

Member Featured Car of the Month January 2011

1978 MGB V8 Conversion

by John Scocozzo

My 1978 MGB was first registered in Cincinnati OH. In 2000 after a few owners and a blown engine, Jacob Sutter of Newbury, Ohio purchased the car as a base for a Buick 215ci V8 conversion and restoration.

The conversion and restoration included:

- Full disassembling of the body, sheet metal repaired.
- Crate 1963 215ci Buick High Output engine
- 1989 Camaro world class T-5 transmission
- Chrome bumper conversion
- Fiero Leather Seats

The conversion and restoration was 90% complete by 2004 when the car was sold to Mike Maloney (club member). I purchased the car in November 2009. A garage and workshop addition was built during the summer and fall of 2009 specifically for the car. My plan is to complete the restoration and DRIVE the car.



The car is a blast to drive and much more fun than the '67 B I owned in the early 80s. Sue and I put over 3000 miles on it over the summer, running errands around town and weekend road trips searching for winding roads throughout southwest Ohio. Going to car shows was ok but, we really enjoyed taking the back roads to cruise-ins around the Miami Valley. The custom car crowd gets a kick out of seeing a v8 in a little sports car.

Year : 1978

Make: MG

Model: B

Engine: 1963 Buick High Output 215 ci engine. Rated at 200hp with 11:1 compression

Transmission: 1989 World Class T-5 with .63 overdrive

Rear Axle: Stock 1978 MGB with 3.91 ratio

The all aluminum Buick engine and Camaro transmission weigh 40 lbs. less than the stock 4 cylinder engine and 4 speed transmission.

“215” History

The Buick/Olds/Rover 215 cubic-inch (3.5 liters) aluminum V8 was originally announced in 1960 as a potential lightweight economy engine destined for General Motors new line of compacts: Buick Skylark, Olds Cutlass and Pontiac Tempest. First appearing in the 1961 model year, production ended in 1963 after over 3-4 million engines were produced. Two versions were available: the Buick model and the Olds, which featured different heads, valve train and valve covers. Pontiac used the Olds version.

The reason production ended so soon was a high rejection rate during the casting process, as GM utilized pressure casting of the Reynolds 356 aluminum alloy around steel sleeves. The assembly was then heat-treated to T-6 condition; but the heat treating caused the steel sleeves to shift and thus rejection of the entire block.

In 1965, Buick negotiated production rights with the British Rover Cars company. Rover, seeing the motor as its salvation for an aging product line, found that sand casting the block and installing press-in sleeves at a later point precluded any production problems. The engine went on to power the ancient P5 Rover sedan, then the modern 3500 (a transplant into the 2000 TC), and finally the legendary Range Rover. It continues to power Land Rover products today in 4.6 liter guise.

In 1970, MG (now part of the vast British Leyland empire and sister company to Rover) was looking to improve the performance of its MGB sports car. An outsider, Ken Costello, actually showed them how to do it, as he had begun small-scale production of V8-engined MGBs. MG's own version appeared in 1973, just in time for the first oil embargo, and lasted only two years. Only some 2591 cars were produced, all in "hard-top" GT form.

The rubber bumper MGB provides a “drop in” engine bay for the 215ci aluminum V8 engine.

