

Report for the online V8 AGM 2020 from V8 Chairman

Summary

The last 12 months have been an extraordinary period with the Brexit uncertainties and shenagins in Parliament reaching a very difficult stage in Autumn 2019, then the General Election with a result where the Conservatives had a working majority, exiting the EU and then the hope some level of political order and economic stability might resume in 2020. But then in mid-March 2020 we saw the extraordinary arrival of the Covid-19 pestilence in the UK and the lock-down measures halting events involving mass gatherings (like MGLive! and several V8 Events) and even face-to-face meetings with the requirements for social distancing and avoiding unnecessary travel associated with the lock-down measures. So in lock-down key parts of life for MGV8 enthusiasts were no longer possible – for example attending classic car events, shows and even smaller social events, but also simply driving a classic car for pleasure was classified as an unnecessary journey and not permitted in lock-down. So with the frustration with life in lock-down, many MGV8 enthusiasts have included carrying out work on their MGV8 - varying from basic maintenance to more serious repairs and in some cases even working on major restoration projects. Specialist replacement parts traders like Brown & Gammons and Clive Wheatley report near manic conditions in lock-down with online orders flooding in. MGV8 enthusiasts have also regularly visited online classic car sites, not least the V8 Website, the V8 Bulletin Board and the V8 Register Facebook Group.

The gradual release from the lock-down restrictions from June has enabled enthusiasts to drive their MGV8 on roads and enjoy the pleasure of generally light traffic levels. But what follows for the remainder of 2020 and through Winter into Spring 2021 is uncertain and will almost certainly require careful behaviour and continuing restrictions on mass gatherings. So the importance of providing fellow Members with good online information and support has an increased importance for them.

Increased V8 Website and V8 Bulletin Board activity in lock-down

The amount of **new V8 Website content**, measured by the links to new items on the Recent Changes webpage, picked up significantly (+27.5%) from an average of 10.2/week in February/early March to 13.0/week from 23rd March 2020. With the **V8BB hits** from registered V8BB users were up between 15% and 47% on an average daily basis from mid-March compared with earlier in 2020. So whilst Members were suffering the frustrations of being locked-down the supply of new content on the V8 Website stepped up significantly and Members' activity on the V8BB increased.

Continued strong flow of contributions for the two series of Workshop Notes

Since the start of the year we have seen 25 new V8NOTES from contributors, including four from a new contributor Jim Livingstone – that's a fraction over **one new V8NOTE a week**. The total aggregate number of workshop notes in the two series was **1,054** in mid-June 2020. For the V8NOTES series the total is equivalent to an average rate of production of notes of **1.2 notes per month over 41 years** since the series began in early 1978! For the RV8NOTES series that's an average rate of **1.9 new notes per month over just under 21 years!** It's a measure of the generosity and involvement fellow members have we have had as contributors to the two series.

V8 Register's finances

The V8 Register is a self-funded branch of the Club and since its formation in 1978 has operated as a financially viable entity by using its own commercial initiatives to generate income and attract modest commercial sponsorship funds to cover the operating overheads with no financial support from the Club. Over the last 15 to 20 years the sale of sets of workshop notes and adverts for cars for sale on the V8 Website, together with several trading initiatives, have been both a regular and successful source of net income for the V8 Register. The sale of sets of workshop notes on a USB memory stick have been particularly popular and a valued item by many Members as they contain an ever increasing number of useful spares and maintenance tips and articles contributed by fellow Members.

These items are on offer on the **Online V8 Shop** on the V8 Website and the purchase transactions are processed by Worldpay on their secure payment processing website. Their secure online payment service is convenient for buyers as it enables buyers to pay by debit or credit cards and for the V8 Register as it handles the funds transfer to the V8 Register's bank account. For overseas buyers the service also handles the foreign exchange transfer. The periodic reporting of sales we receive from Worldpay does involve a significant workload for the V8 Treasurer in reconciling the sales and associated fees and charges for their payment processing and funds transfers services together with the necessary bookkeeping.

In 2017 we had to close down our trading activities because we were unable to find a volunteer to maintain the bookkeeping following the sudden resignation of a former V8 Treasurer. The workload of maintaining the reduced bookkeeping fell on the V8 Chairman. It took some time to find a volunteer to take on the V8 Treasurer role and, during the time with our Online V8 Shop closed, the finances of the V8 Register suffered with a much reduced income whilst overheads continued. Those overhead costs included the substantial webhosting costs for our websites (the V8 Website and the V8 Bulletin Board) and related costs. Fortunately John Cumming volunteered to take on the role of V8 Treasurer and in 2018 we were able to get our Online V8 Shop open and operating again. In addition a commercial initiative was

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arranged by Angus Munro who sourced a new supply of attractive metal V8 Register Grille Badges which were offered for sale through the Online V8 Shop and proved to be very popular. In 2019 the sale of both sets of workshop notes and adverts for cars for sale continued to be popular together with the sale of reprints of a popular RV8 book. Overall sales rose by 46% from £1,508 in 2018 to £2,201 in 2019.

The net effect of the resumption of full trading and the commercial initiatives was the net annual surplus rose to £1,096 in 2019 from a loss of £235 in 2018. Total net assets rose by 18.5% to £7,036 thereby maintaining the prudent finances of the V8 Register. The sale of sets of workshop notes on Twister memory sticks, along with the sale of adverts for cars for sale on the V8 Website, are an essential source of net income which enables the V8 Register to remain self-financing and financially viable as a successful register within the Club and to be recognised generally as a leading classic car group.

V8 Events in 2020

The Covid-19 lock-down and constraints over mass gatherings and social distancing requirements have **effectively wiped out both the V8 Register and Club events** in 2020 as indeed it has in so many other sectors of leisure and business in the UK. Many classic car shows and events have also been cancelled. The organiser of the **V8 Kent Tour 2020** planned for September has delayed making a final decision as to whether the tour can go ahead until the 1st August 2020 or whether it might be rolled forward a year to 2021.

Attracting MGV8 enthusiasts and recruiting new Club members

With our contacts with V8 enthusiasts registering their MGV8s with the V8 Register we look for any opportunity to recruit new Club members. A considerable number of new registrations have come in during the first half of 2020 and where no current MG Car Club membership number was shown our success in recruiting them as new Club members jointly with the Club's membership secretary Liz Allsworth, has been notable.

Our aims

The V8 Register aims to provide MGV8 members with useful information and support available online which is seen as interesting, lively and topical that they will value as part of their package of Club membership benefits. It is provided by:

- **Active V8 Website with a good flow of new content.** The V8 Website is run on an "open to all" basis to enable potential new members to see the scope and quality of the information and support we provide thereby attracting them as new members. The convenience of access without a login process is also welcomed by our existing Members. We have a webpage with links to all new material posted to the V8 Website which is a place most visitors go to see what's new – see the "**Recent Changes**" button at the head of the webpages. The V8 Webmaster is Victor Smith.
<https://www.v8register.net/> and <https://www.v8register.net/subpages/websiteupdatelog.htm>
- **V8 Bulletin Board attracts good quality posts with useful information which is accurate and complete.** Access to the V8BB is only available to registered V8BB users who have both registered an MGV8 with the V8 Register and are current Members of the MG Car Club or a recognised overseas branch or affiliate. Our aim for the V8BB is quality rather than quantity of posts and we discourage prattle and unpleasant posts by moderating them. The V8BB Admin is Victor Smith.
<http://www.v8bb.co.uk/>
- **V8 Register Facebook Group.** It's technically a "closed Facebook group" with an application and screening process managed by our V8 Facebook Admin who is Julian Holmes based in Oman.
<https://www.v8register.net/sub/news150721facebook.htm>

Team input and support

Finally many thanks to the team on the V8 Committee and for the tremendous work they do behind the scenes: John Cumming handling the bookkeeping and accounts, Ken Clayton coordinating the V8 Tours & Event, Ian Quarrington for planning and arranging a splendid V8 Kent Tour 2020 now frustrated by lock-down and trying to assess the prospects for running it this year, Julian Holmes in Oman handling the Facebook admin role, Clive Wheatley for talking through many member's calls for spares and technical help, Chris Bound and Steve Newton for their support. Also many thanks for the wonderful contributions to our workshop notes series and our new contributors Peter Spurrs and Jim Livingstone together with Peter Berry and longstanding supporters Peter Beadle, Mike Breedon, Andy Goves and Chris Hunt Cooke. Thanks too to our Pricewatch team of Keith Belcher and Andy Goves in producing our six monthly market review and price guide.

Victor Smith