

## NZ Update Australian Pre-War MG Register Newsletter: Nov 2017

Denis and Desna Jury

### The MG from Nouvelle Zélande -Vive le Sport!

Following the usual exodus from the Antipodean winter a number of NZ MG owners have been enjoying the European summer this year. John and Brenda Hancock 'containered' their K1 Special (and trailer) to the UK for their three-month continental campaign of touring and racing. After picking up the K1, and purchasing a tow vehicle they headed to Carignan in France where their first event, the Retro GP was being held for the third time.

John said that the event was a load of fun and they were made very welcome and he especially recalls the morning tea stop on the first day where beers and wines were served alongside the coffee setting the tone! The event commenced on a Saturday with a tour of the countryside down narrow lanes and included lunch in an old citadel. They enjoyed the carnival atmosphere and the casual vibe, with food tents and lots of locals. John commented that the French and Belgians love old cars and are very polite and respectful to them on the road. The scrutineering for the Saturday night and Sunday demonstration ('races') was nonexistent and the drivers' briefing took all of 30 seconds; the emphasis was that this was "not a race" but a demonstration – something which it seemed that most competitors failed to hear.



There were three classes; motorbikes, cycle cars and grandsports. Along with the Amilcars, J2's and PA's etc. there were all sorts of other weird and wonderful cars – a number of Riley Specials, Alvis, some completely unknown French machinery, several MG's, a TC special, and a strange assemblage that looked like a TD chassis with independent front end and a K3 body, and a very fast but unknown powerplant under the bonnet (which was never lifted to reveal its secrets) – in total about 20 cars in his division. John was thrilled with the performance of the K and the only cars that gave him trouble were a bunch of Riley specials with unknown engines and the 'TD'.

En route to the next event in Croatia, the Hancocks ticked off another "must do" by taking on the 60 hairpins of the magnificent Northern Italian Stelvio Pass in the K. The focus in Croatia was the 9-day MG event overseen by Piero Fusaroli from the Italian MGCC. Seventy cars were at the event from all over Europe, Australia and NZ. This event was also friendly and sociable with the touring focused on the sea and the coast, beautiful towns and island-hopping ferries.



Their trip then took them back to France through the Northern Italian Lakes area, arriving three weeks later in Le Puy, near the Loire River in South Central France. Aside from the lentils and lace, the main attraction was the Retro Grand Prix instigated 21 years ago when the city fathers and wine merchants

decided to promote their district through this event. Again, the format of the event was touring on Saturday and “racing” on Saturday evening and Sunday. The touring was idyllic through narrow country lanes and fields of corn, sunflowers, and vineyards. John and Brenda were the first NZers to enter the event and they enjoyed the mayoral welcome, morning teas, lunches and festivities which created great warmth and bonhomie.

The second part of the event (again, a “demonstration”, not a race!) was run on a street circuit of about two kilometers. The route was characterized by stone walls flashing by in close proximity, large crowds of enthusiastic onlookers just two meters away behind huge straw bales, and the race commentator’s frequent reference to the MG from *Nouvelle Zélande*.

Over 100 vehicles were entered and included motorcycles and side cars, tricycle cars through to marques -MG, Riley (including a Brooklands), Bugatti, Delahaye, Lagonda and Lancia. The races started with a “warm-up”, and then four or five “demo” laps and then a wind-down. The last lap was in procession, and without helmets but was nevertheless very sporting with the determined drivers responding to the cheering and applause of the crowds with increasing speeds – *vive le sport!* John commented that the tight circuit limited the speed such that third gear was used predominantly with some corners needing second and a run up to 5000 rpm keeping the boost to around 6psi.



John and Brenda enjoyed the fact that the organisation of the racing was based on the philosophy “there is no winner - everyone is a winner” and that was their experience. This weekend in Le Puy and the Retro GP was really enjoyable and the highlight of their continental campaign.

Many thanks to John and Brenda Hancock, and Dave Pitches for their input and images for this article.