

D THE MG V8 CONVERSION

the company became V8 Conversions Ltd. I believe this company still exists. The last time I saw them, they were putting V8's into the then relatively new TR7's, before Leyland started producing the TR8 for the US market.

Ken meanwhile had left for the US where an American manufacturer was putting his 5-speed box into limited production - limited in US terms, that is. The prototype of that box had rested in one of Ken's own MG V8 conversions and I often wonder if anyone is still using it now. It was a good gearbox, an improvement over the 4 speed and overdrive on 4th which the V8 owners have. Does any reader know of Ken's whereabouts now, or even the status of his gearbox?

Costello MG V8 and Leyland MG GT V8 owners may be interested in what could be done to improve their pride and joy. The rear springs can be uprated to the six leaf police GT springs. Never really available ex stock, these things have to be made up to order - they fit all chrome bumper models of GT or Roadster. These springs eliminate the V8 wind-up on hard acceleration and having 6 (stiffer) leaves, do not carry a weight penalty. Somebody (and I lost their name in a fire) is custodian of the Leyland drawing for these springs; the part number is AHH something and if anyone can tell me more I'd be grateful because my springs are this part number and need renewing (or re-ambering).

Be warned that those 6-leaf springs will give a firmer ride and may make the wife complain. The SPAX rear shocker conversion is really a safety must if you drive the car reasonably hard; the SPAX front shocker conversion should also be seriously considered. A front spoiler improves stability at high speeds and is therefore strongly recommended.

Things in the V8's ignition department are begging for improvement. Put in some colder plugs such as NGK BP6HS, set them to 20 thou' and throw out your single or double contact breakers in favour of a Lumenition ignition system. The latter item is well worthwhile, being technically better and more precise than the more conventional and low tolerance proximity induction systems which have assailed the market. You could also consider discarding the oil cooler, if fitted, since the V8 never runs hot enough anyway. Use an oil viscosity index increaser such as STP or WYNN'S to thicken up the oil and get rid of annoying hydraulic tappet noise, which may be particularly evident when cold.

In the performance improvement department, SU carbureted models are a bit stuck unless owners wish to go to the expense and trouble of discarding the whole, tortuous SU input/air filter side and installing a Weber and associated inlet manifolds and piping. The exhaust end can be improved by going for a decent exhaust manifold. Do not bother going to twin exhaust pipes (one

from each bank of 4) since these provide a dubious advantage, the pulses of one cylinder tending to cancel another out in the same bank. Pulse timings from opposite cylinder can assist each other and if you wanted to pipe things correctly to enable this you would end up with an impractical arrangement with pipes all over the place.

If you really insist on maximum power, you could supercharge the V8 with, say, a Shorrock conversion. This is expensive; and if done properly it does not detract from the engine's low speed torque to any noticeable extent. The effect on hard acceleration is shattering. The lump in the bonnet may obstruct your view through the windscreen, however. Incidentally, a lower compression ratio is likely to be required for supercharging.

Should your V8 engine and/or gearbox be in need of an overhaul, consider going to a Rover SD1 engine (with solid tappets which don't froth at high rpm); the 5-speed SD1 gearbox is an improvement, but remember that the SD1 engine is less powerful than the high compression 3500s engine.

For Weber carbureted models, Costello may already have provided you with the settings which I gave him in 1974 or thereabouts. These are:

	Slow run Jets	40F8
*	Main Jets	130
*	Emulsion Tube	F2
*	Air Corrector	170
	Accelerator Jet	55 (richer is 60)
	Accelerator Return Valve	0
*	Float Chamber Needle Valves	225
	Main Venturi	30
	Auxiliary Venturi	4.5

* n.b. These settings can eliminate the annoying power drop or cut-out at between 110 mph and 120 mph which occurred on some models because the relatively small, single float chamber ran dry. If however this trouble persists then discard the SU petrol pump in favour of a Bendix blue-top or similar high pressure petrol pump. If you do this, try to fit an in-line petrol filter between pump and petrol tank.

With the above settings, mpg (never very important to a V8 owner) should improve from about 16 or 19 mpg to an average of 21 around London, or 25 on long (fast) runs. Your right foot will be the final decider on this.

Two points on the Weber: Unless you have a stubby inlet manifold pipe (as designed by Costello) which is water-heated, then you will probably experience symptoms of icing with the above settings; these symptoms will only tend to occur on cold damp days on, say, a wintertime trip down a UK motorway. You may already experience these symptoms anyway, but the

above settings will tend to exacerbate the symptoms since atomisation is greatly improved, thus increasing the cooling effect. One cure for this is to warm up the input air. The other point is that the richer accelerator jet will probably be preferred by heavy right-footers since it gets you under way a mite quicker than the smaller (weaker) jet, throwing out a few unburned hydrocarbons behind you.

Incidentally, if your V8 gives 70 mph in 4th overdrive at about 2,400 rpm then OK, otherwise, you may have an unusual final drive ratio. These were fitted by Costello to suit the "urgency" of the customer involved, different ratios providing different rates of acceleration.

This brings us to the performance aspect. How powerful were the Costello V8's? How fast were they? The Costello V8's with the 10.5:1 compression engine, Mike's exhaust manifolds (there were two types, one using slightly larger diameter piping than the other) and the Weber 40DCOE, are the most powerful of Costello's conversions. As to power Ken was never really concerned - dynamometer readings had indicated 175 bhp could be expected as typical; but once the high compression engines had been run in, and fitted with electronic ignition, Weber 40DCOE (with correct settings) and Mike's larger diameter pipe exhaust manifold, then 185 to 200 bhp was possible. It was only numbers anyway - what mattered was how the car handled.

How fast? The Weber carbureted models were usually the quickest and of course a Roadster was quicker than a GT, other things being equal, by virtue of its lighter weight and consequently a better power-to-weight ratio. Acceleration of 0-60 mph in 6.5 seconds, from the Roadster (carrying two people) was typical. Which final drive ratio you have makes a difference. Certainly the Weber carbureted Roadster had no difficulty keeping up with a Porsche 911S (both being driven flat out). Costello often joked about incidents where he had died in his GT with perplexed Porsche 911S owners whilst touring across France and Germany. But the comparison ends there: the Porsche is a finely tuned race-bred car, the Costello V8 is a long-legged, easy-going, economical mile eater.

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