (Damask Red)
 (Sold as Seen)

100.00

Charge Received £100
 Delivered 10/12/75

Footnote: the invoice for the car "sold as seen" issued by the MG Plant to Cliff Humphries dated 10th December 1975.

Photo (head of the article), Mike Authers (left) with Cliff Humphries.