

A SLICE OF CLUB HISTORY - A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE Part 1 - the early years

by Elaine Hamilton

As promised, here is my contribution to the collection of articles from Club members marking the 60th anniversary of the Club. This is an account of just a few of those 60 years of the Club's life and I urge you all to consider doing something similar by adding an account of your own contribution to the Club to the patchwork quilt of its history.

The Club records show that I joined the Club fifty years ago and have had continuous membership ever since with two intense periods of activity 'interrupted' by marriage, support for Vern's motor racing, family and career. This article focuses on the first of those two periods which was, in retrospect, relatively short going from the time of my joining the Club to Vern's and my departure for the UK and Europe in 1967.

I was a single young girl, the owner of a Mini 850, who joined a very male dominated MG Car Club on the advice of a fellow at UK Motors who responded when I was putting my car in for a service and queried where I could learn a bit about cars with 'Come and join the MG Car Club; we'll teach you'. He gave me directions to 620 Wickham St, The Valley and said 'Said you there on Friday night' so a commitment was made.

It was a commitment I kept but he didn't and I didn't ever get to meet him again! However I did get to meet some very welcoming people including the Hunter family, the recently married John and Anna Fraser, the irrepressible Kerry Horgan etc. One thing I found out was that the easiest way to get accepted was to become involved so I found myself fairly quickly having the first of my two 'stints' on Committee.

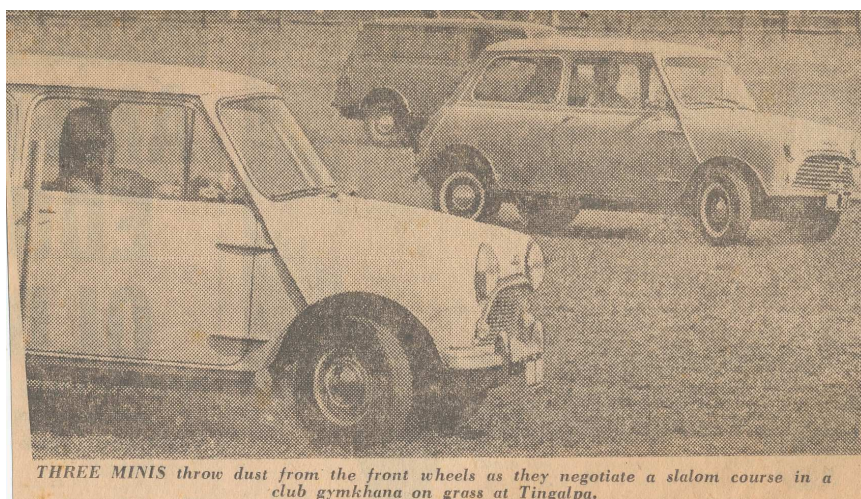
This was an exciting time for the Club as the land at Mt Cotton was purchased and the work on the hillclimb was begun during that time. I recall going down to working bees at Mt Cotton when Mt Cotton Rd was dirt and access to the hillclimb-to-be venue was via Wuduru and Fabians Rds. I remember being there on the day when the trees to be 'kept' were identified before the bulldozers came in to do their work. Carole Palmer (now Corness) and I sometimes provided lunch for the workers. I even remember her recipe for her tuna and rice salad as we made huge quantities of it and, in retrospect, I wonder if some good solid sandwiches may have been a better choice of menu! In my couple of years on committee at that time, I also took on the task of editing, printing and compiling the 'Octagon' -- the wheel certainly has turned full circle though this current period as Editor (now nearly 9 years) is significantly longer than that first one and has the benefit of a professional printer rather than a long carriage typewriter, a bunch of ink stencils, copious bottle of correcting fluid and a Gestetner/Roneo/ink duplicating machine!

Other memories of my first period of active membership in the Club are being revived by Bruce Ibbotson with his series of articles as I remember my many Friday nights at 620 Wickham St, The Valley and the friendly people I met there. Without their acceptance and encouragement on my first visit, I probably would have gone running back down those many daunting stairs and never returned! However, their

encouragement led me to being involved in the Club activities, including joining the committee, my attempts at gymkhanaing at Porters Paddock at Tingalpa, at hillclimbing at Grafton and Tamworth hillclimbs, my enjoyment of the sprints at Lowood - both as a competitor and time-keeper - and, in particular, that wonderful day when Kerry Horgan let me drive his MGB at a sprint meeting at Lowood and I managed a non-forgettable (for me and probably for Kerry!) 103.5 mph down that long straight. Maybe that was what inspired me to trade in my 850cc Mini which achieved a staggering (yes, it really staggered along!) 24s quarter mile for a 1998cc Mini Cooper in which I managed to break the (for me) seemingly unachievable 20s barrier.

Other memorable events from this time were the social Club runs. The first Club event ever held was a social Club run and the Club has a day run on the calendar for this year on the date closest to that of the original run held on 28 Nov 1954. The proposed date for our run is November 16 so mark the date and try to be part of it. I was fortunate to be the passenger in Kerry Horgan's MGB for my first outing on one of these. Kerry was Club Captain and led the run in his MGB (on that day without its bonnet!) and I can still remember the feeling of pride as I looked back at the long train of MGs (and other BMC cars) following us.

A final highlight of this era was my participation in the first Mini Monte Rally over the Easter weekend of 1965 with Carole Palmer (Corness) as navigator. Although this wasn't an MGCCQ event, it was a BMC event so the connection was well and truly there, particularly through the enthusiasm and encouragement of people such as Brian Tebble and John French who also, somehow, managed to provide us with a Halda (which we didn't know how to use but which looked impressive on the dashboard) and a set of tyres on loan from none other than Harry Firth. Our success in the rally was limited but we did manage something that many others failed to do and that was to finish! The next month Vern was transferred to the school where I was teaching and he had just had his first go at circuit racing ... the rest, as they say, is history with us then, as now, both members of MGCCQ.



THREE MINIS throw dust from the front wheels as they negotiate a slalom course in a club gymkhana on grass at Tingalpa.

I am in the Mini in the foreground competing in a slalom race at a Tingalpa gymkhana. This was published in the BMC Rosette, a newspaper published by BMC Australia.



Having an informal drive at a gymkhana at Tingalpa in an MGB being 'road tested' by passenger John Weinthal while Kerry Horgan provides light relief at the rear. John Weinthal was the motoring writer for the Courier Mail and chose to extend his road test of the B to the gymkhana paddock.



Waiting in my Mini for my run at a Lowood sprint meeting. With me was a fellow Mini driver, Michelle Martin (?), also kitted up and waiting *in those incredible crash helmets* for her run in her Mini. *We young girls stuck together!*



Almost too fast for the camera :)) My wonderful run in Kerry's MGB at Lowood showing me on the flying quarter mile.



My Mini Cooper all fitted out ready for the inaugural Mini Monte Rally held over Easter 1965.



Attempting a gymkhana event at a straight at Warwick Farm as part of the Mini Monte Rally. Carole is the spectator in the red top in the background.