

# WELCOME TO THE V8 NEWSLETTER



Robert and Stella Crowson at Tissington Ford

## V8 Derbyshire Tour 2018

The four day tour, organised by Ken Clayton and Carol Fletcher, was based at The New Bath Hotel and Spa at Matlock Bath and included routes through Derbyshire and the Staffordshire Moorlands, with visits to Haddon Hall, Crich Tramway Village, Denby Pottery Village and Renishaw Hall. Forty members attended the V8 Derbyshire Tour with 14 RV8s, 4 MGBGTV8s, 1 MGB and an MGTF. Here Ken and Carol recall an enjoyable tour.

**Sunday 2nd September** saw the hotel car park gradually fill up with V8s as members arrived. The furthest travelled were Victor and Evelynne Rodrigues, from Switzerland.

Tour Handbooks and goodie bags were distributed, followed by dinner.

**Monday 3rd September** revealed a sunny morning and an eager group of V8s itching to

start the tour. The morning route took us through the pretty Derbyshire White Peak villages, before taking in views at Monsal Head and the Headstone viaduct with the River Wye, 228 metres below. We then travelled to Bretton to admire the view over Eyam edge across the White Peak, before descending into the village of Eyam.

The village is noted for the outbreak of Bubonic Plague in 1665 as a local village tailor, who had ordered a bale of cloth from London to make cloths for the villagers, unwittingly triggering a chain of events that led to 260 Eyam villagers dying from bubonic plague. This was more than double the mortality rate suffered by the citizens of London in the great Plague. Under the direction of the vicar the villages chose to isolate themselves from the surrounding areas rather than letting the infection spread. An extraordinary and enduring example of personal self-sacrifice to prevent further suffering.

Arriving at Haddon Hall we had an escorted tour of this Jacobean Mansion House, home to the Manners Family.

The afternoon tour took us over to the Staffordshire Moorlands and to some great scenery of Chrome Hill and Parkhouse Hill, looking like a 'sleeping dinosaur'. The tour then descended to Ilam (NT) to enjoy a



RV8s at Eyam Edge at Bretton





Crich Tramway Village

“room with a view”, the Tea Room has a stunning view of Bunker Hill and Thorpe Cloud.

**An unexpected problem for Ron Warr** arose on Monday when the gear lever on his MGBGTV8 Conversion snapped. Fortunately the tour organiser, Ken Clayton, had identified several “Recovery/Mechanic” specialists in the area so Ron was able to remove the base section of the lever and take both parts to a specialist and have them welded together. He returned and refitted the lever and continued with the tour route.

Tissington Ford was then tackled by all the Tour participants, some more vigorously than others. Robert and Stella Crowson were awarded the prize for creating the largest ‘Bow wave’ as they passed through.

The evening entertainment was provided by William Ruff who gave an excellent illustrated talk on “A day in the life of the English Language”; which provided interesting facts about such words as (MG) Midget, etc., This was followed by a 40th Anniversary Cake for the V8 Register.

**Tuesday 4th September**, after a leisurely start, we travelled to Crich Tramway Village. Members travelled on Trams and were given an interesting guided tour of some of the village: including a timely exit by John Bradney from the Pissour, to the delight of the V8 Tour members!

The rain started which dampened the potential for views on the remainder of this day as we travelled to the Dark Peak of Derbyshire. Several members went to

Castleton and Lady Bower Reservoir. The weather getting better as the day unfolded.

Evening entertainment was provided by Robin Massey who showed members the art of paper folding, origami, the finale being members producing their own hats!

**Wednesday 5th September** we toured further into the White Peak, passing through the picturesque Dovedale. We then visited Denby Pottery Village for a factory tour. Several members made frogs and the more ambitious had a go at decorating a plate.

Evening entertainment was a quiz followed by an Awards Evening.

**Thursday 6th September** took the tour over moorland above Chatsworth House to Renishaw Hall and Gardens. The Hall has been the family home of the Sitwell's for over 400 years. Members had an entertaining guided tour of the Hall.

We would like to thank all Tour Members for their company over the five days. A V8 Tour enjoyed by all who took part.

Next year's V8 Tour will be organised by Richard and Victoria Withington and will be based in Lincolnshire.



Francine Selwyn decorates a plate as Evelyn Rodrigues looks on





Replacement Vitesse gearbox installed

## Replacement Vitesse gearbox

After 118,000 miles the original gearbox in Peter Berry's early Factory V8 started making ominous sounds. All the gears would still engage without difficulty but a sound similar to a bunch of knitting needles rattling was clearly audible, coming up through the gearlever. Of course, nothing can be fully diagnosed without the removal of the gearbox and a partial dismantle, however the experts who drove the car agreed that the end of the gearbox's life time was fast approaching. Here Peter relates his experience with Vitesse Global, the installation of their 5 speed Mazda gearbox, the aftersales service he received and his overall impressions with the new gearbox.

## So what to do?

The gearbox on the Factory V8 is a notoriously weak link as it received very little upgrade from the standard 1800 unit at the time the V8 went into production. Briefly my thought process went along these lines: do I want to remove the 'box, dismantle it, find the problem, rebuild it (with no guarantee of sourcing all necessary parts, as they become increasingly difficult to find), reinstall it and replace the whole lot again, just to reinstate the weak link once more? Yes, it would be faithfully original still, warts and all! Or should I throw caution to the wind and investigate the fitting of the highly acclaimed Vitesse Mazda 5 speed gearbox, which is a direct replacement without any modifications, assuming you discount recalibration of the speedometer.

## Contacting Vitesse

I called Vitesse and was immediately impressed with their attitude and willingness to explain everything in detail. It seems they really have thought of everything in their research and development into making the Mazda 'box highly compatible with the MGB – both the 1800 and V8 powered models. They indicated they could do the job in two weeks' time so I booked it in.

The 130 mile drive to Hinckley near Leicester was completed without incident and Vitesse were very welcoming. They supply Caterham and Morgan with gearboxes at an industrial level. I was also offered a drive in their 4.0 litre MGBV8 demonstrator, and although I'd already committed to the conversion at this stage, I was convinced before I was into third gear! It really is that good.

## What was the car like on collection?

Two weeks later the car was ready for collection. The outsourced speedo recalibration took the time, not the basic work of replacing the gearbox. So I collected the car and set off back down the M1 with the nicest gear change I had experienced in a long time. All went extremely well until the lower reaches of the M1 and the M25, when queues of traffic meant that progress was stop/start for several miles - typical M25 conditions. A knock was developing with the engine at idle. It sounded like part of the exhaust was fouling with the bodywork. I arrived home without incident, but still with the 'knock' when at rest and I called Vitesse the next day. They reassured me they would find the problem and fix it, so I sent them a short video with the bonnet up and the engine at idle. The noise was self-evident

but not easily traceable, as all potential problem areas showed plenty of clearance between the exhaust and the bodywork.

Vitesse decided to send their engineer to my home to identify the cause and either fix it on the spot, or trailer the car back up to Hinckley, for further diagnosis. Now, many years ago, I fitted an engine stabiliser bar between the nearside inner wing and the engine. This was to prevent the common problem of the offside cast iron exhaust manifold knocking against the steering column under acceleration. This had been known to crack manifolds in some cases, so the fitting of the bar eliminated the problem. Some years later I fitted tubular manifolds for improved breathing, thus increasing the clearance issue considerably but the stabiliser bar remained. Chris from Vitesse felt the problem was here and on removal of the bar, the knock was gone. The cause was friction between a small collar on the bar which passed through a hole on the inner wing. It was "squeaking" back and forth as the engine rocked slightly at idle. Amplification from the body panels resulted in the man with a thousand hammers! So problem solved and all was once again well. Vitesse even came along with a shorter gear lever and fitted it as the original Mazda item was around 40mm too long. I cannot fault the after-sales service, it was exemplary.

## So what is it like to drive?

I can only say it has transformed the car. The ratios are very similar to the original gearbox but with slightly improved spacing between second and third. The addition of a fifth gear (as opposed to overdrive on third





and fourth, which is gone forever, which is a shame) is a joy and frankly, is far more intuitive with today's motoring. Some will decry this remark but personally I think it adds, rather than detracts to the character of the car.

The gear change is positive, without being clunky and the clutch feels very similar to the original item, so no change there. One nice touch is that the bleed nipple is at the end of a long hydraulic hose, which terminates in the engine bay, adjacent to the master cylinder. So no more grovelling under the car to bleed the clutch – not that I'm expecting to do that any time soon. Oil type is SAE 75W-90 and the capacity is 2.0L. The shift control case, which houses the gear lever and has its own separate oil bath, holds a further 290-330ml. And here's the best bit though; the service interval is 5 years or 62,500 miles (100,000 km) so it **really is a case of fit and forget**. Apart from the significant cost (the kit at £2,525 and installation at a reasonable £450, both plus VAT), the decision to fit this gearbox was a no-brainer. These cars are for driving and I've just future-proofed that experience by some margin.

Further **information and fitting instructions** are available on the Vitesse website at: <https://www.vitesse-ltd.com/>

### V8 Events in 2019

For 2019 the year will start with the traditional **V8 Curry Night** at the Loyds Indian Restaurant in Knowle near Solihull on Saturday 9th February, the evening before the MG-Triumph Show at Stoneleigh only a few miles to the east of Knowle.

A **V8 Technical Day** with an interesting selection of presentations is provisionally set for Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June and located at the study centre on fellow member Charles Peers' farm at Great Milton near Watlington in Oxfordshire, conveniently just a few miles west of Junctions 7 and 8 on the M40. It was the location for the first well attended V8 Technical Day in 2013. The date will be confirmed once the Club's dates for MGLive! at Silverstone are settled and then further details and the booking arrangements will follow promptly. Several events are planned during the week running up to MGLive! and details will follow in the New Year. The **next V8 Tour** in the popular series will be in September 2019 based in Lincolnshire and arranged by Richard and Victoria Withington. Later in September another **Rolling Road Session** is planned by Steve Newton at Aldon Automotive in the West Midlands.

### Classic car theft is rising

"One classic car a day is stolen" was the headline for the lead article in the popular Classic Car Weekly a few weeks ago.

It's clear classic car owners need to be both vigilant and prepared. One of the best ways of protecting your classic car is to get a tracker fitted which will give you a prompt alert on your mobile phone of interference with your car with mapping information as to where the car is. With that prompt information, and better still a professional tracking package with your tracker, the chances of a successful recovery of a stolen classic car are far greater. Also the likelihood of the police assisting when the location of the stolen car is known is also greater. So now is the time to think hard about investing in a tracker. See our full article on trackers via our "More" webpage.

### Autumn Budget

Following the Chancellor's Budget statement our usual prompt online report on the few measures announced of interest to the classic motoring enthusiast covered:

**Fuel Duty frozen** - as announced by the Prime Minister at the Conservative Party conference, fuel duty will be frozen for a ninth consecutive year.

**VED rates and bands** - no change to the VED rates other than RPI increases are to be made. VED rates have increased in line with inflation since 2010.

**VED rates for cars registered before April 2018** will increase in line with RPI from 1st April 2019 for cars, vans and motor cycles. The Budget documents make no mention of vehicles registered prior to 2001, but it seems likely that rates will increase by £5 or £10 in line with other rates.

**VED classic car exemption** - no change to the rolling 40 year VED exemption announced at the Budget 2014.

**Insurance Premium Tax (IPT)** - the rate of IPT will remain unchanged.

**Pothole repairs** - £420m is to be allocated to local councils to repair potholes but it does not sound enough given the state of the roads in the UK.

**Apprenticeships** - many classic car enthusiasts are concerned that the traditional skills needed to maintain their vehicles are passing with an older generation, so it is good news that further support will be given to apprenticeships.

Further details are available on our "More" webpage at: [www.v8register.net/more.htm](http://www.v8register.net/more.htm)