

## An MG Life - Garth Bagnall

After giving up motorbike racing in mid 1964 I needed another hobby. I found a J2 owned by Kerry Boland which was sitting on the side of the road in Otara, being used as a play thing by all the local kids and in a mess. No seats or tank & not going. I rigged up a pump from a drum to get petrol into the carbs, got it started & drove home to Puketutu Island sitting on a box. By the time I went to bed it was a pile of bits in the garage. The J2 deal also included an F4 that was still in Fielding. (Twelve months later I picked up another F4 in a swamp north of Dargaville, amazingly nothing was rusty).

Four years later & following marriage to Gillian the J2 was rebuilt - an almost completely new body, the only original panels being the bonnet top, door panels & scuttle. I had to make tools to make new bonnet sides. All the woodwork was treated pine so it wouldn't rot and repanelled in alloy. Lauri Poolman made the petrol tank for me. When rebuilding the motor I managed to get a new Crank from Motor Corp which only lasted 6000 miles before breaking so I made a new crank & pistons & used PA conrods.

I joined the Club in mid '68 after having numerous 'Hi There' cards put on the screen. Gill & I entered many trials, and Riverhead Forest Rally (sadly a broken oil pipe saw an early retirement) and Concours (a real challenge as the trials & gymkhanas hammered the paintwork. I borrowed a car for the 1-2



weeks it took to strip & paint the J2. All the copper pipes & alloy came off it to be re-polished chassis & body all repainted). My favourite events were grass and sealed Gymkhanas, (once rolled when one of the TC wheels I was using tore the spokes through the rim in a handbrake turn on grass- thought they were stronger than the J2 wheels – wrong). Hill-climbs, mud-plugs (where MG's

would get stuck up to the axles in mud with many people on the end of a rope to pull them out, or all pushing together) and racing as all good fun and we used the J2 for 3 years as an everyday car doing all but 1 Club event. I & son John picked up Gill & our baby daughter from the maternity hospital in the J2 much to the astonishment of the staff. In the 40 years we owned the J2 we did 85000 miles.

In 1970 in Fielding we found the F Type that was part of the deal when buying the J2. I have also



owned – 3 ZA Magnettes, 2 F4's & a J1, 1 M type and a PA.

In 1974 I fitted a supercharger to the J2 which made it very thirsty – about 4mpg in ¼ mile sprints and 12mpg racing. Lucky to get 18mpg round town, but the power was awesome. I took it off for a short time but missed the grunt.

In '76 I bought the '66 BGT that I still drive and became self-employed fixing vintage cars & servicing MG's. By mid '86 I was so busy with MG's that we opened our business in Stock St, New Lynn. The next 20 years was just a blur as we were so busy we only had one holiday the whole time – a month to Canada, Moss Motors in Goleta USA and to the UK to visit Moss to set up parts importing, followed by a trip round the UK through Scotland & Wales.

MG Car Club members are a wonderful friendly bunch of people and we have met many amazing people & made lasting friendships. For 12 years on Committee I was Events Organiser so organised the first Intermarque Concours at The Sunken Gardens with six clubs attending. I fondly recall Grand Balls for 300 people at Trillos, Xmas parties at the Ponsonby Cruising club until all hours, summer barbeques at members' houses and Winter Woolies barbeques at Wenderholm, Autocross meets at Worrall's Farm and Guy Fawkes too. Racing was great too - Standing 1/4's at Bay Park Raceway, Pukekohe both full track and Club Circuit (a 50 lap enduro with Tony Sturm), Manfield Raceway and Taupo (both first in its original pumice and later when it was sealed) often using the BGT.

April '74 I was having a practice run up Pinchgut Rd, Kaukapapa in the J2 for the upcoming Vintage Car Club Hill climb & the clutch blew up - pieces of it going through the bonnet. I worked out that the bits were doing about 240mph. The throttle pedal went through the side on the bonnet & 1 piece hit Lauri on the clavicle & me below the knee. I used to replace the big-end shells after every hill climb as they were hammered out.



1985/86 I restored a TC that had come from England supposedly restored but it wouldn't get a WOF here because of bad workmanship. When finished it won the Intermarque Concours. I then sent it to the owner who had since gone back to the UK and a week later it won 'Car of The Show' at an All Marques Concours at Beaulieu. Very satisfying after months of work. I always feel that my efforts are appreciated by MG owners.

We went to Marton & Hastings for the T Register runs then in 1996 Gill & I went down to Christchurch for it. I had Dick Knudson from the States with me on the first leg to Bulls for the night. The trip across the Desert Rd was a howling gale with sleet and with the J2 being

hard to keep on the road, then to Wellington the next day. Gill met me in Wellington for the trip on the Ferry to Picton.

From Picton down we were going great until the J2 burnt a valve. Luckily John Hancock was taking his J2 on a trailer so we swapped cars and I drove his for the last 100K or so. Ted Loversidge let me use his workshop to remove the head & replace the valve so we were back on the road before bed. Had a fantastic day at Ruapuna raceway & a lovely social trial out to Akaroa on the Banks Peninsula. The run back home from Chch with a stop at Plimmerton (north of Wgtn). All went well & then non-stop to Auckland.

I had bought an MGB in 2000 which lay untouched for 12 years before tidying up & selling. I had intended to make a race car of it, but time got away from me. I still enjoy the BGT as it fills all my needs, is economical to run & gets cheap Rego & insurance.