



WELCOME TO THE V8 NEWSLETTER



Original Dunlop composite wheel with a chrome rim and alloy centre



Dunlop composite refurbished by Solent Wheels

Refurbishing option for Dunlop composite wheels

John Fisher has had his Dunlop composite wheels refurbished by The Wheel Specialist in Leicestershire and says "I thought that it would be worth adding them to the list of specialist service providers on the V8LIFELINE webpage". He adds "they did not strip the wheels into the component parts for the full restoration process, but shot blast the chrome from the steel rim, powder coated the rims, painted

the alloy centres and then diamond cut them. Whilst not returning the wheels to an 'as-new' specification, I think they are acceptable as an everyday alternative". Contact them on 0116 478 7082 or www.thewheelspecialist.co.uk

Another refurbishment specialist for Dunlop composite wheels

Another specialist providing a similar refurbishment service is Solent Wheels in Hampshire. Peter Spurr reported a few years ago he had a set of Dunlop composites refurbished by Solent Wheels and was very pleased with the result.

Matthew at Solent Wheels says "the refurbishment process involves good preparation by stripping existing coatings and fine grit blasting the wheel to bare metal to remove the corrosion, repairing any kerb damage, filling any areas where corrosion has been removed and then applying an epoxy resin primer with a self-etching feature used in marine applications, which is baked in a low bake oven. Then the wheels are flattened down to create a smooth surface. The wheels are top coated and lacquered with a durable Polyurethane silver coloured paint and clear coat".

Before refurbishing a Dunlop composite wheel, Matthew looks at the back of the wheel to check if there is any corrosion between the rivets between the rim and alloy centres and if so, how serious it is. "Rarely has he seen Dunlop composites with serious corrosion there which would raise doubts over refurbishing a wheel. The result is a smooth, polished finish which is durable lasting for many years. These refurbished wheels can only be distinguished from the original chromed rims from a close inspection. Whilst it's not a "chrome finish" the coating is silver and the surface is smooth from the baking process, so it's another refurbishment option MGBTV8 owners can consider for their original wheels".

Restoration of original Dunlop composites

Renowheel in Bridgend in Wales offer a restoration service for original Dunlop composite wheels and say they "split the wheels and mark each one as we split them so they go back together exactly as they come apart. Regarding the outer steel rim we out-source the re-chroming where they are heavily copper coated and re-chromed.

The skilled work involves splitting the rim from the alloy centre, removing corrosion and rechroming the steel rims, refurbishing the alloy centres and then reassembling and balancing the wheel as part of the restoration. If the wheel has been refurbished before it would be subject to an inspection to assess if the wheel could be restored".

Where the corrosion on the steel rims, combined with the steel rim/alloy centre galvanic corrosion, is bad removing the corrosion from both metals could reduce the thickness of the metal interface to such an extent that it is then not sufficient



Keith Belcher's very smart MGBGT V8. Photo courtesy of Keith Belcher

for reassembly with the rivets leaving doubts over the structural strength and integrity of the reassembled wheel. An experienced wheel restorer will make checks and then assess the rebuild potential. The full scope of the seriousness of the corrosion removal may not be fully revealed until the steel rim and alloy centre of the wheels are taken apart.



Origins of the Dunlop composite wheels

The Dunlop composite wheel, with an alloy centre with 10 trapezoidal holes and a chromed steel rim, is a particularly strong wheel and in the 1970s it was the type of feature you would have more likely seen on exotic sports cars. They were advertised as their 'Formula D4 alloy/steel composite wheel' to "...give your car real personality!" In 1973 MG chose these distinctive wheels for their new V8 powered MGBGT model, launched in August that year. Above is one of Dunlop's adverts in Motor Sport in March 1970. Peter Beadle (formerly parts manager with University Motors, then

with Sprite & Midget Centre and later Moss Europe) recalls a replica centre alloy casting for the composite wheel for the MGBGT V8 was made by Specialist Car Products back in the 1980s & 90s on which MWS then fitted the chrome rim.

Peter adds "a similar looking Dunlop composite wheel was used on the 1972-1977 Reliant Scimitar GTE (SE5/a and SE6), although this version of the wheel was wider at 14 x 5.5 inches and sported different centre caps. Even with these differences, the Scimitar wheels will fit the MGBGT V8. With the wider wheel the offset on the steel rim was greater than on the MGBGT V8 version and the machined profile of the Scimitar GTE wheel differs from the MG V8 wheel as the raised part of the trapezoidal cut out in the alloy centre comes to a point on the GTE, whereas on the V8 it is radiused."

These Dunlop composite wheels were also used on the 751 special "Jubilee" MGBGTs built between April and June of 1975 for the home market. The 'Jubilee' cars were produced to celebrate the 50th anniversary of MG sports car production. They were finished in new Racing Green paint, with gold body side stripes, a numbered dash plaque and Dunlop composite wheels, whose machined silver and chromed surfaces were painted in a gold finish.

For many years a very professional and good quality Dunlop composite wheel refurbishment service was available from Motor Wheel Services International (MWS) near Slough. Sadly, they decided they could no longer offer that service as the work had become very difficult, not least balancing the reassembled wheels which could take several hours.

MGBGT V8, Damask 1949 Coincidences

Further tales from Keith Belcher on the ownership of his V8 when it turned 50 years old in 2024.

"It was a Saturday morning in June 1991 and many classic car values had stabilised after the first classic car bubble had burst and I was in the market for one. The day before I had travelled 100 miles to collect a Lotus Elan to be told on arrival that the car had been sold the day before, despite a handshake agreement and a deposit. I was incensed at this,

even after the deposit was refunded. I had been searching for over eighteen months.

I was relating this to my local Snap-On man whilst eating breakfast at work. He quipped "You had a lucky escape there. You know what LOTUS stands for?" I replied "Yes, Lots Of Trouble, Usually Serious". He then went on to tell me how the day before he had been at a local car restorer's premises and he had seen a lovely MGBGT V8 which he was told was for sale. I pondered this for a few minutes and thought I've never considered one of these. So that afternoon I found myself test driving that very MG. Having owned several Bs and BGTs I was struck by how the V8 transformed the car and was like many who have caught the bug, immediately smitten. It was even my favourite BGT colour too, Damask with black trim. I had a briefcase which contained enough cash, so a deal was struck there and then. I was to collect the car a few days later to allow for the removal of the private registration.

A number of coincidences occurred during Keith's early ownership of Damask, 1949, as outlined below by Keith

Coincidence No 1.

The following weekend I drove the V8 to my best pal's house to show it off. While we were looking the car over my pal's nephew appeared from the house (he was visiting) and said wistfully "I recognise that car, does it have speakers in the C post covers?" I replied "Yes, it certainly does!" He also mentioned another unique distinguishing feature which nailed this particular car down. He explained that the car used to belong to his boss and that he had sold it to the chap I had bought it from. He went on to detail a dispute over the private registration I had seen it with. I later made contact with the boss and he was able to recover the disputed private registration at a later date.

Coincidence No 2.

Sometime later I applied to the DVLA for details of the car's owner's history. Back then you could do this for a few pounds without any GDPR issues. The first owner was a company in Newcastle upon Tyne. I contacted them and a very kind secretary told me lots about the car and that it belonged to the company owner. He was an MG fan but more importantly he was also a retired WW2 RAF Squadron Leader, Mr. Phillip Whaley Ellis 'Nip' Heppell, a renowned decorated Spitfire flying 'Ace' based in Malta in 1944/5. I of course told my father who was an NCO flying officer in '44 and had flown many times to Malta. He remembered being introduced to 'Nip' and chatting to him in the officer's mess at Luqa, Malta. (*Scribe's note: Victor Smith documented further details on the V8 Register 'News' pages back in August 2014 of Nip Heppell's association with Keith's V8 as a former keeper.*)

Coincidence No 3.

On contacting the V8 register I was supplied with details of the production of the car. It was the 7th from last Chrome Bumper car made and the very last Damask red car. It was dispatched from the factory on 8th October 1974. I surmised it was delivered the next day on my father Ken's 50th birthday!

What are the chances of all that?

V8 Rear Axle Refurbishment

After 51 years and 122,000 miles, the rear axle on my 1973 MGBGT V8 had developed the typical MGB 'clunk' when accelerating or decelerating, or when changing gear. Basically, power on, power off cycles, which was making the driving experience less than ideal. The clunk had been evident for some years, to be honest, but had become

distinctly more noticeable over recent months. Something needed to be done to remedy the situation.

Before confirming that the rear axle is the culprit there are a few other potential sources of the clunk to check, such as worn UJs, worn suspension components, or even worn hubs or splines if wire wheels are fitted.

In my case, all other components were fine, so the rear axle required investigation. The likely cause is worn thrust washers behind the planet gears, within the rear axle.

Although replacement items are readily available through the usual specialists and the job is deemed relatively simple for a competent home mechanic, it really does require the car to be placed on a ramp, rather than simply jacking the car up, to obtain good access to the axle. (I'm sure others have done it this way!)



After some research and a recommendation, Hardy Engineering based in Leatherhead, Surrey were chosen as the right people for the job and the car was booked in. I decided on a full overhaul, as I considered it was unlikely to need repeating within my lifetime, while it was all apart. The work was completed, including new bearings and seals, (plus wheel bearings) and re-shimming of the planet gears in the carrier to take up all excessive play. The original thrust washers had simply worn away in some instances, so the job was worth doing – if a little overdue! A couple of new check-straps were also fitted as the original items had seen better days. The axle was refilled with EP140 oil as the greater viscosity provides better damping into the wheel bearings, splines and between the gears.

So, if your aging Salisbury axle is demonstrating a clonking sound during normal driving, now is the time to replace those thrust washers on the pinion and planet gears. I'm reliably informed that the original 3.07:1 crown wheel and pinion sets are better made than the reproduction items.





High Output Alternator and Cooling

A chance conversation recently with a fellow V8 enthusiast resulted in an interesting conversation on the age-old topic of engine cooling. My V8 has never suffered from overheating problems in all my years of ownership but on a warm day, sitting in traffic with the fans on, it's struggles a little and is probably best described as 'marginal'. The cooling system is completely standard and is always kept in good order. The radiator was re-cored after an engine rebuild many years ago and has never shown any indication of blockages. This is all in line with the way the BL design team intended to keep things cool under the V8 bonnet but as said, it's marginal in hot, static conditions.

My attention was therefore drawn to Workshop Note no. 527, written back in 2017 by Colin Goodey. Colin was always aware of under bonnet temperatures when driving in heavy traffic but didn't want to go down the normal route of an expensive hi-flow radiator and other upgrades. He therefore decided to fit an uprated 75-amp alternator, which delivers about 10% more power at tick-over. In real terms this meant that the fans were spinning at over 200 rpm higher than with the standard AC Delco (45-amp) alternator. Colin indicated an improvement in the performance of the cooling fans, with the fans cycling rather than being permanently on in the warmer weather.

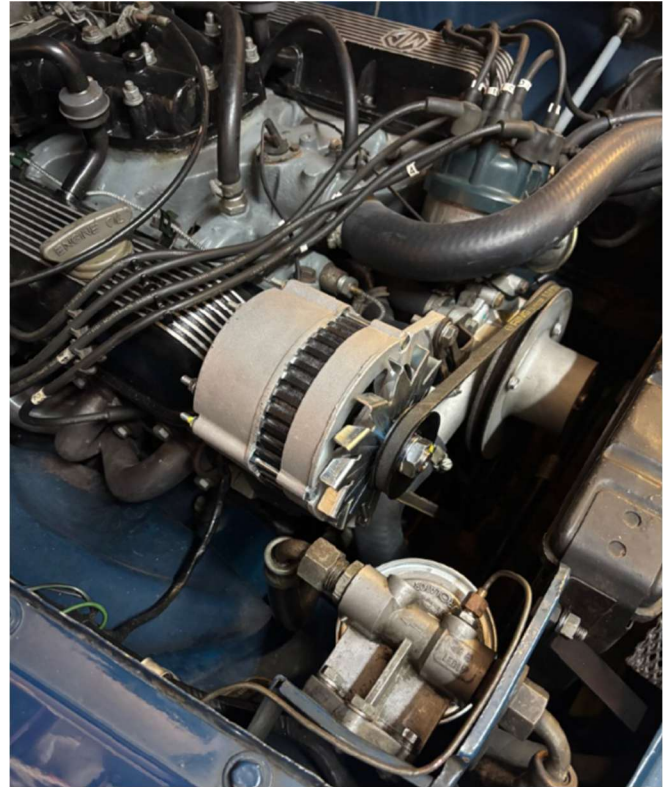
Colin now supplies these units through his company, Just MGB as an outright sale, so you can retain your original 45-amp AC Delco unit if originality is important to you.

This all seemed like a very good idea, so I sent away, bought one and it duly arrived. The old unit had done sterling service for 30 years and was still in good working order, but struggled a little at idle, especially with the cooling fans on, together with the headlights at night and perhaps the heated rear window. The higher output alternator will certainly help by allowing the fans to spin quicker at idle in the warm weather and hence will aid the cooling.

Fitting was straightforward and retains the original fan belt. The part number and description is "GEU2218U – 75 Amp Brand New Alternator MGB GT V8 or MGB Roadster V8". My old alternator also carried this same number, albeit without the last 'U'. No modifications were required to the brackets on the car, although the new unit comes with a pre-installed bush (as did the old unit) in the rear-most mounting hole. This simply needed tapping a little further in, to ensure that the front hole aligned properly with the mounting bracket on the car. This was quickly and easily achieved on the vice with a hammer. The added bonus with the bracketry design is that the alternator pulley aligns perfectly with the water pump and crankshaft pulleys.

So far, the temperatures this year haven't really been the best test environment for the replacement alternator but on starting the engine the voltmeter (another non-standard addition - but very useful) showed a charging rate of 14.2 volts immediately. The old unit was showing 13.6 volts so there is a marked improvement straight away. Perhaps this

summer I can spend less time thinking about potential overheating problems and more time enjoying the car. I'm certainly looking forward to the warmer weather! Just to add, I've never actually had an overheating problem but as said, things was always marginal in warm temperatures. Having an eye on the voltmeter showed around 12.5 volts at idle previously with all the 'big-ticket' items on, so I'm quietly confident for the future.



NOS V8 Wheel – Bargain Find!

Whilst looking through some old receipts recently for a particular item, I came across a receipt for a V8 wheel, which I bought from Brown & Gammons back in 1998. One of my original wheels had proved difficult to balance on a number of occasions, which culminated in a wheel specialist informing me that it was buckled and really was beyond balancing or safe/economical repair. I was advised to look out for a replacement wheel.

These were the early days of the internet but I scratched around for a while and made a few phone calls. A good example at B&G came onto my radar, which although sold as 'used' appeared to have been a spare in a previous life, with little if any use. It was therefore in extremely good condition and effectively brand new. The price seemed a little steep at the time so I called and asked if there any movement was possible. I was told that it was the only one they had at the time and the condition meant it represented very good value. I swallowed hard and sent off my cheque. The wheel turned up a few days later, very carefully packaged and I opened it with some trepidation. The condition was stunning! It has resided on the rear of my V8 ever since. Oh yes, the cost... It was £75 + £7.50 p&p. I think I found myself a bargain. A quick search on the internet today turned up a single V8 wheel "with poor chrome" for £156 and a set of five, allegedly in good condition, although the spare has significant chrome damage, for £1225. That's £245 per wheel – including the poor spare!

The value of NOS items is steadily creeping up, as the supply of such items slowly dwindles. A 'classic' case of the rules pertaining to supply and demand. What bargain NOS items have you found? Please write and let me know.