



Recollections from second term as MGCC President, 2004 to 2008

by David Miles

**(pictured at the official opening of the Cubrooms
in 2005)**

Having been a committee member from, I think, 1998, I considered the easiest position to hold was that of Vice-President, particularly as the late John Davies was well entrenched in the office of President and enjoying the position. How wrong this perception turned out to be!

Before this, however, as a relatively new committee member, it had seemed to me that there was an urgent need for an up-grade in the way the club communicated with its members. The committee, following some discussion, agreed to the formation of a website, and with initial support for the idea coming from Helen Danalis, and the actual formation done by my son Richard, we entered the digital age. The website evolved and advanced rapidly with the input of Glenda Crew, and now is, I suspect, the most awarded of all Australian MG Car Club sites.

Whist numbers for my proposed Mid-Week runs to cater for the growing number of retired members were initially disappointing, persistence ensured that there was a future for such events, and they began to gain popularity.

At this time, Bruce Mutch was editing and supervising the production of this magazine. He oversaw its enhancement from an in house production to a much improved, professionally produced and printed journal. Even more sophisticated printing techniques were evolving, however, and it was decided to take advantage of the new technologies. Bruce deferred the responsibility of editor to Elaine Hamilton, and, as with the website, the Octagon has been the regular recipient of “Best Club Magazine” at annual national meetings.

My relatively easy ride ended, however, when John Davies resigned shortly before the 2004 National Meeting in Warwick and, to my horror, the combined fingers of the then committee pointed directly at yours truly, then enjoying the aforesaid easy ride as Vice President, to fill the vacated position!

The first task was, of course, the National Meeting, only a month or so away. Under the guidance of John Davies, Ron and Bev Clydesdale, Margaret and Dino Mattea and a very dedicated team, most of the ground work had been done, and the meeting progressed pretty much to plan, but scoring computer problems created the need to abandon the trophy presentation whilst glitches were resolved. I'll never forget the trepidation with which I had to announce this to the assembled throng of participants, nor will I forget the marathon overnight effort put in by Paul Lupton and his crew to rectify the problems before the farewell breakfast.

Hard decisions seemed much easier after that, and the requirement to make them came in quick succession. The club had been forced to vacate the very central clubrooms at West End which we rented from the ever-supportive Tighe family, and next we were renting a church

hall at Albion. While grateful for the use of the premises, the landlord's "no alcohol" policy did curtail our activities somewhat. There was a feeling that we should "bite the bullet" and investigate the possibility of obtaining a permanent home. In addition, the Mount Cotton track surface had to be re-sealed, so there were conflicting demands upon our limited finances.

A concerted effort was mounted by the committee to find this permanent home for the club – something that we saw as vital to our long term future – and parameters as to position and cost established. A number of options were examined, and our Collinsvale St premises won out. Tremendous help came from numerous members to assist with turning very basic industrial premises into a useable club facility. The mezzanine was constructed with the help of John Loth and the library housed, allowing the volumes collected by David Robinson over many years to be utilised, whilst club friends and helpers gathered together sufficient items to produce a workable kitchen and bar. Largely ruined by the 2011 flood, it was pleasing to see the kitchen and bar restored to an even better standard by hard working members following this set-back.

Somehow, we had also mustered enough funds to re-seal the track at Mount Cotton, so this was carried out as well. It was very satisfying for all those on that particular committee that we were able to satisfy the desires of both the Hillclimb and MG enthusiasts within the club.

Committee meetings were held every second Monday night, with our dedicated committee room providing a cosy venue. Many a tale could be told of the deliberations carried out within its walls – CAMS reports from Ann Thomson, Treasurers' reports from Paul Strange and then Carly Moffatt/Mattea, and Paul (and Kerry) Strange then Elaine Hamilton as very efficient Secretaries. The hard work of these people, along with the support of enthusiastic committee members, made the task of President so much easier and more enjoyable. We had very positive, hard working committee members. Meetings were occasionally a little tense, but good humour and mutual respect always prevailed.

As it has evolved, one of the very significant decisions made was in response to a letter from the late (tragically) Ian Bryant, from Hervey Bay, suggesting the formation of a "Chapter" of the club in that area. Despite initial scepticism, these suggestions were adopted, and subsequently lead to the formation of additional Chapters on the Darling Downs, in the Capricorn Region and in Cairns. Currently, these Chapters are now growing significantly, both in numbers and in the scope of their activities.

I am particularly proud of the scope and standard of the improvements to Mount Cotton which were achieved by the committees of which I was President. With unparalleled professional and practical help from Dino Mattea and other hard working volunteers, the face of this venue changed dramatically in just a few years. Our close neighbour, Peter Maszaros, provided exceptional help with his expertise, bobcat and mower. A new canteen, pit office complete with generator room, timing shed and all manner of much needed improvements evolved. Spectator and competitor facilities were enhanced, and the venue attained a park-like demeanour. Peter Rayment's timing gear, having done a sterling job for many years, was

replaced with modern, digital equipment of world standard. Brian Tebble, Jon McCarthy and those whose determination and foresight formed the venue all those years ago would, I am sure, be proud of what their successors achieved during those few years. Let's not forget, either, Dino's efforts with regard to "Friends of Mount Cotton," which relieved the club of some of the financial burden of the aforesaid enhancements. The hard work there continues, and the once critical Redlands Council now support our endeavours. Noise complaints, whilst I suspect were often of a vexatious nature, were nullified by the introduction of up to date monitoring equipment, and, with sometimes unpopular enforcement of the 95Db CAMS limit, has helped to ensure the continuing operation of our venue. I am proud of the fact that this system recently received praise from the CAMS technical officer.

The Wednesday working bees, I am pleased to say, continue; the efforts of those involved contributing significantly to the venue.

While Mount Cotton has been the rock which has provided financial security, the MG enthusiasts, and the core of the club, were not, I hope, overlooked. As mentioned, the Chapters have greatly extended the opportunity for our regional enthusiasts to enjoy the pleasure and fellowship MGCC offers. Mid-week runs provide fun and fellowship, along with the opportunity to exercise and display our cars. The weekly Noggin 'n' Natters initially held every Friday evening provided members with the opportunity to catch up with the latest modification, breakdown or other significant MG related event.

My recollections of my time as President are those of a committee and club with a positive, "can do" attitude. There were also many members, apart from those on the committee, who were also only too happy to volunteer for all manner of tasks when the need arose. They were happy, enthusiastic and keen to be part of whatever project was "on the go."

As 2008 drew to a close, however, unfolding events convinced me that it was time to pass the baton on. I had enjoyed my task, but it was time to re-focus on my personal life, my family, friends and my health.

My hope, as always, is that this excellent club has survived my terms as President and, perhaps, even been enhanced by what I and supportive committees and members achieved. I have no regrets, and offer no apologies for trying to adopt a "Big Picture" approach so that the entire membership was considered in the making of committee decisions and club policy.

I thank those who supported me, not only during the easy times, but through the difficult times as well.



In discussion with David Robinson and Ann Thomson at the pre-purchase viewing of 8/16 Collinsvale St.



David chairs a happy meeting in the Committee Room of the Clubrooms



A proud moment as David displays the trophies won at the 2008 National Meeting at Tamworth



With David Robinson at the function to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Club