



WELCOME TO THE V8 NEWSLETTER

This month we have a report of the recent V8 Register 'Rubber Ball' event to celebrate the anniversary of the launch of the first rubber bumper V8 at the Inter-Club International Weekend at the Three Counties Showground at Malvern. We also have a few tales of V8 ownership – in this instance, mine!

The Rubber Ball at Malvern

2022 marked the 60th anniversary of the MGB; the following year, 2023 saw the 50th anniversary celebrations for the launch of the larger-engined variants, the MGB GT V8 and also for the RV8 marking up 30 years. These milestones were marked by successful events at Silverstone and Gaydon.

V8 Register member John Davies spied an opportunity to mark a slightly 'niche' anniversary in 2024; that of 50 years of Rubber Bumpered (RB) MGB GT V8s. With no MG Live! event at Silverstone in 2024, this could be organised for the MGCC's annual gathering at the Inter-Club International at Malvern Showground over the 29-30 June weekend. The notion of the 'Rubber Ball' was born.

By any standard the MGB GT V8 was manufactured in tiny numbers, 2591 in total. The 735 RB cars were a smaller subset manufactured in two batches (VINs 2101 – 2632 and 2701 – 2903) between 1974 and 1976.

Of course, no one knows the number of RB V8s still around today. Around 200 have been known to the Register at some time but records date back over many years. An initial ambition for 50 cars to attend to mark the 50th anniversary quickly seemed optimistic. Word went out via the V8 Register website and various Facebook pages, and interested owners made contact with John. Plans were made for the anniversary display at Malvern.

In the end a group of nine RB V8 cars assembled in Severn Hall at the showground on the morning of Saturday 29 June, arranged in a gentle crescent shape in front of the anniversary banner. Two White, two Black, two Tahiti cars plus a Teal, a Bracken and a Rosso Red roadster made for an eye-catching line up.



Nos. 2101 and 2102 reunited after 50 years

Fittingly, first-built Teal 2101 made the 800-mile journey from Lausanne in Switzerland, where it now lives in the care of marque enthusiast Jacques Milliet. This car belonged for many years to former V8 Register Historian and MG employee Geoff Allen, until he passed away. It will be familiar to many long-standing club members and is stunningly original, retaining Geoff's own personal touches and minor modifications.



John Davies' immaculate car, no. 2102

2101 was joined by second-built 2102 belonging to organiser John Davies, likely the first time they had been together since 1974 (unless you know differently!). Tahiti 2401 came all the way from Luxembourg with Ed Leysen. Paul Gill (White 2518) and Stephen Brown (Black 2575) brought their stunningly restored cars from Wales and West Yorkshire respectively; another long-term owner (36 years!) Tim Southall brought Tahiti 2371 from Stourbridge and provoked much discussion about spark plug shields! Steve and Michelle Biggs brought Bracken 2122, won in a competition in 2023!



The grand line-up in the Severn Hall

Finally two Roadster conversions were present; Bernard Robinson brought the well-known 'Super B' created by the Hewitt Brothers in Manchester in 1988-9, and reliably reputed to have provided design inspiration for the RV8's styling. Finally, David Gillingham displayed his 'O' series

development car 'L9', converted to V8 spec by Beers of Houghton in 1982 and still looking superb today. On Saturday at 13.30 all nine cars rolled in convoy to the Display Arena and MC Wayne Scott talked to a number of owners about their cars before moving on to discuss some of the other marques celebrating their own anniversaries. A lesser number (six) repeated the procedure the following day before the cars started to disperse home.



No. 2101 (the ex-Geoff Allen car) arriving from Switzerland. Some reflections on the 'V8 Rubber Ball'; while John didn't achieve his hoped-for number of vehicles, this didn't really matter because the display was very colourful and it was striking how such ostensibly similar vehicles presented so differently. Also, while old acquaintances were renewed, new friendships were definitely formed and the common bond of the cars present certainly underscored MG as 'the marque of friendship'. John is very grateful to all those who went to such trouble to share their cars over the weekend, and thanks the V8 Register Committee (especially Tony, Lorraine and Victor) for their ongoing support.

Check your Batteries



No. 201 outside RAF Wittering

For many years now I have been meaning to convert the 2x 6-volt batteries behind the seats to a single 12v item. Workshop Notes 250, 329 and 357 (the latter being a twin 12v conversion) cover the subject very well. I even bought a 12v conversion kit in a handy plastic tub from the V8 Register around 25 years ago to do the job. But... it's one of those things that just never quite seems to happen. Having to remove the rear seat, rear carpet section and tin cover, in an awkward, bent-double position means they don't always get the regular attention they deserve. This is the story of how my 'well maintained, trickle charged' batteries let me down and how (quite miraculously) they didn't spoil the holiday I had just commenced when it occurred.

Back in 2020 a friend and I had planned a champaign region tour with our wives. I would take the V8 and he was in his TVR. Then Covid came along and skewed everything. The planned trip was in September, when restrictions were easing - but we all felt that an overseas trip was perhaps a little unwise at this time. We therefore quickly repurposed our plans to become a trip to the Yorkshire Dales, staying in a very nice hotel in Harrogate.

Car preparations completed and packing finalised, the departure date soon arrived. We set off from NW Kent and

were soon on the other side of London, heading north towards our lunch stop just outside Peterborough. During our very nice pub lunch, I remembered a photo opportunity for the cars, around 10 miles further north up the A1. RAF Wittering, displays a lovely Hawker Siddeley (Jump-Jet) Harrier outside the entrance; this would be our photo shoot location. We pulled into the car park, introduced ourselves to the RAF sentries, who were more than happy with our photo plans and lined the cars up in front of the Harrier. This is where the problems began.

After a few shots (not from the sentries) I jumped back into the V8 and turned the key. Click... Nothing more, just 'click'. I quickly pulled out the back seat, carpet, tin cover, etc and checked the battery terminal connections. Everything was fine and tight. My friend suggested that we try bump-starting the car, so a comical sight ensued with my friend and our two wives pushing the V8 around the carpark. Luckily the engine fired quickly (well, I'd just completed 100 miles of trouble-free motoring) and so we jumped in the two cars, waved to the RAF guards, (we were waiting for little red dots to appear on our foreheads!) who were laughing and slightly bemused by our antics and sped off up the A1. My mind was racing about possible causes until I noticed my small voltmeter (with phone incorporated charger - worth their weight in gold) was reading 15.6 volts! This was definitely not right so I pulled off the A1 into the Grantham services and found a friendly AA Patrol parked up in the far corner of the carpark. As I pulled up, left the engine running, greeted the Patrol and started explaining the problem, the engine simply cut out. As an AA member, I phoned through for assistance, completed all the formalities, etc. and the nice lady hooked me up straight away to the Patrol standing beside me.



Two new 6-volt batteries firmly strapped in place

I still had the lid off the batteries so the Patrol connected up his voltmeter to each 6-volt battery, one at a time. One read 3 volts and the other was little better at 4 volts. So, in series, I had 7 volts on a 12-volt system. My batteries had chosen this moment (100 mile from home) to throw in the towel - and yet, the car had successfully started at least 4 times that morning. The nature of modern day batteries appears to be fine one moment and dead the next, rather than gently draining as they used to, years ago. Next, the AA Patrol connected up his 12-volt jump pack and I turned the key. The

car started perfectly, with my voltmeter settling down at 13.6 volts. This pretty much proved that there was nothing wrong with the alternator or the starter motor. So... what to do? The AA man said, "You're good to go now sir." I pointed out that there was the small matter of me having his jump-pack hard-wired to my car and that he would probably want it back. "No problem, sir. I'll follow you, where are you going?" "Harrogate..." was my reply, which was around a further 100 miles up the road. The AA man grinned, took off his hi-viz jacket, put on his sunglasses and said "Shall we be on our way then sir?"

So that was it, the AA man followed me all the way to our hotel carpark, which turned out to be a lovely drive, (followed by a Ford Transit) where we removed the jump-pack and the engine promptly died. The next day I found a Euro Car Parts centre just 2 miles away and they actually had 2x 6-volt batteries in stock. We jumped in the TVR (ever reliable!) collected the batteries, fitted them and my worries were over. The hotel even offered to dispose of the two dead batteries, free of charge with their commercial waste. I think I should have bought a lottery ticket that day! The Yorkshire Dales were fantastic, with some incredible scenery and wonderful driving roads. On our return home, I checked the age of the old batteries. Nine years...! I had guessed around five years but time runs away and I was slightly embarrassed to find out their true age. They didn't really owe me anything. So, four years later, and bringing us fully up to date in the summer of 2024, perhaps the time has come to brush the dust off that 12-volt conversion kit and get the back seat out. The moral of this story is a simple one; although out of sight is generally out of mind, check your batteries regularly!

V8 Engine Stabilizer Bar

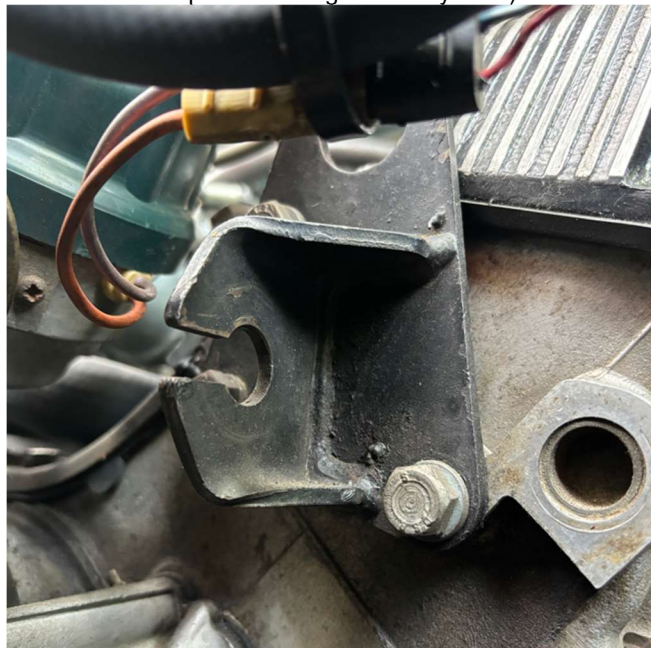
I've owned no. 201 (the 100th production V8) since July 1984 and so it has survived one marriage and two children. I'm still married and the children are now grown up and have (almost) left home. I've been retired for three years now and the plan is to use the V8 more for touring purposes, both here at home in the UK and in Europe. A few years ago and after 118,000 miles the original gearbox was showing signs of wear, so after some lengthy research the decision was taken to fit a Vitesse 5-speed box. The story was covered a year ago in the August 2023 edition of Safety Fast!, within these columns.

While the engine was out the after-market engine stabilizer bar was removed. On refitting the bar it became evident on the journey home that the short metal bush, which passes through the inner wing, was rubbing on the inner wing, causing a very loud chafing sound, much as if something was knocking badly. It took a while to diagnose but removal of the stabilizer bar cured the problem. Now, the original reason for fitting the bar back in 1988 was to avoid the affects of engine torque twisting the engine and knocking the offside cast manifold against the steering column, with the possibility of cracking the manifold. The cast manifolds were replaced by stainless tubular manifold in 1994, resulting in a much-improved clearance. So when the 'rattle' was diagnosed back to the stabilizer bar and it was removed, it was never refitted. Fast forward to May this year, when we took the V8 to France and Belgium. There were 25 other cars on the tour and ours was the only MG. Suffice to say that there was some high-speed cruising on the péage (why not with some beautifully maintained roads and a speed limit of 130 kph) and the V8 kept up very nicely with some much faster cars. A problem I did encounter, however, was that as I lifted off the throttle at the higher speeds the car felt momentarily unstable, in fact quite wobbly for a split second – which was a little concerning. The same 'wobble' occurred when the throttle was re-applied once again. I could find nothing wrong with the steering or the suspension. The problem was slightly improved when I let a couple of pounds out of the front tyres as I had set them quite

high for touring purposes. This did ease the problem slightly, although the 'wobble' was still quite pronounced.

My thoughts then turned to the previously removed stabilizer bar, which resists the torque of the V8 engine when power is applied. The position of the engine mountings is well below the CoG of the engine and the original factory set-up has nothing further to resist this on/off torque of the V8. (Hence the reason it's a very common and popular upgrade for many owners on their V8s.)

On our return home I dusted off the stabilizer bar, which was still on the garage shelf and refitted it. Fitting was simplified as the original engine mounted bracket has a slotted hole, making fit-up a lot easier. (Plenty of Vaseline was applied to the collar when it passes through the bodywork.)



Stabilizer Bar mounting bracket – with slot

A suitable piece of dual carriageway was found in the UK and at a more modest speed, the throttle was repeatedly applied; on and off again. Surprise, surprise, the wobble effect had gone. I believe the reduction of the tyre pressures made the side walls softer and hence they absorbed some of the 'torque-shift' more readily.



Stabilizer Bar reinstalled on no. 201, problem solved.

My engine mountings were replaced nearly 6 years ago now so with the quality of modern rubbers are probably not in their first flush of youth. I'm sure they're good for a few more miles though with the stabilizer bar refitted.

V8 Steering Gaiter Clips

While I was under the V8 recently completing the annual oil change, I noticed that the rubber boots on the track rod ends

were significantly torn on both sides of the car. I believe this is an MoT failure, as dirt can enter the ball joint and exacerbate premature wear, so I arranged to have new track rod ends fitted, complete with new rubber boots. It occurred to me that although in good condition, it might be false economy not to replace the steering rack gaiters at the same time, as the track rod ends would only have to be removed again in the future to replace the gaiters. New gaiters were purchased from a well-known MG parts supplier and I was slightly surprised to find that they came with plastic tie-wraps, rather than the more usual stainless steel jubilee clips. Although I was sceptical, I arranged for all parts to be fitted and the tracking realigned at my local specialist. The work was completed quickly and I drove the car home. The following day I completed a 70-mile round trip in the V8 and parked the car up in the garage overnight. The next morning, I walked into the garage and found an amount of steering rack oil on the floor, having leaked around the larger tie-wrap clips; I'd say about a teaspoons-worth. Not a complete surprise, I must say and not a huge amount but as the rack only contains half a pint, I didn't want to lose any more. Once again, I'm sure a leaking gaiter is also an MoT failure point so something had to be done. I looked at other parts suppliers and found one who showed conventional jubilee clips on their web page. When I phoned and asked if the gaiters did in fact come with these jubilee clips, I was told that their website picture was an old photograph and they only come with plastic tie-wraps now. Cost saving, I guess. Not quite what I had in mind and I wonder how other members get on with these. I scratched around on eBay and found some clips so I ordered a pack of five. They duly arrived but when I tried to fit them, I found they were slightly too wide and fouled with the rubber lip around the wide end of the gaiter. A further search on the internet turned up a suitable looking item at Halfords. So, I popped down to my local store to at least have a look and measure their thickness. They turned out to be approximately 3mm narrower than the previously purchased items and hence were exactly what I needed. I bought two such clips (beware, they're not cheap!) with Halfords reference number FIXG 302, came home and fitted them.



New steering rack gaiter clips, in preference to cable-ties. They fit very well and tightened properly around the gaiter ends. 700 miles later and the gaiters are as dry as a bone. I believe strongly in 'the right tool for the job' and this proved to be the case in this instance. One last warning to fellow members, if you're under your car in this area, check the steering rack mounts very carefully, as there have been reported instances of cracks on some cars in the past. The RV8 can also suffer from the same problem. This, of course, has very serious safety implications and if you find such a crack, the car should not be driven further until a full repair has been completed by a known specialist. Workshop Notes 338 and 339 cover this matter in considerable detail.

Frontline Front Valance



Photo courtesy of Bonhams|Cars Online, showing the Frontline spoiler fitted, replicating the original valance profile.

For some years now I've had thoughts of replacing my front valance with one with a small spoiler to improve high speed stability on motorways. I do, however, like to keep my V8 looking standard and so I've had my doubts about changing the appearance of the car. (The original design was beautiful when it was launched way back in 1962, why change it?) This has largely kept such thoughts at bay, until I came across the Frontline valance, with a subtle lip to the lower edge, which seems to fit the original design very well. Ah yes, but how would it look on an otherwise standard looking V8, with original chrome bumper, etc? Once again, such thoughts were tossed into the long grass until recently, when a friend sent me a picture of a Teal Blue V8 which was up for auction with Bonhams Cars Online. Finally, I could see a standard Teal Blue V8 with a Frontline valance fitted and to be honest, I liked it. Some enquiries resulted in the knowledge that the valance comes without fixing holes, to allow the customer to trim the height of the valance to suit their individual car. I particularly like the way this example follows the line of the original valance. If I decide to take the plunge, it will not be a DIY job. I do not possess the necessary skills to trim the valance correctly, drill the fixing holes and spray the prepared item. Better to leave this to an expert. Further enquiries have been made as I write this and I will report back if there is sufficient interest and I have one fitted.



Photo courtesy of Bonhams|Cars Online. Frontline spoiler side view.

If any other members have had experience of fitting or living with a Frontline valance at motorway speeds, please get in touch and share your views, opinions and observations.