



The MG still with effortless performance after 40 years

Launched in August 1973, the V8 powered MGB combined the popular fixed head coupe body style with a powerful three and half litre light alloy V8 engine. The Rover powerplant ran with a reduced compression ratio but an increased torque compared with the similar engines then used in the Rover saloons. The result transformed the MGB, creating a very nimble car with the luxury of multi-cylinder power which is both flexible and reasonably economical - features which continue to have a special appeal for V8 enthusiasts today!

On the road the V8 has an effortless performance, accelerating rapidly in the higher gears with 125 mph available in both direct and overdrive top. Hills just melt away and the torque gives the car an unfussy manner. The 0 to 60 time of 7.7 seconds is still, 40 years later, a time many of today's sports saloons cannot touch. Even when asked to work hard, the exhaust note retains its very pleasingly modest but purposeful burble in keeping with the understated style of the car.

The V8 engine, although from an old Buick design from the early fifties, uses hydraulic cam followers which give the V8 a quietness that compliments the smooth power. Under the bonnet, the lightweight aluminium V8 engine is much larger than the original four cylinder steel engine but is only just a little heavier when the engine ancillaries are included. The lightweight benefits are good front to rear weight distribution and an appreciable 60% increase in the power to

weight ratio, even from the detuned 137bhp V8 power unit.

A surprising feature of the V8 is the fuel economy. Even driven on the open road with a sense of fun the enthusiast can enjoy with V8 power, it is quite easy to achieve between 27 and 31 miles to the gallon. The overdrive unit gives the V8 long legs with around 29 mph per 1,000 rpm or 3,000 rpm at 90 mph. The convenient overdrive facility is available with the flick of a stalk switch on the steering column.

The V8 is however not without its poor features - excessive wind noise at speed and a choppy ride at slow speeds from the stiffer rear springs which are needed to cope with the higher power output. The gearbox has to be treated with consideration with the additional power going through to the road wheels. The V8 is very much an MG combining the famous marque's Safety Fast! features - speed and performance with predictable and forgiving handling characteristics.

At its launch in 1973, the V8 was welcomed as a powerful example of the MG marque but generally regarded as arriving several years late in a popular but ageing bodyshell and suspension package, then over ten years old. The specification of servo assisted brakes, tinted glass, distinctive light alloy wheels, fine cord covered adjustable seats, two speed wipers and an overdrive as standard made it a refined sports car for 1973 and good value at its launch price of £2,294.

In so many ways the V8 is an undiscovered classic sportscar and prices have never been driven up by "chequebook investors". It remains a sports car that a

small band of enthusiasts enjoy and see as very good value today in every sense.

MGBTV8 facts

The model was produced from 1973 to 1976 with pre-development cars produced from late 1972. The original Factory production figure is 2,591, with only a few early LHD cars and none originally exported to the USA, although total V8 production is believed to be 2,600. Just over two thirds of the production had chrome bumpers with the remainder fitted with rubber bumpers. It had servo assisted brakes (discs at the front and drums at the back), distinctive Dunlop composite light alloy/steel wheels with 175 x 14 tyres, tinted glass, reclining seats covered in fine cord, two speed wipers and a heater as standard, together with a four speed gearbox with overdrive fitted to all cars on fourth gear. On over 60% of the chrome bumpered cars overdrive was also available on third gear - the change point is around VIN 1200.

V8 Register records show it's likely that around 2,000 V8s still exist with many exported over the years to Australia and New Zealand. The estimated current UK stock of V8s remaining is probably around 1,800 cars. Spares availability is very good, particularly from the specialist V8 spares providers. Current prices depend very much on condition but range from £3,500 to £9,750 for chrome bumper examples to £3,000 to £8,500 for RB cars with exceptional cars up to £12,000.

Memorable advert for the V8 launch

**If you've just bought a
Reliant Scimitar GTE, a Datsun
240Z or an Alfa Romeo 2000 GTV,
this will ruin your day.**

At 124 mph, the new MG is practically the fastest thing on four wheels up to £3,000. It does 0-60 in a brief 8.25 seconds and reaches its legal cruising speed in 12 seconds. It has a light alloy 3.5 litre V8 engine which gives 137 b.h.p. at 5000 r.p.m. and 193 lb. ft. of torque at 2900 r.p.m.

The lightness of the engine, the uprated suspension and wide radial ply tyres give the V8 outstanding handling characteristics. It has Laycock overdrive, brake servo, alloy wheels, twin electric cooling fans, tinted windows, head restraints and MG pedigree. All as standard.

The new 124 mph MGB GT V8



From British Leyland. Makers of the best selling cars in Britain.



Price £2294 (including tax and V.A.T.). Number plates, seatbelts and delivery charges extra. Excludes warranty and accessories. British Leyland is a registered company.

Six years too late

Six years too late, comfortable seating, poor ride, excessive wind noise, fast and economical. That was the frank verdict of Motor Sport on their 1,900 mile road test of the new MGBGT V8 model in October 1973. Rather than test the car immediately after its launch in August 1973, they had waited for a lengthy 1,700 mile continental trip through France to test the car in a demanding Grand Touring role. So quite a tough exercise for any car and particularly so when you read of the sustained speed the car endured during a trip of barely 141 hours - hardly "grand touring", more like a "pedal to the mettle" thrash!

The test report mentions "this remarkable alloy V8 had succeeded in propelling the 110mph body design at cruising speeds of 120 to 130mph for miles on end, on one occasion at 121mph average being maintained for almost 100 miles at night!" Then the report adds "in spite of this hard usage the overall fuel consumption worked out at exactly 18mpg . . . more representative of what the normal driving customer can expect!" The article went on to suggest that might be "17 to 26mpg."

Of course today most V8 enthusiasts would see at least 27mpg even driven in a moderately spirited way rather than at the very high speeds above, and often 30mpg at normal cruising and touring speeds.

Despite this very hard test, the author said "it has some excellent attributes, but most of them are marred by some of its more dated features . . . wrapped in the same familiar (MGB) package." Their conclusion was "a likeable car, but it has too many criticisms to make it covetable" and then referring to the price "you get many 11-year old features which could have been designed out." Later in the paragraph the author reveals all - "after this experience I am finding it hard to decide whether I really like this latest Abingdon product, or more to the point whether I would choose one as a replacement for my TR6!"

Despite the hard driving used for this unusually long road test, it is a most readable article and, more to the point, it expresses the contemporary impressions of

Photo removed

the then new MGBGT V8 shortly after the launch of the model in 1973.

You can see a copy of the two and a half page Motor Sport MGBGT V8 road test from the October 1973 issue of the magazine on the V8 website, reproduced with the kind written permission of the publisher. See www.v8register.net/sf/more.htm

Police Review V8 road test

The specialist journal Police Review also did a road test and reported its finding in their issue dated 17th August 1973. The review by WR Taylor was keen on the MGBGT V8 saying: "Pursuit or enforcement cars of the two-seater variety are slowly gaining in popularity and probably the majority of cars of this type that are in service with Police Forces are MG "B" GTs. This car combines a businesslike appearance with a reasonable performance and is capable of carrying a surprising amount of equipment. Now, announced this week, we have a new model, which should make this one of the finest enforcement cars available - the MG "B" GT V-8." Several V8s were used as police patrol cars in the early production stages. You can see a copy of the article, reproduced with the kind written permission of Janes' Information Group (Police Review) at: www.v8register.net/sf/more.htm

Development of the V8

Don Hayter gave a fascinating account of development of the MGBGT V8 at the Factory during the early seventies during his talk with V8 enthusiasts at Sandford near Abingdon in February 2002. He revealed how the design genius and engineering skills of a dedicated team at Abingdon combined to create a classic MG sportscar. The V8 was brought into production on a very modest development budget at a time when the dead hand of BL seemed determined to eliminate the independence, initiative and flair of the Abingdon design and development team and its ability to create new models of the MG marque. Well over the years since the launch of the V8 in August 1973, many V8 enthusiasts have wondered "how did they get the V8 package so right with such modest development resources and the constraints of the legendary BL corporate politics of the time?" Most recall on their first driving a V8 how they found it such an extraordinary car in terms of the sheer driving pleasure and response with the smooth V8 power.

Just how rapidly the car was developed was mentioned graphically in Don's opening remarks - "You will see as I go along that I really haven't got many slides on the V8 itself because the V8 development

programme was so darned quick! You had to photograph it going by!"

Don also reflected on the V8 going into production at Abingdon saying "we had to alter our production lines as we had four lines downstairs and a maximum of four upstairs and we had three which would normally be MGB lines and one Midget line all the time. Bodies as you know would come in from Swindon originally - and then later from Cowley as all the paint was transferred their later on. The bodies would come into the bottom of A-Block and be lifted up on to the top to the trolleys where all the simple work was done - the harnesses went in and the simple trim and fascia - everything that could be done away from the production line downstairs. The bodies were pushed along by hand as there was never any mechanical conveyor line. This was one of the reasons why MG got loathed because people thought we were so out of date - they would say you can't build a motor car like that, you have got to have a mechanical line to control production. One thing with controlled conveyor lines is it provided the shop steward with an argument for stopping the lines! Everywhere they had mechanically controlled lines they had timing and rate setting problems.

Anyway, everything was moved at Abingdon by hand, stage by stage, and then dropped onto the elevated line where the axles had been prepared and engine installations were ready. Then the bodies would drop down for the first time onto their wheels and again they were pushed manually to the end of the line where headlamps and all the rest of it were fitted. When you went into the works, the first thing you would hear in the morning was "push em up, push em up!" because the group from the night before were maybe up to schedule, but they would have a build schedule for the day and they would chalk on the board how many cars each line had done. They all knew perfectly well who was ahead and who was behind.

The operators were all skilled at their particular job and depended completely on line feeding to keep the production line going and there were always some things which would stop them - things like paint in thread holes. All the car bodies went through a slipper dip and then they were sprayed, and sometimes they had to go through twice. So there was quite an accumulation of paint in the threads so we had to use thread clearing screws which did a lot of the job but even those could not clear it sometimes if it was solid with a great deal of paint and you would have a potential strip or they would have to be cleared out by hand."

V8 Anniversary 2013

There are twelve interesting events in the programme to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the formation of the V8 Register and the 40th anniversary of the launch of the MGBGT V8 in August 1973.

Visit to Hardwick Hall

This National Trust property is one of the most significant Elizabethan country houses in England with spectacular gardens. The house is near Chesterfield in Derbyshire and our visit will be on Sunday 7th April 2013. Ken and Carol Clayton have organised the event with dedicated parking for V8 members. Full details are on the V8 website.

V8 Anniversary Day

A key event in 2013 is the V8 Anniversary Day on Saturday 18th May 2013 with three interesting features - the launch of the new MG V8 book from David Knowles, several V8 technical sessions with presentations on topical technical issues from a group of speakers and outside, Dyno Runs provided by Novatech on their mobile dyno equipment. The location is conveniently just off the M40 and south of Oxford at Great Milton.

Our **book launch** will include a presentation by David Knowles touching on his aims for what is a welcome sequel to his very popular book published in the mid-1990s, what interesting additional material he found during his researches, details of the people he was in touch with, the interesting material he has included on the later MGV8 models and the significant section (around a third of the book) on the RV8 predevelopment story.

The topics covered in the **technical sessions** during the day will include an update on the ethanol fuel situation and preventative maintenance, installing air-conditioning in a V8, a useful modification to the RV8 aircon compressor fan to avoid fan motor rust problems and reports on the survey results from the Best RV8 and V8 Modifications surveys this year.

Bookings for the **dyno runs** are likely to be popular so do book early to get a slot during the day.

Visit to Rousham House

Rousham House is a particularly attractive, privately owned house north east of Oxford which has been in the same family for over 500 years. It has exceptional gardens running down to the River Cherwell which were landscaped by William Kent in the late 17th Century. It is likely to be a popular visit with wives and partners with a relaxed drive reaching Rousham by mid-morning, then an

opportunity for a guided tour of the house, to see the gardens and enjoy a picnic lunch. The house is only open to special parties by prior arrangement so in the morning we have arranged a guided tour of the house. The visit will be on Thursday 13th June 2013 and is organised by Gordon Hesketh-Jones. Full details and booking arrangements are on the V8 website.

Hook Norton Brewery tour

Debbie Brading has arranged a tour of this seven storey brewery with a magnificent steam engine providing much of the motive power. As previous tours of this brewery have been popular, Debbie has arranged two tours which begin at 11am prompt and each tour guide is able to accommodate around 10 people. The tours end with a tasting in the visitor centre before we move on to the Pear Tree Inn at the entrance to Brewery Lane for lunch. This event will be on Friday 14th June 2013 of the two day MGLive! weekend meeting.

Lunch at the Pear Tree Inn

This popular annual informal lunch has been held for well over 25 years at the Pear Tree Inn, the nearest pub to the Hook Norton Brewery. All Club members are welcome - meet at the Pear Tree Inn from around 12.30am for lunch at 1.00pm.

V8 Anniversary Dinner

A dinner to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the V8 Register will be held near Silverstone on Saturday 15th June 2013. It will be a natural high point of the anniversary year as many members will be attending the Club's annual weekend International MGLive! meeting at Silverstone nearby. Further information and the booking arrangements are available on the V8 website at: www.v8register.net/sf/more.htm

V8 Reception at the EEOY 2013

An informal reception before dinner on

Sunday 18th August is planned for fellow MGV8 enthusiasts attending the European Event of the Year based at Aviemore to celebrate the launch of the MGBGT V8 model in August 1973.

V8 Two Day Highland Tour

The short two day tour will be based at the Dundonnell Hotel on Little Loch Broom near Ullapool and covers a major part of the routes described in the two Memorable MG Routes recently published in Safety Fast! The aim of the tour is to provide fellow V8 members attending the European Event of the Year 2013, particularly those making a long journey from Mainland Europe and the south of England, with an opportunity to spend a few more days in the Highlands and see two very attractive areas. Bookings are already flowing in so don't delay booking - full details on the V8 website.

BMH Body Plant tour and lunch

Tours of the plant seeing key components for the MGB being manufactured are popular. The tour group is limited to the 18 members and booking will open on the V8 website in mid-April. The plan is to arrive at the plant at 10am so we can assemble in the boardroom for tea and coffee and a briefing before the tour. The visit will be on Thursday 19th September 2013.

V8 Anniversary Lunch

The lunch at the White Horse at Woolstone is on Thursday 19th September. Many of the BMH tour party will join other V8 members for an informal light lunch from around 12.45am. The bar menu has proved ideal on previous visits. All Club members are welcome. It's about 30 minutes from the BMH Body Plant at Witney via Faringdon and Uffington.

Further details of all the V8 Anniversary events is available on the V8 website at: <http://www.v8register.net/a35/anni.htm>



Solving bad electrical contacts in the fuse box

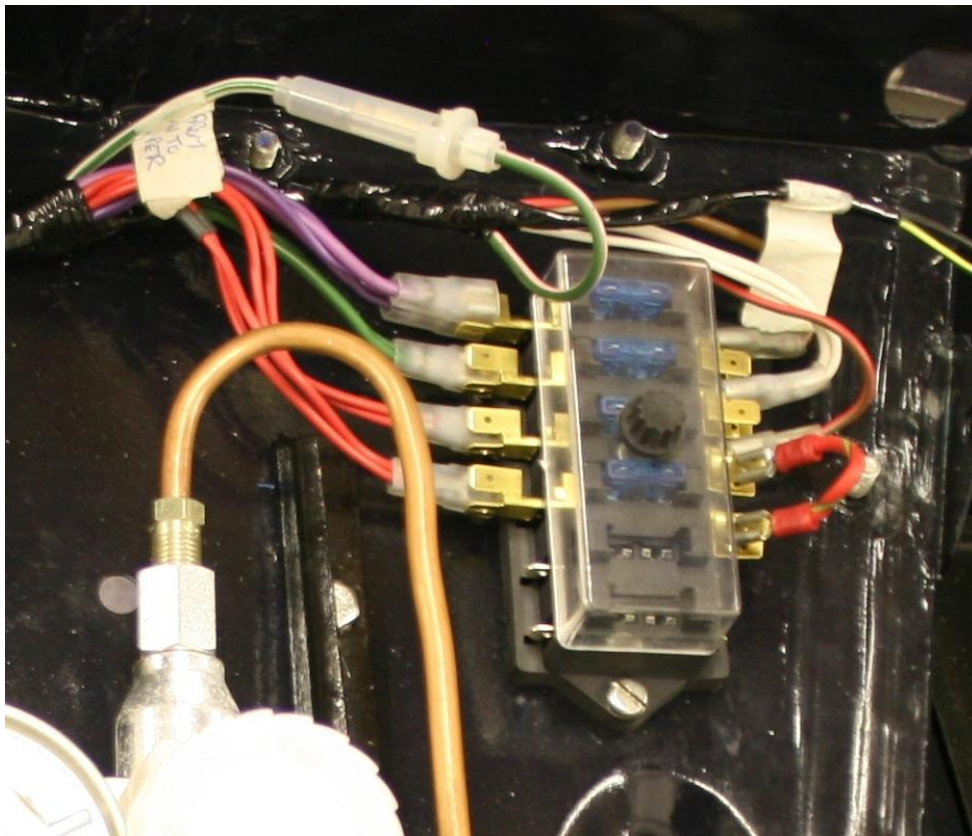
Gordon Hesketh-Jones posted a cautionary tale on the V8 Bulletin Board with some useful advice highlighting the need to pay attention to the fuse box where the contacts slowly deteriorate over the years.

Last week I was on the Truro inner dual-carriageway and went round a roundabout in the righthand lane – and the engine cut out! No misfire, no stuttering – just a nasty silence. I coasted to a halt still in the righthand lane only 30 to 40 yards from the busy roundabout and frantically put on my V8 Register Yellow Waistcoat (for the first time), the hazard flashers and my Red Triangle. Then I phoned the RAC – who offered a 30 minute delay so I phoned the Police as we were really in a dangerous position. Once they came and coned off the lane I checked around the engine – no 12v feed to the coil. Checked the lead and connections – all OK.

When the RAC man arrived he agreed but could do nothing except to arrange for a Low Loader to take me to Tim Kelly's MG centre just 5 miles away. Tim found that the spring under the carbon brush in the distributor cap was weak so fitted a new cap and, finding nothing else wrong, fitted a new fuse – engine fired OK. However when I tried to put the car into my garage later on – the same problems. This time I took out the ignition fuse (second one up), sprayed all of the fuse box contacts with Servisol Super 10 electrical contact cleaner and hey presto – the engine started promptly and has done so ever since.

What we all need to remember is that our cars are around 40 years old and have been exposed to many damp Winters – and often damp Summers too - which is why my garage has a dehumidifier plumbed-in and set to come on whenever the relative humidity gets to be worse than 70%. I suppose that my particular location in the pointy end of Cornwall with the sea 1½ miles to the South and 5 miles to the North might exacerbate the problem but I believe we all need to be aware of this problem in our ageing MGs.

We all routinely change the engine oil and have the car serviced but I suspect that none of us (Bill McCullough excepted) have paid much attention to the fuse box where the contacts slowly deteriorate over the years. So I urge all fellow V8 enthusiasts to buy and use an electrical contact cleaner – easily available from Amazon or Farnell. My version costs around £11 but there are many others at around £5 or less – and it could save you a lot of grief!



Mike Howlett responded saying "if you aren't bothered about keeping the car exactly original, ditch the horrible Lucas fusebox and the glass fuses and fit a modern fusebox with blade fuses. That's what I did to both my GTV8 and my Midget, and shall do to my Elan as I rebuild it. I got mine from Vehicle Wiring Products." <http://www.vehicle-wiring-products.eu/VWP-onlinestore/fuses/holders1.php>

Servisol Super 10

The technical data sheet says it is a highly efficient switch and contact cleaner. It offers a combination of high purity electrical cleaning and mechanical lubrications for contacts, switches and relays. It removes grease, tarnish, oxidation and other contamination from contact surfaces and leaves a protective conductive lubricating film. The data sheet adds it cuts the voltage drop between contacts by increasing the surface area and reducing resistance. The residual film resists drying and the attraction of dust. It eliminates contact bounce and stops the damage which can be caused by arcing between contacts. Improves the current flow and protects against friction.

Apply directly onto the components to be treated. Do not use on live electrical equipment. After spraying, always leave for at least 4 to 5 minutes to allow dispersal of

solvent vapours, before operating the equipment.

<http://www.rapidonline.com/mechanical-fastenings-fixings/servisol-super-10-switch-cleaning-lubricant-200ml-87-0770>

New inline fuse upgrade for the overdrive circuit

Brown & Gammons have an inline fuse upgrade kit available for the ignition power feed to the overdrive switch. A fuse in that circuit is something that has always been seen as a significant oversight by the Factory. The kit is available at £4.25 plus P&P and can be ordered online at: www.ukmgparts.com

