



MGBGT V8 (Citron 798 on display at the 1973 Motor Show

### MGBGT V8s at the MG Motor Show in 1973 and 1974

The MGBGT V8 was launched in August 1973 and in October was on the MG stand at the 58<sup>th</sup> Motor Show held at Earl's Court from 17<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> October 1973. The display on the [MG stand](#) was dramatic with an MGBGT V8 up on a steep ramp which had the logo down the side declaring "the new 124mph MGB GT V8". It was a dramatic sight with Citron 798 up there looking as though it was to take off. What a launch at a motor show! Also on the stand was another MGBGT V8, Aconite 799. You can see a BBC report on the show in a [short video](#) recording which is a real period piece in many ways with a clipped BBC voice and in his relaxed style he refers to the "window dressing is more or less as before!" A glamorous scene was normal for motor shows in the sixties and seventies with many ladies freely disporting themselves over car bonnets. A few showed a little more decorum getting into the front seats but the effect was to wrap the cars in a sexy scene which attracted drooling male visitors!

#### What happened to the two MGBGT V8 display cars?

Citron 798 and Aconite 799 were "Commissioned" at the MG Abingdon Plant on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1973 and underwent the detailed show car preparation for BLMC Austin-Morris Publicity at Longbridge. Following the show both are recorded in the MG Factory production records as advised for dispatch from the MG Plant on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1973.



MGBGT V8 (Citron 798) at a specialist after some Winter fettling

#### Citron 798

The MG Factory Production Records show **Citron 798 was sold on to PJ Evans Ltd** nearby in Birmingham. The GOV.UK website shows it was first registered 10 months later on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1974 with the vehicle registration number **TOH 654N**. The "N" at the end of the VRN was for the new number plate period from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1974. The V8 Database records show Mr DM Lane as the first owner followed by Robert MacGillivray in Lanarkshire who owned it for many years until it was sold in 2022 to the current owner, John Davies in North Yorkshire.

In booking to join the MGBGT V8 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade Lap on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at the Club's annual meeting at Silverstone, John Davies mentioned "0798 is now back from Winter fettling (new clutch, screen, exhaust, tyres and refreshed wheels) and is ready for the season ahead". So this notable MGBGT V8 is clearly in a caring ownership.

#### Aconite 799

The Factory production records show **Aconite 799 was sold on to Appleyard (Glasgow) Ltd** in Glasgow and dispatched from the MG Plant on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1973. The GOV.UK website records it as first registered on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1974 with the vehicle registration number **SGD 575N**. The first owner we know of was Tony Jenkins in Leicestershire, then some years later it was exported to Australia and recorded as owned by Richard Johnson in New South Wales.



MGBGT V8 (Aconite 799 on display at the 1973 Motor Show

#### Limeflower 118

Another MGBGT V8 with the registration plate **HOH 901L** appears in the video of the BBC report on the Motor Show. It is a "Pre-production" car built in early June 1973 and despatched on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1973 to BLMC Austin/Morris Publicity at Longbridge in Warwickshire as a "Public Relations" car. It was then used for a variety of photo sessions and test drives. In the video it is at a press event which appears to be at a track where it is being driven at speed. It looks as if it could have been filmed either at MIRA or another location.

Limeflower 118 has been owned by a longstanding V8 enthusiast Mike Dunlop in Berkshire who appeared in the car at the first V8 AGM in May 1979 at Weedon Bec on the A5 to the north of Towcester. The colour of the bodywork is the very rare colour of Limeflower which at a glance looks like Harvest Gold but when you see the two colours alongside each other it is so noticeable that Limeflower has a greenish hue in the beige

whereas Harvest Gold is a much more golden beige colour. The rarity of Limeflower is that only two were produced in that colour whereas there were 183 in Harvest Gold.



MGBGT V8 Limeflower 118 an early pre-production PR car



MGBGT V8 (Bracken 2106) appeared at the 1974 Motor Show

#### Rubber bumper facelift seen at the 1974 Motor Show

At the next Motor Show on 16th October 1974 there was a major change – the MGB and MGBGT V8 models on display had the new safety upgrade of rubber bumpers. The two MGBGT V8s on display were both pre-production cars (Bracken 2106 and Citron 2105) finished in bold body colours which suited the similarly bold black bumpers very well. Following the show they were both sold on to Newbury Motors Ltd in Birmingham by BLMC Austin-Morris Publicity at Longbridge and dispatched from the MG Factory on 25<sup>th</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1974.

The first production rubber bumper car was Teal Blue 2101 with the VRN **TOF 560N** which was dispatched to BLMC Austin-Morris Publicity as a pre-development photographic car and press demonstrator. It was later purchased by Geoff Allen, the foreman in Rectifications Department for 27 years. He looked after the car for many years until his widow Jean sold the car to John Davies in North Yorkshire. It was later purchased by Jacques Milliet in Switzerland who had been a personal friend of Geoff for many years. The other pre-development early rubber bumper cars were Harvest Gold 2102 (a press demonstrator now owned by Dave Saunders in Surrey) with the VRN **DNP 229N**, Mirage 2103 (advertising) with the VRN **GDA 710N** and Harvest Gold 2104 with the VRN **GOL 997N**.

#### Why were there rubber bumpers?

As a major part of MG production of MGBs went to North America it was a vital market for the Abingdon Plant and its future. With the growing concern in the USA over consumer safety and emissions legislation, MG had to comply to maintain sales there. Starting from the 1974 model year, cars on sale there had to resist a level of impact damage, with tougher standards promised for subsequent years. MG looked at a range of options but eventually settled upon a flexible moulded urethane bumper which became what is usually referred to as the “rubber bumper”.

In his talk to V8 Register members in 2002, Don Hayter touched on this matters saying “as American regulations involved crash testing because of the raised bumper regulations which were coming in, we had started working on that and it was my job. Crash testing was one of the things that really did make a difference because we had to raise the MGB by an inch purely because the Americans designed the regulations round all the American cars where the bumper heights were between 16 and 20 inches. Well our poor old MGB was low, it was right down on the 16 inches and so we had to raise the car a little and make a much deeper bumper, so that in fact when they did the test on it we could still pass. If you look at the MGBs from the rubber bumper models you will see in the front where the duct panel is, in fact the duct side member climbs slightly and that is to get opposite the bumper at the new height.

That bumper added 105 lbs to the weight of the MGBGT. This alteration in fact made the MGB the first car in the World that had a built-in system which was in fact compliant with the regulations and was within the bumper. Everyone else, for example Volvo and BMW, had a bumper with mounted inter-rubbers and actual travel was on a large socket or a rubber dish, in fact like a shock absorber. So the bumper actually moved, and they had to make it move under the body. We actually got compliance in the bumper itself in that polyurethane moulding.

If anybody has been bumped in a rubber bumpered MGB then you will know how good it is. I was sat at a T-junction, very soon after I put my car on the road, which is a V8 engine MGB Roadster in an “O-series” shell, and the lady in front selected reverse in a Renault and came back very rapidly and stove in the whole of the back of her car. In fact my bumper was somewhere about the middle of her boot! She drove forward and came to have a look and it had only cracked my number plate and scratched the corner, but her car had got a about £2,000 worth of damage! Now I had seen the crash testing but had never been sat there and seen it happen before my eyes!”



MGBGT V8 (Teal Blue 2101) with rubber bumpers in 1974