

An MG Life – Bronwyn Walbran

My introduction to the MG Car Club was about a week after meeting Paul. The event was a Mini trial, the usual second Tuesday of the month, held every month in those days. Mini being a short version of a longer trial not a trial for Minis, mini-skirts, or mini people. The finishing point was the usual Leopard Tavern by Victoria Park Market. My job was to read the instructions, I didn't have a clue what else was happening! There were 16 entries and not all were in MGs. (Paul had borrowed his mother's 1100 as his mode of transport was broken.)



Paul did have an MG at the time that he had bought with his brother Murray. This is a WA which is still under very slow restoration. (I have never seen it in one piece- good things take time!!)

From then on I participated in some events. My means of transport at the time was a Fiat Bambina, so when hillclimbing - at first in *Phat Cat* (Paul's 3.8 Mk2 Jaguar) and later in our MGB *Joseph* - I drove at not much more than normal road speed up Bald Hill - but sometimes the pale pink mist would show itself, especially in the early 1980s when there were quite a few other women members competing keenly. One of the last hillclimbs I drove in (this time in *Joseph* in 1987) was in Riverhead Forest, where the start was up a slight hill. Paul's instructions were to give it lots of revs to get it up on the cam, drop the clutch and go, and then ease off. The easing off was required because Matthew was due in 6 days and I didn't want to traumatise anyone. Apparently I didn't ease off enough going by the look on Geoff Broadhead's face who was the start marshal.

Driving in motorkhanas came a bit later when we had bought *Joseph B*. During this time Walbran's were both near the front of the field and at the bottom (that was me if you haven't guessed already). Although I did get a "husband beater's" certificate once for one motorkhana test (driving Paul's sister's MGB). And had a lot of fun.

The MG Car Club was also quite active in the rally scene in the 1970's and '80s, using Riverhead Forest to run a rally for its own members. In those days not much extra kit was



needed so it was easy for the many keen types (we were all young then) to rally their day-to-day MG rather than have a dedicated car for the job. I co-drove for Paul in *Phat Cat* in a Riverhead rally and as he already knew where we were going my job was to keep a check on the oil and water temperature gauges. I heard afterwards that someone thought there was just a helmet in the passenger seat. (Being vertically challenged has its difficulties). Darryl Bretherton has also been heard to comment at a

motorkhana "oh look, there's a hat driving that car!"

The membership at that time (70's) was very much mainly young people in their 20s and there were quite a few large scale social events - balls with about 300 members and guests, big Christmas parties and even OKDs (Overhead Knockers Do). The latter was to celebrate 50 years of MG and entailed dressing in 1920's period clothes reflecting MG's decade of origin, a theme that was enthusiastically entered into by all. Because there is more than one version of which year MG started we made sure and had an OKD for each year. (For those members who are new to the club overhead knockers refers to the distinctive sound of the overhead camshafts of early MGs.)

A recurring theme with Phat Cat in the 70's and 80's was overheating. In one Mercury trophy trial the engine was getting hot, so the heater had to come on (in summer). In order to survive the heat inside the car, the window had to be wound down. My very long hair at the time did not appreciate the lack of warning. We made it to the finish with me quite unkempt. Lack of petrol has also been a problem on the odd occasion. This trait has continued on into the next generation - like father, like son(s).

Also during the 70's and 80's we were involved in the car club magazine. We were editors while we were living at Waiuku and became very familiar with the radio signoff tune at midnight in those days, followed by an early morning dash up the motorway before work to get the copy to the printer (isn't the internet wonderful!?). We did two stints as editor and helped out at other times with collation, typing (port parties played a role here because there was a group of us and it became a fun social occasion) and printing, the latter for quite a few years using the club's offset printer at Ray and Joan Hughes place. (Anyone want a printer, it's still in my laundry, free to a good home or museum.)

Many weekends over the years have been enjoyed with Far North. I didn't make the first Far North as it was held a few days before we met but have been on all since, kids & all. (Four kids with attendant nappies etc, plus all the check signs etc ... you can fit LOTS into an MGB if you try.) In the early years, 2 weekends plotting (getting stuck up muddy tracks and latterly having to share back country roads with some locals and I'm now referred to as "the squawkometer") and 1 weekend of



the actual trial. The first 10 years or so we were all young and working for someone else and time off was harder to get so the start was Friday after work at 7.p.m. Paul and I would usually arrive at 7 or sometimes later having just printed off the instructions on a gestetner machine. Friday consisted of (intensive) trialling all the way to Whangarei hence the late arrival of everyone at the overnight stop. Saturday was the same, intensive trialling all the way to Whangaroa pub for a well-earned drink. Sunday was a convoy from Coopers Beach to the "cabbage patch " as we called it to begin more trialling. We would arrive in Whangarei at approximately 6pm, grab a hamburger and continue trialling to the finish in

Albany/Paremoremo at midnight (Den the Pen's place). Paul now uses google maps as well as driving the course and as the year marches on towards November/December he can be heard cackling in an evil manner and muttering things like "now if this ... could we...". Far North has also evolved into a more relaxed and very social affair with alternative routes for people to select from.

The MG influence became ingrained quite early on in our relationship, as when we decided to get married Paul said that he would like to build our own house and I immediately replied that of course it would have to be octagonal. Paul would do anything I wanted in those days, so the reply was: "of course dear, I'll do anything, anything..."

We've travelled all around the country to MG happenings: national rallies, (driving at night with the hood down admiring the stars), Mid-Winter adventures (being very rugged up for the cold, with the hood down) and the Easter meet with the Wellington Centre. Travelling



around with the hood down is very refreshing, except when in a Midget in some European alpine tunnels of great length with the fumes of other vehicles causing us problems - subsequently overcome by travelling over the passes instead. The pilgrimage to MGCC Silverstone has been undertaken several times in recent years, and we have become great friends

with many MG people in England and Scotland. When we first went tripping, it amazed us how total strangers would open their doors to us purely on account of being fellow MG owners. Truly the marque of friendship.

The latest edition to our MG family is our MGF, which we bought new, known as Benjamin - Benjamin being Joseph's younger brother. We were encouraged to do this by Andrew (first born, whose first sentence was "buy more Mummy ") and it is now over 20 years old. We imported it ourselves from Manchester because the New Zealand agent at the time did not take us seriously. We may have turned up at the show room with 4 children and Paul in jeans but we were serious buyers.



Those four children now have MG's of their own, fifteen between them - more than us!