

## My life with MG - John Campbell

My association with MG began November 1969.

With John Arkley and the late Steve Munroe we went to watch a gymkhana at the then Chamberlain Park Woolworth's car park, in those days there was no Sunday shopping. The club had set up their tests and two members of note, Dren Errington and Dave Haydon showing us (giving it heaps) how to drive in a gymkhana.

Watching these two lads was awesome and by the looks on their faces, we thought this looked like great fun, so we three applied for club membership.

The club magazine, then called the MG Bulletin, arrived in the mail and the first event I entered was a gymkhana in my Mini. From memory this event was somewhere out Panmure way.

Well my driving was not necessarily the best, but it slowly improved. Another new member at the time was Marty Dunn and this was also his first time, driving a Fiat 850 Fast Back. We both watched with anticipation and swapped notes on how to improve. As other events were organized I entered my first hill climb at Bald Hill.

The MG Car Club at the time were running the Bardell Oil Hill Climb series, which was run by different car clubs, being Auckland CC, Northern Sports CC , University of Auckland CC.



I started entering these events in my Mini, which was great but believed a bit more horsepower was required, so the 850 was rebuilt to 998 specs (as close as possible).

Now that the Mini was a bit quicker I started entering a few race meetings at Pukekohe. They were lots of fun but something was missing as I was entering MG events in a Mini when all around me were MGs.

Some say I saw the light and sold my Mini and brought my first MG, a 1961 Mk1 Midget (948cc) with no hood but it did have side screens. I later got a hood as when I met Val she sometimes complained about her hair do.

Well I thought I was the cats whiskers in the Midget and can remember showing the Midget to Dren Errington and Bob Francis and I can remember Dren saying "you need a proper steering wheel" and to my surprise I was given a wood rimmed/aluminum steering wheel, just what every 1970s boy racer required!

The Midget was slightly under powered compared to my old Mini. After much discussion with various members the motor was rebuilt, modified cam, Weber carb etc and race pistons supplied by Tony Williams, which increased the capacity to 997 cc - (horse power unknown, but a lot of fun!)



The Midget was fairly competitive and I can remember setting good times against Jim Hoare and Clive Taylor in various hill climb events.

As part of the Midget brigade, I had the opportunity to enter the 1974 Heatway Rally as co-driver with the late Quentin Phillips competing in a 1380 cc Midget. We were part of Team MG, with John Arkley and Paul Walbran driving an MGBGT. This event was held in both South and North Islands, starting in Christchurch.

Our little Midget started off really well, over the port hills, across Dansey's Pass and up the



west coast. However when crossing a ford at the back of Murchison we did something bad to the clutch but managed to get to Christchurch for the ferry crossing to Wellington. After component replacements etc, we were off on the North Island stages, which was all good until we met the Gentle Annie road and for some reason we had problems keeping in second gear. So in Hastings the motor/gear box

came out and a few components were replaced. Again all good, however going over the Motu stage, the second gear started playing up, requiring the co-driver to keep both hands on the stick to stay in gear. But we did finish the Rally and were placed 58th overall with a total of 2925 points. Not bad when we were up against Hannu Mikkola in a RS1600 escort with 1912 pts. It just shows what a great performance car the Midget is.

However life with MG moves on. When Val and I married our wedding cars were Midgets; Jim Hoare and Felicity Walbran and buttercup (our Midget).

Like most of us, things slightly changed when married and houses became the next project, so unfortunately the Midget had to go (sad day that was) to allow for deposits etc.

As life progressed with work etc, the company I was employed with was sold and we had a relocation payout... and would you believe it... this saw another opportunity to buy an MG, this time a 67 BGT. From then on the BGT and the house became our projects until our sons were born and the second mortgage required attention, so the B (another sad day) was sold.

Time moved on and when we had a little bit of spare cash we managed to buy another MG, this being the one we have now owned for approximately 27 years, this being the orange roughly, Val talked me into buying a Datsun Station wagon and you guessed it, the BGT started a new life as our club competition car, entering various club hillclimbs, a bit of MG Race series track time and the Classic Trials meetings. Some events have been successful and we managed to win the Legends of Speed HRC Ralph Watson Classic Trial Trophy at Pukekohe.



Moving on, our older son Dean saw the light and bought a 96 MGF but after 10 months ownership he decided to go back to University to complete his degree and unfortunately could not keep up with the car repayments. So after much discussion Val and I bought his MGF.

The MGF is a great traveller and one of our best trips (except with

the MG CC national rallies etc) was down to Milford Sound with sleeping bags and a tent. Going through the Homer tunnel was a bit of a hoot as a bus had broken down and there we were sitting (hood down) with water dripping and the occasional weta dropping on us (up went the hood!).

With both our MGs we have great fun whether on social runs or on the track. I do look in our garage and think how would I get another MG in there... a midget maybe... knock down the bedroom wall... it could go in there, however this could be another story, I will ask Val.