



Changing a speedometer when an RV8 is reimported from Japan

Japanese specification RV8s were exported to Japan with a speedometer incorporating an odometer, both calibrated in kilometres. Many RV8s have returned to the UK as reimports so what is the position with regard to the need for a speedometer change from kilometres to miles and retaining evidence of the mileage before that change so the owner of the vehicle can provide an indication of the total mileage when the car is subsequently offered for sale? Here Chris Hunt Cooke and Victor Smith set out what they believe are useful notes for RV8 enthusiasts together with information posted by fellow V8 Register members on a V8 Bulletin Board [thread](#).

What is the legal position regarding speedometers in the UK?

Chris Hunt Cooke set out the requirements applying to a vehicle registered in the UK: the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 [LINK](#) have the effect that

an **RV8 must have a speedometer calibrated in both mph and kph**, so it is a legal requirement for a reimported Japanese spec car to have its speedo changed. "Having said that, it would not be an MOT failure and the chances of a kph speedometer ever coming to the attention of the police must be very slight. When I had my RV8 it never had the speedo changed and it never caused me any problem!"

The straightforward way of dealing with the issue would be to **change the speedo head for one calibrated in both kph and mph**, but I think it would not be practical to keep the old speedo as both suppliers I have seen seem to deal only on an exchange basis. It is not much of a proof on mileage covered in any event".

As a DIY solution, it would be possible I suppose for mph speeds to be neatly written on the glass of a kph speedo to comply with the law. It is an interesting question whether a satnav showing the road speed would meet the UK requirements, I am inclined to think that it would.

Those owners who would really like to keep everything in order could 'clock' the odometer of their replacement mph speedo forward to indicate in miles the distance recorded in kilometres on the original instrument calibrated in kilometres".

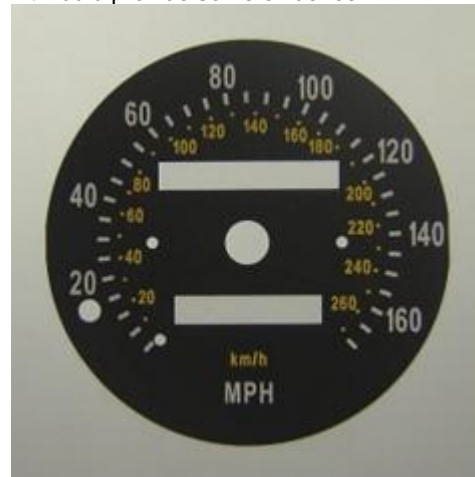
Chris Hunt Cooke later added "Type approval regulations made in 1978, which would have applied to the RV8 when built in the early/mid 1990s, brought into force an EU commission directive [LINK](#) which specified dual marking in these terms: 4.2.2. *In the case of a speedometer manufactured for sale in any Member State where imperial units of measurement are used, and where transitional arrangements in accordance with Article 5 are in force, the speedometer shall also be marked in mph (miles per hour); the graduations shall be of 1, 2, 5 or 10 mph. The values of the speed shall be indicated on the dial at intervals not exceeding 20 mph.*

Who offer speedometer dial conversion services?

From postings on a V8BB thread, fellow members mentioned their experiences with various suppliers of replacement speedo dials or dial replacement services.

Prodash

While searching Chris Hunt Cooke did come across a very relevant item of interest - a **dial conversion kit for the RV8** [LINK](#) offered by Prodash in Somerset which might be an economic and convenient way of resolving the issue. That would leave the odometer reading in kilometres unless a re-calibration was done, but owners might be prepared to live with that and explain on selling the vehicle that it still had the original speedometer. An invoice for the conversion kit would provide some evidence.



Prodash offer two replacement speedo dial conversion services:

- **RV8 replacement kph/mpg dial**

Their new speedometer dials are a direct replacement polycarbonate units as fitted by the manufacturer. The scaling and colours are very closely matched to ensure a factory look and the backlight is carefully managed for night illumination. Due to the complexity of a speedometer unit Prodash recommend they install dial conversion kits or that it is done by a trained technician to avoid damage to the delicate needle assembly.

Once the speedometer is damaged it usually means a replacement is necessary but they are able to repair some versions. The cost shown on the Prodash website for a replacement dial is £37.95 plus UK delivery of £2.45 plus VAT, indicating a total of **£48.48**.

Prodash confirmed they "do not provide fitting instructions and mentioned "the speedometer on the RV8 is not really designed to come apart, so in order to get into the speedometer unit you have to prise off the clamp ring. You also need to be very careful getting the needle off the shaft - we use special tools for these". However they do offer a dial conversion fitting service.

- **RV8 kph/mpg speedo dial conversion fitting service**

Prodash offer a kph/mpg dial conversion service. If you send them your speedometer, they will then convert it for you and it send back ready for refitting to your car. Their price for that service is £145 plus VAT including return carriage, indicating a total **£174.00**.

See the [Prodash website](#).

Lockwood International

This company was mentioned by Martin Cridford and appears to offer only a replacement dial supply service.

- **RV8 replacement kph/mpg dial**

On their website a replacement dial (Part No 8029) costs **£49.42** including UK delivery and VAT.

Their link to a [fitting guide](#) says "throughout the world, many professionals in the automotive industry plus hundreds of thousands of ordinary car owners who have no technical training have fitted Lockwood replacement dials. They mention a step by step guide which they include with every dial kit they send out which they "feel sure you will find extremely helpful"!

However Lockwood International's fitting guidelines include a caution: "No responsibility will be accepted by

Lockwood International Ltd for any damage caused whilst, or as a result of, fitting these dials"!

- **RV8 kph/mpg speedo dial conversion fitting service**

A search of their website indicated a **dial fitting service was not offered by Lockwood International** despite their warning dial replacement was not an easy task.

See the [Lockwood International website](#).

Speedy Cables

This long established firm has been involved in servicing speedometers for many years and has gathered a good reputation. Their website offers no replacement RV8 speedo dials but on enquiry they responded saying they **do not supply replacement speedo dials on their own but we are able to offer an RV8 speedo dial replacement and fitting service**. The cost for this service is £160 plus carriage (£12 to a UK address) and VAT so a total of **£206.40**. Both Dave Morris and Mike Howlett mentioned they had have had instruments rebuilt by Speedy Cables who provided a good service.

See the [Speedy Cables website](#).

Speedograph Richfield

Peter Spurr mentioned their website says they "carry out kph to mph conversions and vice versa and that they have a computer assisted dial production facility and can manufacture or reprint dials. You need to send them details of your speedometer to get a quote for their replacement dial supply and fitting service.

See the [Speedograph Richfield website](#).

Clive Wheatley mgv8parts

He offers an RV8 speedometer (exchange only) at £150 including VAT". It's a speedometer with a mph dial with kph also shown and the odometer is changed to read miles and not kilometres. The speedos are sent off to a specialist Clive uses for the speedo dial change and recalibration of the odometer. The service can take up to three months particularly if you want your own speedo returned rather than an exchange unit. [Website link](#)

VDO Vision speedometer

Dave Morris mentioned that as original speedos are obsolete and very difficult to get hold of, a [similar alternative](#) is available from VDO.

How do you get evidence of total mileage should you wish to sell the car?

If you have a speedometer dial conversion or a replacement unit, what evidence can you have showing the total or aggregate mileage in Japan and later the UK? It is a key concern when you may later come to sell the car.

Looking at the options:

- **Fitting a kph/mpg dial conversion kit**

As the speedometer unit is the same instrument, the aggregate "mileage" will be as recorded except it will be recorded in kilometres on the odometer. But reading the UK regulations the requirement for calibration in both kph/mpg applies to **recording the speed of the vehicle shown on the dial and not the total "mileage" recorded**, so a simple dial conversion would be sufficient to comply with the regulations. When subsequently an owner came to sell a reimported RV8 with a dial conversion, the aggregate "mileage" could be stated as indicated on the odometer in kilometres. The fact that it was the original instrument and not a replacement unit should provide sufficient reassurance for a buyer.

- **Using a kph/mpg dial conversion service**

The only addition is the speedometer will have been removed from the car, sent off for the professional conversion of the dial and then the same unit returned for reinstallation in the same car.

- **Replacing an original kph speedometer with another exchange unit calibrated in both kph/mpg**

In this case there would be two units - the original Japan spec speedo with an odometer recording the "mileage" in kilometres and the replacement exchange kph/mpg speedo with an odometer recording the "mileage" in miles. The owner of the vehicle would need acceptable evidence of the recorded "mileage" in kilometres on the original kph odometer sent off on an exchange basis so that the aggregate "mileage" could be checked later by a buyer by their adding that kilometre "mileage" on the original odometer to that on the replacement odometer (presumably recording in miles following the conversion) at the time of the sale.

If the replacement odometer was purchased on an exchange basis then the physical evidence of "mileage" on the original odometer will have been lost, so the question is what would be acceptable evidence of the original

mileage in kilometres? In that situation a sensible approach for the owner of that RV8 would be to take a good quality photo of the odometer showing the "mileage to date" in kilometres and then **get a copy of that photo certified by a responsible person** by their signing a declaration on the photo. That declaration could be something like "I hereby certify that this photo is of the odometer fitted to the RV8: VIN SARRAWWBMBMG002888 and VRN L888 MGR which shows the "mileage" recorded seen by me on that unit on this day." Signed and dated, possibly even witnessed too.

That should provide acceptable evidence for a buyer. The person certifying might wish to add "In certifying this photo I am not able to verify whether the "mileage" recorded in kilometres on that odometer is the full accumulated mileage covered by this car from new, simply what I have seen on this day".

What is involved in a DIY replacement RV8 speedometer dial installation?

Martin Cridford posted a note on the V8BB thread with his experience saying: "I have converted the speedometer on my RV8 from kph to mph myself using a new dial face supplied by Lockwood International. I believe Lockwood supply the dial faces to others. [Fitting instructions](#) were supplied and are also available on the internet.

The conversion is a challenge with the most difficult part being removal of the black outer rim that holds the glass into the casing. This took considerable time and effort and still resulted in some wrinkles to the outer rim as the rim is crimped back onto the casing. Fortunately these are not too visible once the speedo is fitted back in the dashboard. Even though I had some training in instrument mechanics (as a power station engineer apprentice back in the 1970s) I found changing the face a challenge in itself as the needle has to be removed from the spindle before the face can be changed. It's all too easy to dislodge the spindle which requires further dismantling of the mechanism to get it all back together correctly.

Having successfully changed the dial I am not convinced that it has gone back together correctly with respect to the needle/spindle positioning as the speed indicated seems low to me! I think some form of calibration may be necessary. The odometer display stays in km too which confuses the MOT man and the numbers are not clear as the new dial face is a little foggy in the see

through windows. Had I not been time limited with respect to getting it done for the car's first MOT for registration, I would have gone back to Lockwood for their comments.

Overall a difficult job and far better left to the professionals! Unfortunately I have a penchant for 'having a go' based on the principle that if it was put together it can be taken apart."

Dave Morris mentioned "Presto type hand lifters (made for clocks but work well on most instruments) are available on eBay".

Conclusion

Many of the replacement dials for other cars do not need the removal of the needle of the speedometer but the replacement of the RV8 dial does. As a consequence the task is more difficult. Most RV8 owners, and quite probably many MG RV8 servicing specialists, would not wish to take on the task of fitting the replacement RV8 dial as the risk of damaging the instrument is high unless you have the necessary skills. So realistically most will wish to find a supplier who will provide a replacement dial fitting service. This may be on the basis of fitting the replacement dial to your existing speedometer or alternatively it might be on an exchange basis where you send your Japan spec speedometer and receive another RV8 speedometer which has had a replacement dial fitted showing both mph and kph speeds to conform with UK requirements.

The need and consequential expense of having the odometer recalibrated from kilometres to miles seems unnecessary.

Which option will most RV8 enthusiasts reimporting a Japan

Supplier	Supply RV8 replacement speedo dial incl VAT	Supply & fit replacement speedo dial incl VAT
	£	£
Lockwood International	49.92	n/a
Clive Wheatley mgv8parts	n/a	159.30
Prodash	48.48	174.00
Speedograph Richfield	n/a	by quote
Speedy Cables	n/a	206.40
VDO new speedo (alternative)	n/a	251.52
Prices based on research in December 2016 & include UK delivery		

spec RV8 opt for?

Most RV8 owners will not wish to carry out the dial replacement themselves because the task is recognised as being very difficult with a high risk of damaging the needle and/or the spindle. So the most sensible option for all but the most determined DIY owner is a RV8 kph/mph speedo dial conversion fitting service by one of the specialist firms offering that service mentioned above. The cost of the options reviewed in this article are summarised below.

The supply and fit a replacement mph dial service offered by **Clive Wheatley mgv8parts** on an exchange basis seems the most competitive at **£159** and it includes the recalibration of the odometer from kilometres to miles.

Prodash and Speedy Cables (a long established and well known vehicle instruments servicing specialist) offer a supply and fit service for a new mph speedo dial. Two fellow members mentioned in their posts on the V8BB thread that they had received a good service when using Speedy Cables.

Feedback welcome from fellow members who have had their reimported RV8 speedo dial changed.

Contact: v8registrar@v8register.net

Odometer is an instrument that indicates distance travelled by a vehicle.

Speedometer is an instrument that indicates the speed of a vehicle, usually combined with a device known as an odometer.