



WELCOME TO THE V8 NEWSLETTER

This month we have two very different tales of MG V8 ownership. The first is the story of Gemma Grose's ownership of her MGBGT V8, which she has owned for 15 years - and how she nearly lost it to the ravages of time. Our second account this month is part 2 of The Shuttlecock Run, by Philip Roussel-Smith. Philip exported his smart British Racing Green RV8 to the USA temporarily, for the road-trip of a lifetime. Part 1 appeared in our August Newsletter, where Philip explained clearly the process of importing his car for the trip. This month the story continues with the next (unexpected) episode.

TNV 440N Restoration

Gemma has written in with details of her particular trials, tribulations and joys of ownership of her (now) very smart 1974 Citron MGBGT V8, no. 1808. Gemma takes up the story: "The story begins in 1986. My friends and I had just left university and no one had any money. I had recently written off my Alfa Sud (which was surprisingly rust-free at the time) and had replaced it with a Pontiac Firebird. At around the same time a friend traded in her Mini Metro, (which couldn't pull the skin off a rice pudding!) for an MGBGT V8. The first time she pulled up & parked behind me I didn't take much notice of what she had bought; to me it was just another 12-year-old car.



Roll the clock forward to 2008 and I was looking for a toy to tinker with. I have always had an interest in cars and motorbikes and have spent many wet days trackside over the years. I have an engineering degree and most of my career was spent with the Ford Motor Co. working with vehicle teams in their research & development facilities. I felt I needed to get my hands dirty! I made my friend an offer for her V8 and had the first refusal when a 2nd slipped disc was the final straw and she decided she needed something more practical. The deal was done, although my friend went to great lengths to point out all the faults, including a rusty floor pan but I was determined not to let the sale fall through - or

to destroy our friendship, which so often happens with old car sales.

Money changed hands and initially I didn't realise what I had bought, which was a road going MGBGT V8, in pretty much original condition. She had 130,000 miles on the clock at the time (not actually that high, for a 34-year-old car) but it went well and more importantly, it was all mine. I think my friend regretted selling the car at the time, although I believe she's now glad that it went to me. It kept it in the family, in a way. I used the car for around 18 months, very happily, until things started to go downhill - and escalated to a point where I was struggling. Foolishly, I had allowed my partner (at the time, long since gone) to 'help' me tidy the engine bay - so he stripped it out. Then one day I came home from work to find I had no MG! My partner had arranged for it to be trailered away to get the floor pan welded. Matters were made worse by the fact that he had taken a crowbar to the floor pan in a fit of rage, which had actually bent it so much that the car was even more undrivable than it had been with a stripped engine bay.



My car languished at the garage it was trailered to for far too many years, despite constant visits and promises to start work soon. A new driver's side sill and floor pan were installed in Essex but the workmanship was very poor. There was insufficient welding, a lot of mastic and gaps with daylight showing through!! Not exactly great value for the money and this work would need to be undone in the future. I felt alone and had no car friends I could turn to for help or advice. I had a partially stripped car, which couldn't be driven, and which was slowly rotting as it was stored outside with just a tarpaulin over it for 'protection'. The mice, spiders and damp had quickly moved in.

At around this time in 2015 I discovered the MGB GT Fan Club group on Facebook, when I was pretty much out of options. I found similar, like-minded enthusiasts who felt my pain and came to my rescue. There were discussions,

opinions, (lots of those) and some recommendations. Everyone agreed that I had to get the car out from under the tarpaulin and away from its resting place as quickly as possible.



Who would take on a basket case non-runner like this, which someone else had tinkered with and left for dead? It was going to be a big ask.

Eventually George and Craig Lymer, a father and son team at Yorkshire Classic Cars came to the top of the list. George is a no-nonsense, straight-talking Yorkshireman and was my knight in shining armour. He said they would be prepared to take the car on and resurrect the sorry state. This was a daunting task, as the car was hauled up to Yorkshire, sight unseen. There were so many unknowns with the car sitting outside for so many years. Would it ever see the road again, under its own power? The car was finally pulled out from where it had lain, unloved in Essex for the previous 5 or 6 years and taken to Sheffield to commence the reconstruction process.



My brief was that I wanted her back as a reliable road car, as close to original specification as possible. It was a painful process as the interior and the bodywork were pretty much shot by this time. The engine had more fur on it than Lassie, as numerous winters had taken their toll. I received weekly reports and pictures from George and, of course, bills.



Unsurprisingly the bills kept growing and at some points I was literally crying; this £3,500 car was now costing me more than I earned in a month but once you've started and you're in that deep, there is no turning back. Does this situation sound familiar to anyone else? Is it an illness?

It appears that sometime in the past the car suffered a fairly major front-end accident - although my friend, the previous owner, knew nothing about this. There was a small crease in the bulkhead and the steering column was slightly out of true. The bulkhead crease remains and although hidden, the car is at least square. We were unable to source a replacement column at the time, so the existing one was checked over and reinstalled. It's been fine ever since. I suspect it was an early life incident and covered under the insurance policy at the time.

The previous workmanship performed in Essex was poor and much of it had to be unpicked to make good in preparation for all the reconstruction work that was to follow.

New panels were purchased and gradually she came back to life.



While we were waiting for paint it became apparent that many of the ancillaries were in poor condition by now and in some cases were too far gone, or missing altogether! The list of parts needed became longer and longer.

The engine rebuild was the next challenge. Corrosion was severe and looking at the pictures of the internal damage on strip-down I suspect she had been run dry when she was originally trailered away. I will never know now but some serious work was needed with all new internals being required.

At this stage I also turned to Victor Smith within the V8 Register. I'd worked my way through to my third slam panel and the body number (which bears no correlation to anything else) was long gone. In fact, all I had were some blurred photos, which didn't provide much help. I hoped there might be something on record to 'prove' the identity of my car. Victor kindly looked up known build records and my car's original identity was narrowed down to a choice of three. Then, by chance, I found an old MOT certificate, where the tester had recorded one of the numbers Victor had found, so I claimed it, there and then.

On completion of the respray, engine rebuild and refit, including all ancillaries there were still problems. The engine simply wasn't running correctly or smoothly. So, the engine was in and out of the car like there was no tomorrow - along with much head scratching. It took around another 6 months before I collected my car. There was still a slight rumble, deep within the engine but eventually George let it go. He had shaken it down as far as he could and the performance was fine. So, without piling a load more money in, it was as good as it was going to be, much prettier now and perfectly serviceable. The engine issue has never been fully diagnosed, although there has been much speculation. I still have occasional issues with the carburettors on startup, with the nearside carb over-fuelling (probably the grose jet sticking



– how wonderful to have a car part named after you!) until everything wakes up but she is MINE, all mine and these trials and tribulations are behind me now. I have a spare set of carburettors which I will rebuild over the winter to see if this improves matters.

At MG Live in 2018 I found I was losing battery charge on the journey, so I had to find a solution before driving home. General opinion was that I needed a new alternator but I wasn't convinced. I noticed some fried wiring under the dashboard, so I sorted this out and fired up the alternator with a loose piece of wire. This was enough to get the alternator going, as long as I didn't switch the ignition off. Problem solved and she was going again. I saved the money on the new alternator, drove home at the end of the weekend and soldered a new wire in to make a permanent joint. As an aside, there have been some amusing aspects to being a female driver/owner. I attended the MGCC Spring run from the Haynes Museum with a friend a few years ago. As I signed in, I was greeted by name. "How do you know who I am?" I asked. "We have no other female pairing" came the reply!

I've moved to the Dorset/Devon borders now. The car loves the lanes and we've had so many adventures, including revisiting my Ford roots, where I used to work, to see the people I used to bore with my endless troubles back in those gloomy days. She won 'Best in Class' at the Ford Vehicle Enthusiasts Day in Dunton, Essex for British pre 1980s cars and was 'Miss May' on the MGBGT Fan Club calendar a few years ago. Last year I took TNV up to Salisbury to see the previous owner, my old friend and her husband. I didn't really know if this was the right move but I did it anyway. I'm sure they were pleased to see her again & Adrian even looked under the bonnet. So much smarter than when they owned it, I'd made the right call. TNV is part of our friendship history after all.



We have driven the GP track at Silverstone and I have made new like-minded friends. I know I can always get ramp time if I need it, or a house call with my networks of new friends. I now know the MG family is out there if I need them.

The Shuttlecock Run – Part 2

We reconvene at Coles Bar, Bronxville (my New York office), there may be a bit of a pattern setting in here.

My MarineTraffic app had shown me the progress of the RoRo ferry Atlantic Sun carrying my MG RV8 from Liverpool to the Port of Newark and I noted that the ship docked the previous day.

As soon as I arrived in New York I made contact with Pride International, the import agents, and soon received their invoice which disturbingly included a figure of \$520 for import duty. A quick call to them confirmed that this was because they had not received confirmation of my non-resident exemption from David Hurlin at the EPA Imports Line.

(Exemptions) Happily this was quickly resolved and the requirement to pay the duty was removed. This does however emphasise the importance of getting non-resident status confirmed when importing a vehicle for a short term because if you don't do this first and pay the duty to release the car you will not be able to apply for a refund later.

I had been advised that it could take a week or so to clear customs but the email confirming that the car was ready for collection arrived the following morning. So armed with a printed copy of the Delivery Order, attached to the email (and my trusty battery booster - just in case) I set off for the port.

The Port of New York is extensive and I needed to access an area to the west of the Hudson River. I decided to take the train from Bronxville to Grand Central Station in Manhattan, pick up a local sim card from a nearby AT&T store, then take the train from Penn Station to Newark Airport and finally a taxi to the dock gate. This was a very easy journey but it's amazing how magnificent Grand Central Station is compared to the very grim Penn Station.

I arrived at the dock gate and after an identity check (driving licence) I waited my turn in what is probably the only New York building that does not have air conditioning! Eventually my turn arrived and in a few moments I was cleared to go. So, wearing the required high visibility jacket I set off to find my car in the offloading area.

I found the car without much difficulty, clean, undamaged and it started with the first turn of the key. So no ill effects from its trip across the Atlantic. Back to the port gate to get the release note stamped with the magic Clear to Exit Terminal, hand back the high vis jacket and out onto Distribution Street then onto the I95 heading North.

Well so far that was easy but those of you with a nervous disposition, you may want to stop reading now or at least go and make a strong cup of tea first, in my case I needed something considerably stronger!

Less than ten miles later the long-awaited road trip was essentially over. Did I mention that it was a clear sunny day, not raining or foggy? Heading North in the early afternoon, so no problem with low sun glare, in fact a good day for a drive. The traffic was light but on approaching my exit towards a late lunch, vehicles ahead were queuing on the off-ramp, so I stopped in turn. A few moments later there was a ghastly crunch from behind, followed by a lesser impact at the front as I was pushed forward. It was immediately obvious, without looking at the damage, that the road trip would not be going ahead. But first things first the engine was still running and as I was stationary the car wasn't in gear - and, oh yes, I was totally unscathed. I had been rear ended by a Ford Super Duty 8000lb truck.

The next step, as with any road incident was to document the situation. So I took photographs of the scene and spoke to the driver of the other vehicle, who immediately admitted liability and was polite and apologetic. We exchanged insurance and contact details and as there were no injuries the police weren't interested; it was just another 'fender bender' as far as they were concerned.



It was time to get the car off the interstate and to somewhere safe, so with the help of the other driver we assessed the damage to the MG. The rear damage initially looked horrendous with crumpled wings, rear body assembly and both rear lights smashed to pieces, with shards of coloured plastic dripping onto the road. The front looked relatively unscathed with a bent number plate and scratches on the bumper skin. We did, however, find more damage later. Checking around and under the car revealed no further damage to the wheels, tyres or suspension and more importantly no oil, brake fluid or coolant leaks. So I decided to restart the engine and see if the car was drivable. Engine ran perfectly and I was able to select forward and reverse gears without difficulty so I decided that the best course of action was to get the car back to Bronxville where I had accommodation and off-street parking available, important in New York where even in the suburbs garaging can be 35-40 dollars a day.

The remaining problem was the boot lid which was badly bent and impossible to close. As neither I nor the truck driver had anything to secure it with, we decided to go to his depot

which was only a couple of miles away. I could then meet his employer and we could make sure that I had all their insurance details and secure the damage better, it also gave me the opportunity to make sure that the car drove properly. As the car was running correctly, albeit with no rear lights and the boot lid held down with a cargo strap, I set off back to the I95, across the George Washington Bridge and up the Henry Hudson Parkway to Bronxville and a much-needed beer at Coles Bar before sorting out the insurance.

Back at my apartment I gathered together all my paperwork and rang my insurance company, Hagerty rather nervously. I needn't have worried; the claims process was handled very efficiently and after a couple of days I had a claims reference, I'd been called by the loss adjuster and had a meeting arranged to survey the damage.

At the same time as Hagerty's were doing their stuff I contacted Clive Wheatley and Brown & Gammons to check on prices and availability of replacement parts and forwarded my findings to the loss adjuster. Over the next few days, I talked to Bronxville Motors to discuss possible repair strategies but it became increasingly obvious to me that the best plan would be to ship the car back to the UK for repair and so with this in mind I set about planning the trip home. I checked in on the car daily but after a couple of days I found that the battery was completely flat, it wouldn't even light a bulb, I checked on the internet and found that my Noco GB70 booster had a manual override setting that would allow more power to be transferred to the battery and happily that worked. I later took the battery down to the ever-helpful guys at Bronxville Motors who not only charged the battery but checked its health as well, all with no charge. Thereafter I left the battery disconnected.

Initially I contacted Autoshippers who had arranged the outbound journey. Although they didn't say so, I think they were reluctant to ship a damaged vehicle. When I did eventually receive their response, it was to ship the car in a container from Baltimore; inconvenient and far more expensive, so I looked for an alternative. After calling CFR Classic who, after the initial contact, were impossible to get in touch with, I found Schumacher Cargo Logistics. Well, they sounded fast! Schumacher's indeed proved to be both competitive and efficient and within a few days I had completed the paperwork and arranged for the car to be collected for shipment in a container back to Southampton. During this period I had been in regular contact with Angie King, the loss adjuster at Hagerty's, and they had agreed that the car would be too difficult to repair in the USA and that they would pay out the full agreed valuation less \$765 to retain ownership, which was readily agreed.



On a bright sunny morning in August, STB Services arrived and the car started its journey back to the UK. Me? The next day I took a taxi down to La Guardia and flew down to Wilmington, North Carolina, to catch up with friends. So, what happened next? Well, the tale continues and you will have to wait to find out.

The North Lakes Tour 2024

A timely reminder to book early for this event. Places are filling up quickly now. See the 'More' webpage at www.v8register.net/more.htm for more details.