



WELCOME TO THE V8 NEWSLETTER

MG100 at Silverstone

On June 10th and 11th, the V8 Register attended the MG100 event at Silverstone, as part of this year's grand celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the launch of the MGB GT V8 and the 30th anniversary of the launch of the MG RV8. The weekend was uncharacteristically hot for Silverstone, so the V8 Register was a welcome refreshment centre, offering tea, coffee and cakes, together with seating for members to catch up with old friends and new friends alike.

Our newly elected Chairman, Tony Smith was there in his early Oxford Blue RV8, (the only RV8 fitted with a test PAS assembly by the factory) as were a good number of V8 and RV8 owners.



At lunch time on Saturday there was a Parade of 33 MGB GT V8s, 10 RV8s, together with a selection of other MG V8 conversions and enthusiasts on the track. On the Sunday the V8 Register was called upon to supply a full V8 soundtrack in the main arena, which was willingly given by all participants. Both events were thoroughly enjoyed by all.



John Davies brought along his MGB GT V8, which was the very car which appeared at the 1973 Motor Show in London, for the launch of the V8. John was presented with a framed photograph of his car at the Motor Show by Tony Smith.



MG50-V8 Gaydon

On Sunday 20th of August, the V8 Register has its MG V8-50 major event at Gaydon, where we will further celebrate the anniversaries mentioned above, plus the 45th anniversary of the formation of the V8 Register in 1978. There will be a dedicated MG V8 parking area on the north side of the car park, in front of the Museum. The focus of the event, planned by Julian Holmes will be in the dedicated meeting rooms within the Museum building.

In these two rooms there will be a reception area with welcome refreshments and a few trade stands. The second room will contain a modest programme of presentations and slide shows, contributed by volunteers and enthusiasts. Spaces are still available for this prestigious event, which will not be repeated for many years to come. For booking details, see <https://www.v8register.net/subpages/MGV8-50-gaydon-info-and-booking-form.php>

The Shuttlecock Run – Part 1

Philip Roussel-Smith had long dreamed of a touring holiday across The States in his RV8. This month we have part 1 of Philip's story, the planning stage, of what turned out to be a very eventful tale.

The Hillgate Pub, (my London office) Notting Hill Gate - well it had to start somewhere. I just happened to mention to friends over lunch that I had always wanted to drive across the USA from New York to California. No, not another Route 66 saga. Of course, everybody had their own ideas and suggestions and before long the plan had blossomed into a tour around the USA visiting places of architectural interest and friends along the way.

So, I needed to make a decision, the original idea being coast to coast. I think the record stands at 25 hrs 39 mins on the Canonball Run, so definitely not a leisurely tour! A more relaxed approach was obviously the firm favourite but how long would be required and what car to do it in? That's when it got interesting.

On all of my previous holidays in the USA I have just flown in and picked up a hire car. So how much would a rental be for ten weeks and what do you get? I've had problems with hire cars before and this appeared to be a very expensive solution, which proved to be correct.



And so, the idea of taking my MG RV8 was born, but why the Shuttlecock Run? Well, 'Canonball' had already been taken and when I've attempted to play baddminton, the destination of the shuttlecock has always been a mite unpredictable, so it seemed fitting. The question was would it be possible and if so, how? Well, I knew a good place to start so I Googled it and although it took some time and determination to work out the requirements it wasn't too difficult. Basically if the car is a minimum of 25 years old it can be imported into the USA for a maximum period of 180 days without needing to comply with Federal Vehicle standards.

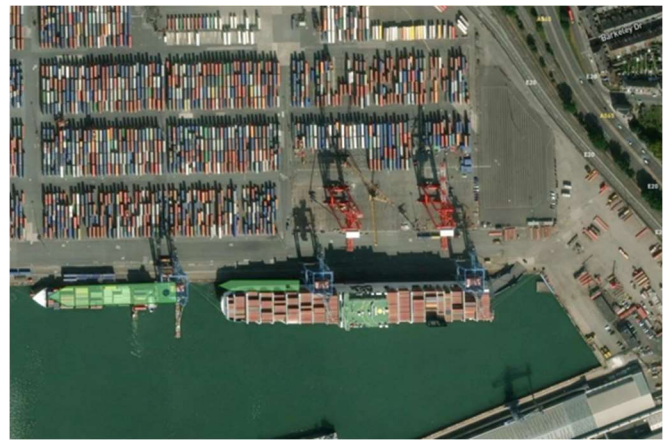
First step is to decide your method to transport the vehicle and the port of entry that most suits your plans. There are three main options available:

1. Air freight. This is very desirable but very expensive so I didn't consider it.
2. Container. In retrospect probably the best option.
3. Roll-on-roll-off (RoRo). Most economical option and the one I chose.

I looked at several shipping agents and in the end, chose the quotation offered by AutoShippers based in Bristol for a RoRo voyage from Southampton to New York; we later changed this to departure from Liverpool in order to ensure that I arrived at the same time as the car.

The plan was to do a fairly extensive tour around the US taking in Falling Water, meeting up for a party weekend with friends in North Carolina and then up, to attend the British Invasion event in Vermont before returning to New York and shipping the car home again.

So, shipping decision made; the next thing was to sort out the paperwork which is relatively straight forward.



Driving insurance.

After some research and a few false leads I found that the US insurance agents websites didn't accommodate the requirements for a UK licensed driver using an imported UK registered car. Hagerty had been recommended, so I decided to call them. After a few moments when they thought it wasn't possible, I was transferred to Jordan Cowles in their Signature Services Group who confirmed that they could offer a 120-day USA touring policy for people bringing their 'collector cars' to the USA for organised collector car tours, shows, and similar events. As I had planned on attending the Vermont event this fitted the bill perfectly. Within a couple of hours Jordan had arranged a policy which included an agreed valuation and in fact covered me for a total of 150 days. He emailed the documents directly to me.

US Import Regulations.

Regulations governing the importation of motor vehicles manufactured outside the US which do not conform to US Safety and Emission standards in the first instance, are dependent on the age of the vehicle. While there are stringent safety and emissions requirements that must be met by vehicles under 25 years old, if you are importing a car which is over 25 years old, it qualifies for exemption from both safety and emissions standard regulations.

The shipping company will require copies of the US Department of Transportation declaration form HS-7 (this looks intimidating at first but for 25 year old vehicles you simply fill in boxes 1 and 5, your name, address and signature. (there is a Name of Importer box but leave this blank) US Environmental Protection Declaration Form 3520-1 (select Code E and vehicle details) and sign. Also the V5C, MOT Certificate, your Passport and, oh yes, some money! The US forms are available on the shipping company's website.

Additionally, if you want to avoid import duty you will need to send a letter to the US EPA, applying for the temporary importation of the vehicle. The letter should include your planned dates, the reason for importation (i.e. road tour and car show attendance) and include a paragraph confirming that you consent to the EPA collecting and storing your data and VIN. You will need to attach a copy of your V5C and shipping information. This can take up to 21 days but you must have confirmation in place before the car is released by the US Customs Broker. If you pay the duty, it will not be refunded later. Send your application to David C. Hurlin, EPA Imports Line, Exemptions, email imports@epa.gov Phone: (734) 214-4098 or 4100, Fax: (734) 214-467

So, with dates and shipping route confirmed, paperwork in hand, insurance arranged and some money changing hands, (you will need to pay the US Customs Broker before you can collect the car at the destination port) you're all set. Next, the shipping company will issue a Standard Shipping Note, two copies of which you will need to take with you when you deliver your car to the departure port; you must ensure that both copies are signed and dated by a port representative. You retain one copy.



The shipping company will send a confirmation when your car has departed and progress across the ocean can be monitored using the MarineTraffic app. The next piece is very straight forward depending, on the season and the ship carrying your pride and joy managing to weather the storms and slip past the iceberg zone. It will arrive in the US and you will be contacted by the US Customs Broker requesting some more money. They will then issue a Delivery/Pick Up Order. Print this out and take it to the port and your car will be released. Any extra costs? You can pay for transit insurance but that is up to you. One thing to bear in mind is that unlike cross Channel ferries, shipping of this type doesn't keep to a rigid schedule and flexibility needs to be included in your own schedule.



I made sure that I took a hard copy of all documents, as well as electronic copies, you never know what you might need. Although the process does appear to be a little complicated it proved, in fact, to be very straight forward. On a bright sunny morning in June last year, I set off for Liverpool and after a fairly traffic free journey dropped the car off at the docks. A few days later I received confirmation that my car had departed for New York via Halifax, Nova Scotia aboard the Atlantic Sun. I flew to JFK arriving on the day before the ship was scheduled to arrive. Two days later I took a taxi to the Port of New York in Newark, paperwork in hand, and collected the car which was clean and unscathed.



But what do you do if it all goes wrong? Well that will have to wait for the next part of the story. Stay tuned...

5 Speed Gearbox Conversion

This is the story of your scribe's decision to progress to 5 gears in the V8, which I have owned for 39 years now. In 2018 and after 45 years and 118,000 miles of reliable service the original gearbox in my early factory V8 (with overdrive in 3rd and 4th) started to show signs of age and wear. Reverse jumped out of gear, unless held in position and there were increasing metallic noises (like rattling a bunch of knitting needles!) emanating from the gear lever. The internals sounded 'slack' to say the least. The original basic design was on the limit with the additional torque of the V8 engine and parts are now becoming difficult to obtain, so I started to consider my options.



Rebuilding would be costly and likely to be fraught with difficulties. If successful, I would be simply rebuilding the original fragility problems back into the gearbox. Then there was the question of originality. My head was telling me that this was not the sensible way forward. I've owned the car since 1984 and I had no intention of selling it, so, although controversial, I decided that a 'better box' was needed. Much has been written on replacement gearboxes for the MGB V8, all having their pros and cons. I considered the LT77 'box, as fitted to the Rover SD1, which is slightly slimmer but taller than the original item and hence requires some modification to the transmission tunnel. Also considered was the late R380, which is probably a better alternative but still requires similar tunnel modifications. Neither were therefore ideal. The Ford T5 'box has been widely used in North America and until recently on this side of the Atlantic, a popular choice was the Ford Sierra Type 9 gear box. Around this time a company called Vitesse Global developed an option of using a Mazda 5 speed gearbox, complete with a conversion kit for use on several classics, including the MGB GT V8. There are several advantages to the Vitesse

gearbox. First it requires no modification to the transmission tunnel and it's a direct bolt in solution, with no cutting or welding needed. Second, the gear ratios are very similar (in fact, slightly better) to the original gearbox, with 5th gear being virtually identical to 4th gear overdrive. The gear lever is a bespoke item and exits the gearbox in the original position. The only item needing alteration is the speedo, which needs recalibration. An added bonus with the brand-new Mazda gearbox is the concentric slave cylinder and remote bleeding pipe, which terminates in the engine bay. So, future clutch bleeding operations are performed from within the engine bay, rather than underneath the car. All parts are warranted for 12 months. Happy days!

This was indeed a very interesting option, so I called the guys at Vitesse and before long I was booked in for a test drive of their home-grown 3.9 V8 Roadster demonstrator, with 5 speed gearbox conversion.



On arrival the demonstrator was sitting outside waiting for me and I was soon behind the wheel. From their base in Hinckley, Leicester the open road isn't far away and I hadn't used all the gears before I was convinced. The gear change was light and very positive, with the ratios feeling just right. Back at base, I was given a tour of the workshops and their impressive facilities, culminating in a cup of coffee in the office and a look at the Vitesse work diary. Years ago I had access to a pit and lifting equipment but those days are sadly gone and I no longer have access to either. Vitesse provide a fitting service and so a convenient date was quickly booked. On collection around 2 weeks later (engine out, so other minor work was attended to as a matter of common sense) I was invited to take the car for a test drive. My immediate feeling was that I'd made the right choice and this was confirmed at the end of my 140-mile journey home. So how does it feel to live with a modern 5 speed gearbox on a 1973 MGB GT V8, rather than the original 4 speed with overdrive? Well, I'm now several thousand miles into 5-speed ownership and I can honestly say that it has transformed the driving experience, without losing any of the original character of the car, whatsoever.



The clutch is light but firm. In fact, it's lighter than the original clutch and it took me a while to stop stamping the pedal to the floor on gear changes, due to the lighter feel and general

driving habits with the old 'box. However, this is much better when progressing through congested traffic.

	Standard MGB GT V8	Vitesse Mazda 5 Speed
1 st	3.138	3.136
2 nd	1.974	1.888
3 rd	1.259	1.330
4 th	1.000	1.000
o/d	0.820	-
5th	-	0.814

I mentioned that the gear ratios are an improvement from the original 4 speed box. This is particularly noticeable in the gap between 2nd and 3rd gears, which are much closer, giving a more linear and progressive feel through the gears. In short, it just felt right. The Mazda 5 speed gearbox feels like it belongs in the MG and I honestly believe that had this 'box been around when the MGB GT V8 was first conceived, it would have been the obvious choice from the outset.



The slave cylinder is mounted within the gearbox, which makes it more difficult to get to, should any maintenance be required but modern components such as this are a lot more reliable these days and I shall worry about the consequences, should the need ever arise. If the 'box ever has to be removed, engine removal is no longer required to split it from the gearbox.

So, in summary, my concerns about originality have long since gone. The V8 is a car for driving and if I should suddenly experience a rush of blood to the head accompanied by a desperate need to revert to the original gearbox there are no modifications to the car and so the whole Vitesse installation is completely reversible. I'm sufficiently confident that this won't happen to have parted with the old gearbox, (so many people told me to keep it, just in case but in truth, I have nowhere to store it, so why?) and a fellow enthusiast is now rebuilding it himself to swap into his very original factory V8. Nothing is ever wasted these days, while I look forward to many more years of happy motoring – with 5 forward gears!

If anyone else is considering this option, I'm very happy to answer any questions.

Please note

The V8 Scribe has changed to Peter Berry. Please check that the details at the head of each V8 Newsletter of the copy you set for this issue are:

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