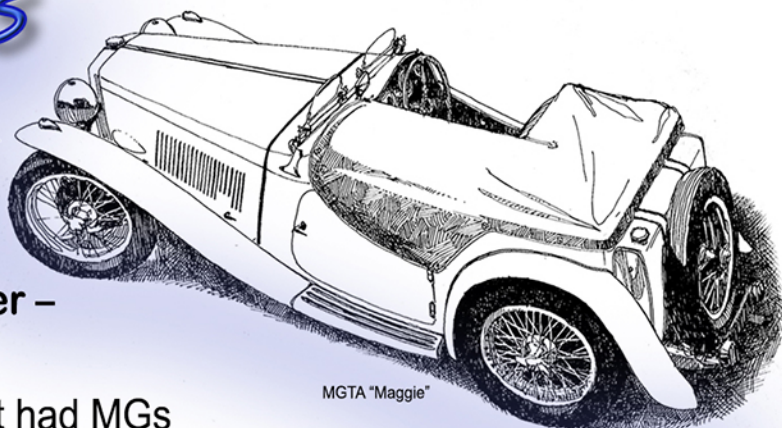


# Den's Doodles

They say that if you can remember the 60s, you really weren't there. 1969 is certainly in my memory bank, and it changed my life forever – I joined the MG Car Club.

It was full of 20-somethings, and most had MGs of some sort. There were of course lots of non-MGs too – Jaguars, Lotuses, Austins, Morrisies, other English cars by the dozen, and some of those newish Japanese things. It was quite a difficult club to become noticed in, but I joined with a rather nice 1936 MG TA, which I nicknamed "Maggie". She managed to win a couple of concours events, not that she was particularly immaculate, just that she was an attractive old girl, and there weren't so many restored masterpieces gracing their owners garages.



MGTA "Maggie"

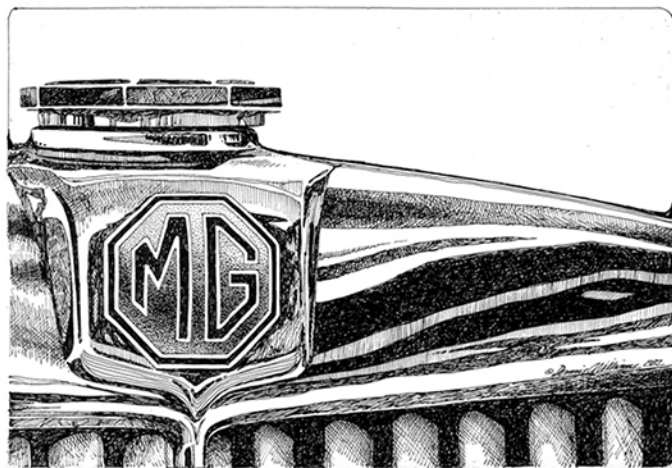


Previous to Maggie, I was the not-so-proud caretaker of an MGPA just after leaving school, having swapped it for a motorbike.

Any deal was a good deal if it was different, and hopefully improved the personal driving stock. She leaked around the windscreen, through the side-curtains, down onto your legs, up through the floorboards – so she eventually had to go. Next was a tatty MGTD in red, half share with my older brother Tony, who was becoming a car dealer without the white shoes. Bought for 750 pounds, reupholstered the door cards etc, and sold on for a massive profit of about 700 pounds.

Then Maggie turned up, bought from Bill Wilde in Herne Bay. Previously owned by Don Vercoe I think.

Winter Woollies runs were fun, often with Maggie leading the way, complete with brass fireman's helmet, about a two-hour drive through country roads to end at an eating establishment of some sort, but the driving there leading a convoy of 30 or so T-Types (and those modern MGAs and Bs) was far more fun than the eating bit at the end. They usually started at the Railway Station or Tamaki Yacht Club, and in a time when you were able to meander in Auckland.

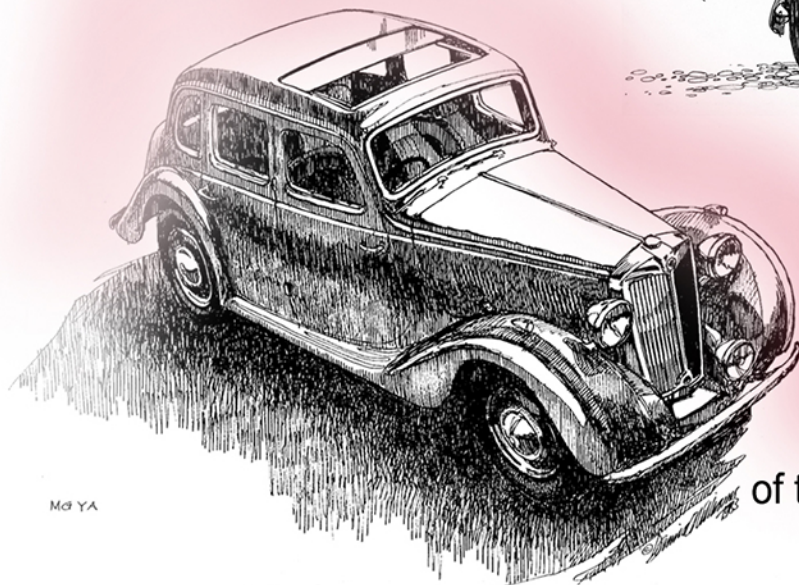
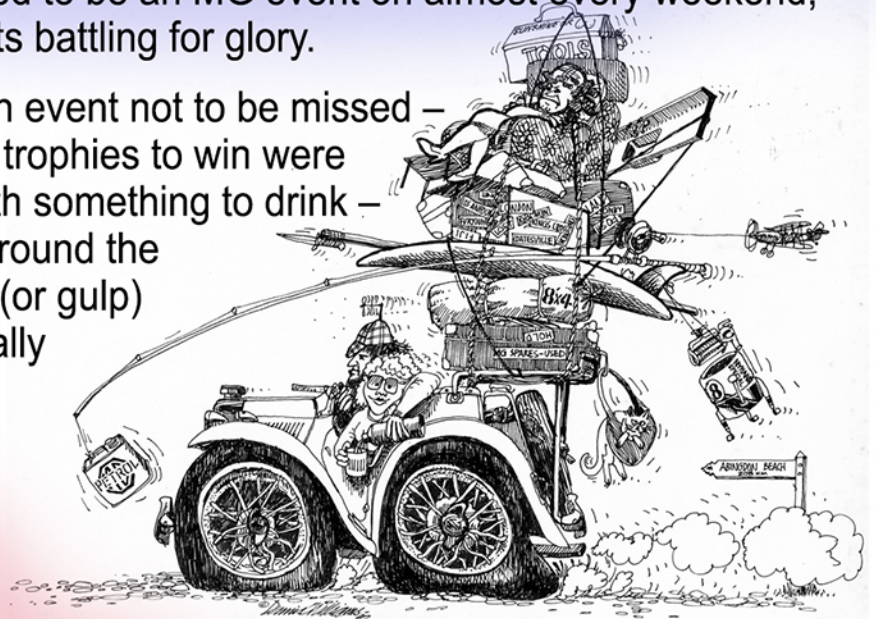




## Den's Doodles

In those early years, there seemed to be an MG event on almost every weekend, with 30 or 40 enthusiastic entrants battling for glory.

The annual MG Ball really was an event not to be missed – everyone dressed to kill, and the trophies to win were the biggest ones you could fill with something to drink – the winner was obliged to take it round the other attendees and let them sip (or gulp) from the non-sterilised lip, gradually spreading each others germs throughout the club. We were all immune then.



Luckily the Principal at the school I was teaching at (Napier St, now upmarket Freemans Bay) allowed my art class to assist with the huge cardboard pictures of various MGs that we used for Ball decorations.

Some of these were sold off at the end of the event (for a donation to the school), but many still survive in my collection.

The early Magazines (the MaG as we renamed it) were filled with differing versions of events, and interspersed with my drawings and doodles, hence acquiring the nickname of 'Den the Pen'. The MaG parties – true "cut'n'paste" with scissors and glue, often ran through the night to ensure it got to the printers in time.

I managed to change the cover designs several times over the years, as everything was drawn by hand in those early days – Desktop Publishing hadn't been invented yet. The 'electric golf ball' typewriter was the latest invention.

Hillclimbs and Bald Hill always went in the same sentence – the magnificent unsealed bendy narrow roadway up the side of a mountain by Pukekohe and Waiuku. If you had the guts to go round the first right hander at full pace, you were inevitably going too fast for halfway corner, where all the spectators congregated to watch the mudguard bending, or choked in dust if you managed to get it right. At one stage, I held 3 hill records at once – standard B, standard Midget, and MG saloons (with old 'Blue Streak' MG1100).





# Den's Doodles

If you're not sure what these are, don't be afraid to ask one of the oldies that are still around... in no particular order: Dren or Di Errington, Sue or Ernie Martin, Paul or Bronnie Walbran, sister Felicity, CR, John Arkley, Cammie, Ray Hughes, Clive or Jane Taylor, Garth or Gill Bagnall, Marty or Karen Dunn, Rex or Sheryl Thompson, Dave or Kath Hewitt, Ian Grant, Bob or Debbie Francis in the far north, Donn White, Andy Lowe, Graeme Collett, and many I've managed to forget. There are usually 3 things that slip your mind as you get older – 1st is names, 2nd is faces, and the 3rd thing I can't remember.

Unfortunately, slightly overenthusiastic behaviour at Easter managed to get us banned from a couple of the Tokaanu establishments. I was not involved, just observing...



Pukekohe, early 80s

MudPlugs were another favourite, and attended very well. Laughs a minute, up a very slippery muddy road that Paul had probably found somewhere, potholes full of mud, deeper than a Midget bonnet, pushers and laughers neatly dressed in gumboots, ready to assist. One driver, and one bouncer/pusher allowed. Very few got through unscathed. This was usually followed by a concours a week or two later, and mud stuck in crevices underneath the MGs were helpfully ignored, considered "badges of excellence".

Octagon Week zoomed around in 1978, so an old MGB was bought. The paint was horrid, therefore a repaint was essential. Five small cans of original BMC colours were purchased, locked myself in a garage for 2 days with a piece of chalk and 5 paintbrushes. "JosephB" was born. After being lucky enough to win Octagon Week, and the B not being ideal for motorkhanas, it soon changed hands to the Walbran's stable

of ex-Den cars, then used very competitively in all categories of car sport. In one Riverhead Rally when I was driving and Paul was panicking, I managed to slide along a gravel edge dropoff, slightly destroying the right sill. We drove out and continued. Paul's wry comment, "I thought you were going a bit fast for that one!"

Around that time, after I'd moved a huge villa from Mt Eden to 16 acres in Coatesville, an MGYA joined the stable, then 'The Blue Streak' a rough old MG1100 got a hiding too, by a lot of different members in the club.

## Den & Paul - Riverhead Rally -c1978



"Joseph" and his coat of many colours



Riverhead Rally again, around 1978



## Den's Doodles

Gymkhanas, (later changed to Motorkhanas because most of us couldn't jump our cars like horses), were MG specialities. MG won most Interclub events, and after serious competitions in MG Auckland, I managed to gather a few NZ National Titles, but only in Mini GTs and my MG1300-powered Moke, also claiming the Aussie Nationals in 1982 in a grotty loaned Mini across the ditch.

In amongst a chain of Clubman GTs and Mokes (helpful steeds for winning motorkhanas), a few other MGs came and went. In no time a BGT, a 2-door MG1300, and the old Blue Streak again showed their successive faces.

Being on the Committee for a while eventually led to holding the Presidential title for a few years around 1981-84, but then moving to

the Bay of Islands stymied the weekly involvement in things MG for a while. During this hiatus though, gave me time to draw several pictures and cartoons of MGs for our series of MG Calendars from 1979 to 1989, this being another pet project involving the perennial Mr Walbran again - many hands doing cut'n'paste again till the early hours, then printing the goddamn things with the messy old printer in Ray & Joan Hughes's basement. Brown ink everywhere, but this had the benefit of boosting the MG coffers, so that subs and entry fees could be held low.

The first Metro Turbo in NZ joined the ongoing fleet, then a Maestro 1600 that annoyingly told me "Handbrake ON" during motorkhanas. Sold the quick Turbo to Andy Lowe, exited the Maestro due to the ex-English stuff that never sleeps (turned a bucket of rust into pure gold – sold the car), saved a couple of red Metros from being scrapped for their motors and brakes for minis, a couple of white Metros (same reason), then managed to acquire a very reliable and fun Montego EFI.

You can probably see a pattern evolving here, the emphasis being on MG saloons. Well, we must always remember that MGs began as rather pedestrian Morris saloons being slightly modified into sporting saloons, and then some became convertibles when their tops fell off.  
(Now those facts should awaken the purists and make them sit up).

After the blue Monty left, a red one replaced it for a while, and then a bolt shot out of the blue. The only Maestro Turbo Tickford to leave the English shores new, came to NZ, and after chasing it for years, became mine at last. Tickford UK only made 505 of these cars, homologated for racing, in 1989 and 1990. Mine is number 36, and now according to the Maestro Turbo register in the UK, only 26 survive on the road today, with a few being de-rusted in garages.

At the time of release, it blitzed all opposition by doing 0-100km/h in 6.4 seconds, the fastest accelerating MG ever built, the only other saloons to beat it being the BMW M5 and the Bentley Turbo R, which were only 0.1 seconds faster, much bigger engines, and hugely more expensive.

Enough of the promo.

I still have it - (my kickboxer in a ballgown).



**Maestro Turbo Tickford #36, 1989**



# Den's Doodles

Once upon a time there was a sedately driven '72 Midget aptly named "Escargot", probably because of its timing of events done on a calendar instead of a stopwatch. As the owner Christine was leaving our shores to join the unlucky country, a deal was done and ended her sedate lifestyle.

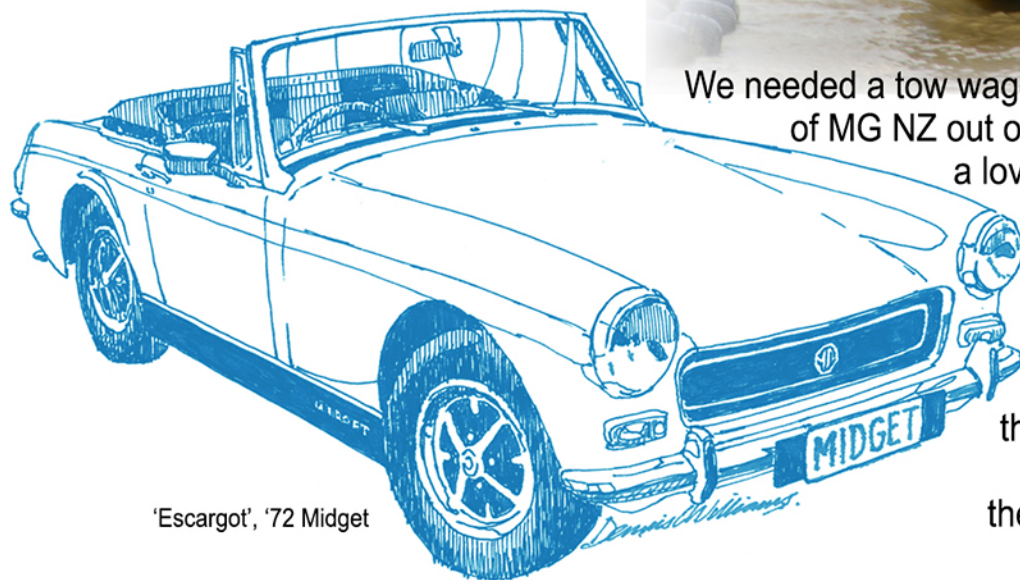
(The car, not Mrs Nyhane). Engine bored, flowed head & stuff greatly increased the 1275s power, LSD, 5-speed, strengthened axles etc made her a lot more 'funnable'. Showed Auckland Car Club that rear drive MGs were seriously competitive, winning most of their khanas by considerable margins, and ended up tutoring them for punishment.

At the same time, another Metro Turbo evolved into a motorkhana winner as well.

At around this time, Doug Dingle had made some small alloy jetboats, and our quadraplegic friend Trevor asked me whether I'd like to drive his boat while he navigated, in jetsprints. A couple of minutes after a positive response, I was hooked. We campaigned the little rocket all around NZ and formed a new class

of jetsprint boat in the process, comfortably beating many more powerful jets at the same time. One of my theories in life is that you need to keep your brain moving faster than the machine you're operating, and these things were quick. You really needed a well honed memory, instant decisions as well as quick responses. Unfortunately, most of the jetsprints seemed to coincide with MG events, so the purchasing of MGs and competing in them slowed somewhat.

Only after around 23 years of jetboating (jetsprinting, and doing most major rivers and lakes all over NZ), we decided to get back into MGs again, buying an old MGF, and having just as much fun as always. The most similar thing between the jetboat and the F is the amount of water you put up with.



'Escargot', '72 Midget



'Escargot' 1st away - LeMans Pukekohe (late 80s)



'88 Metro Turbo

JetSprinting



We needed a tow wagon, so talked Kerry Cheyne of MG NZ out of his quite well-used ZT-T – a lovely car on the open road, a little sluggish unless you constantly played with the auto, so it became another of the Walbran's ex-Den cars, along with the long-unused 'Escargone' hot Midget, both now in the capable hands of Scott W.



# Den's Doodles

After saving a lovely MGF Abingdon from becoming a throw-away TradeMe hoon-mobile, it is now happily at home with Alan & Maria Thorn in Katikati. Then I heard that Jane Taylor was selling her lovely blue ZR, a wonderful lively MG that behaves itself as a daily driver, as well as being enjoyable in competitive events, doesn't drop oil or require half a ton of spares in the boot every trip away from home base.

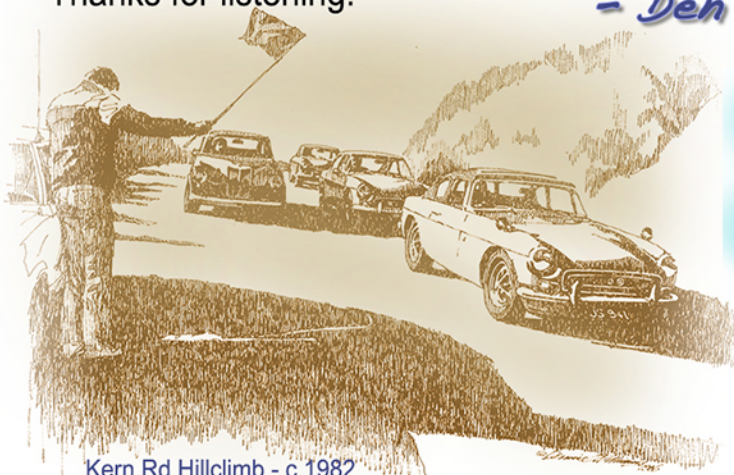
And this is where the story really begins. Through all of this, I know almost every name that has won every trophy in the MG cupboard – I've engraved most of your names on them every year since around 1972. And my engraving hand can do one name automatically – W-a-l-b-r-a-n !

Now if you've been counting, I have owned a total of 24 MGs. A couple of short-term ones have not been mentioned - one of them only lasted in my ownership until the bottom of the road that I bought it, and a very rusty old MG Maestro EFi that was acquired for some useful spares for the Tickford, just in case...

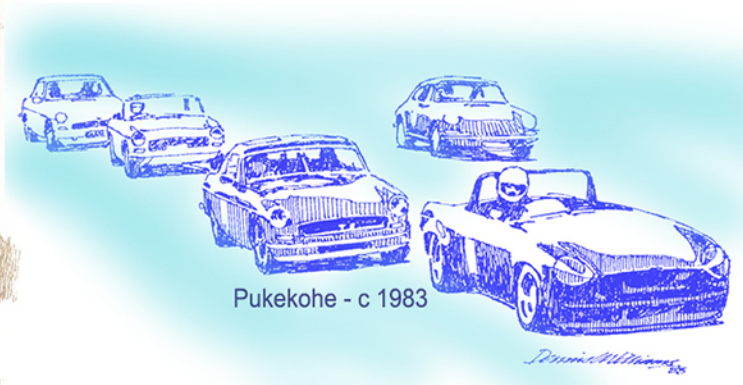
The other slightly unusual facet alongside my MGing is the fact that in the last 12 years, Ree and I, in our NZ 4WD motorhome, have driven every road that reaches the coast in all of NZ, also driven our USA motorhome in every US state in 3-month stints over 2 years (yes, including Alaska), and driven our Ozzie motorhome in 3-month stints, again over 2 years, right around 'Straya' and Tazzie. But that's another story. And now we're beginning to drive in as many MG events as possible while we're visiting home.

Thanks for listening.

*- Den (the Pen) Williams*



Kern Rd Hillclimb - c 1982



Pukekohe - c 1983

*Den Williams*