

GREEN DUST



Ireland's Unique Motor Racing History

1900-1939

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By
BRENDAN LYNCH

PORTOBELLO PUBLISHING

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To Patrick and Siobhan Lynch.

*“The cars came scudding in towards Dublin,
running evenly like pellets in the groove of the Naas Road.”*

After the Race — James Joyce.

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FOREWORD

After many dedicated years of research, Brendan Lynch has completed the first-ever comprehensive record of early Irish motor racing to plug a huge gap in the motorsport and motoring history of Ireland and indeed the UK.

A measure of his massive undertaking is that the book covers every single Irish speed event from 1900 to 1939 — including the great Irish Grand Prix races of Phoenix Park as well as the Tourist Trophy series, which became part of the Ulster way of life over the nine years it was staged at the Ards circuit not far from my Belfast home.

And not only are the Phoenix Park and Ards events covered thoroughly but also the Limerick and Cork Grand Prix races, the Bray round-the-houses and even the sand races and hillclimbs which provided such entertainment for competitors and fans alike.

Apart from the accounts of the races themselves, I was amazed to hear that the world land speed record had been broken in Phoenix Park and I was also enthralled by the chapters on the overseas successes of Irish racing drivers and drivers associated with Ireland. It was the first time I had read such a lengthy account of the exploits of Hugh Hamilton, who was certainly destined to be a great international star before his untimely death, while the story of Leslie Porter and Willie Nixon in the 1903 Paris-Madrid race was also fascinating if sad.

The fact that many of the photographs are previously unpublished also adds to the interest of the book and it was most interesting to see the

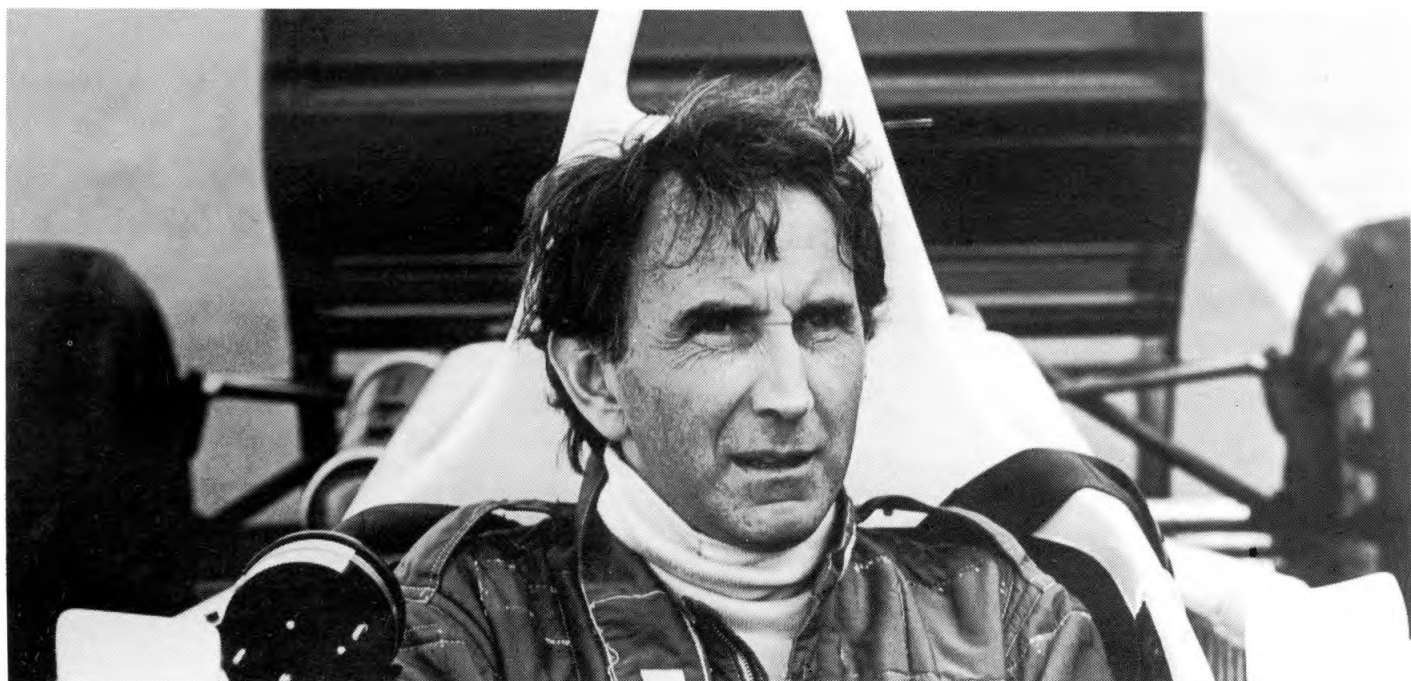
giant Gobron Brillie, Napier and other machinery which took part in the 1903 Dublin Speed Trials — all of them so ungainly and dangerous looking compared to the Grand Prix and sports cars with which I am more familiar.

The Irish road circuits played a major role in the development of motorsport in these islands. Even in my early competition days, the Phoenix Park and Dunboyne meetings were real road races without parallel in Europe and as this book points out the Irish events also attracted some of the world's most famous competitors. Those races, the drivers and the period deserved to be recorded and this book does exactly that, as well as tracing the development of Irish motorsport which led to my Grand Prix career and the success of many other Irish drivers from north and south of the island.

I know Brendan Lynch for many years as a dedicated journalist and race reporter from Formula Ford to Formula One Grand Prix racing. His interest in the individuals involved in racing, rather than in the peripheral aspects of the sport, as well as the fact that he competed himself for some years all have helped to give him a deeper understanding of what is involved in motor racing.

This book is without doubt a labour of love. I am sure that its readers, like me, will admire the commitment and enjoy the interesting and invariably good-humoured manner in which the great Irish events and competitors of the period have at last been so ably chronicled.

John Watson



AUTHOR'S PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ireland has always been a sporting country but while the national games of hurling and football, its soccer, horse racing and athletics achievements have been well chronicled, no attempt has ever been made to write a comprehensive history of the country's great international motor races.

Thus it is not generally known that Dublin's Phoenix Park boasted Europe's fastest road circuit — nor that the Park is the oldest continuously used road circuit in the world — nor that the world land speed record was broken there in 1903 — nor that the great Irish races at Phoenix Park, Ards (near Belfast), Cork and Limerick attracted some of the greatest drivers in the world including the legendary Italian Tazio Nuvolari, European Champion Rudolf Caracciola, Boy's Own hero Tim Birkin and the wild Camille Jenatzy, first person in the world to drive at a mile a minute.

Sadly, Ireland has also yet to properly acknowledge the achievement of John Boyd Dunlop and Harvey du Cros — who established the world's first pneumatic tyre factory in Dublin — and the successes of Wicklow's speed king, Henry Segrave, fastest man on land and water and the first person to travel at 200mph.

This book is a celebration of those achievements as well as a record of every Irish speed event from 1900 to 1939. Hopefully, its publication will stimulate more widespread awareness of Ireland's outstanding contribution to international motorsport and it may also help to promote a debate on the feasibility of reviving the great international races of the Twenties and Thirties.

Approximately one billion viewers now watch television coverage through live or deferred broadcasts of the Grand Prix Formula One races, the biggest television audience for any sporting event apart from the Olympics. An Irish Grand Prix could harness this worldwide medium to attract immeasurable prestige and tourist and commercial interest — which was never more needed than in these troubled recessionary times.

Though many regard motor racing as a frivolous activity, it should be firmly reiterated that without the uncompromising test of competition, our modern road cars would not have achieved the advanced standards of economical power, road holding, braking, general safety and comfort which we now take so much for granted. As to why men and women risk their lives racing, most of them readily admit that there are few experiences to rival the exhilaration of driving a car at speed — and, more importantly, negotiating the fine balance between control and disaster. There is, moreover, a certain honour attached to a profession in which men and women consistently put their money where their mouths are in what this writer sees as the ultimate art form.

And here I must record my admiration for the man who has written the foreword to this book, John Watson, who persisted despite every conceivable misfortune, financial and mechanical until he came within a whisker of being Ireland's first World Champion. High-speed accidents, hospitalisations and the deaths of close friends were the constant companions of the Belfast man who epitomises the archetypal professional racing driver.

I must also record my appreciation of the courage of Dublin's Derek Daly, who recovered from a horrific Indianapolis accident to resume racing in the USA, and also the many other drivers whose activities I regularly covered from Mondello to Monaco, Brands Hatch to Watkins Glen — including the sporting Emerson Fittipaldi, who gave me a handsome trophy for the first-ever Irish Formula Vee race and the inspiring Niki Lauda. Sadly, some of these drivers are no longer with us and there are six in particular that I will never forget; the electrifying Gilles Villeneuve, the ever-cheerful and determined Graham Hill, French daredevil Patrick Depailler, the quiet super-quick Welshman Tom Pryce, the spectacular Ronnie Peterson whose widow Barbro recently died so tragically, and a comparatively unknown Dubliner, Peter O'Reilly of Ballymun, who took on three jobs to subsidise the racing which sadly killed him at Phoenix Park.

I must acknowledge too my admiration for that legendary driver turned constructor, Enzo Ferrari, whose name is synonymous with motorsport and who managed the Alfa team in the 1931 TT; for the dedicated and brilliant mechanics without whom there would be no cars on the grids; and finally for the superb journalism of such contemporaries and former colleagues as the fearless Denis Jenkinson; Nigel Roebuck of Autosport; Alan Henry, late of Motoring News; the distinguished David Hodges; the polished John Blunsden of The Times and his colleagues Colin Dryden of The Telegraph and Pat Mennem, late of the Daily Mirror; dedicated writer and publisher Mike Kettlewell; fluid historian Bill Boddy of Motorsport; chirpy Ulsterman, Maurice Hamilton and that multi-faceted Kiwi, Eoin Young of Autocar (and the rest!).

Thanks too to the efficient and hospitable staff and marshals of Brands Hatch, Silverstone, Thruxton, Donington Park, Mallory Park, Snetterton and Oulton — who even allowed me to pen programmes during

my UK stint! Also thanks to Raymond Baxter for his BBC Fifties commentaries and, on the Irish side of St George's Channel, to the management staff and marshals of Kirkistown and Mondello Park and the latter's atmospheric commentator, Robin Rhodes.

A special word of thanks is due for his consistent encouragement to Mike Thackwell, youngest-ever Grand Prix driver and a man in the mould of Birkin and Villeneuve whom I was delighted to introduce to Ireland. Also to his brother Kerry and former racing father, Ray Thackwell for their support.

Motor Import's (BMW) Frank Keane and Sealink's Robin Sharman assisted the early stage of my research, while production was greatly expedited by the support of Derry Creedon and Henry Ford & Son Ltd; David Warbrick and Dunlop Tyres; Reg McMahan and Burmah-Castrol Ltd; adopted Dubliner Roger Kenny of Lada Ireland; Leo Keogh, Bob Prole and the SIMI; David Sheane of Sheane Engineering, Wicklow; Dominic Murphy and Des Behan of the Leinster Motor Club, John Hynes and Gerry Hoban of Christie & Co.

Having virtually lived there for four winters, I must express my profound gratitude to the unfailingly helpful staff of the British Newspaper Library, Colindale, also to the staff of the Science Museum, South Kensington, the London RAC Library, Dublin's National Library, Trinity College Library, and the RIAC Library, whose enthusiastic librarian former racer Wilfie Fitzsimmons provided invaluable information and photographs.

Thanks to artist Terry Ballance for his evocative cover picture, while John Cooney whose grandfather won the first-ever Irish speed competition provided the Phoenix Park Speed Trials photographs which are published here for the first time. I am also extremely grateful to Tony Colley for material from his father Dudley Colley's albums, Jim Donnellan and Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

My sincere thanks also to John S. Moore, author of *Irish Car Makers and Keeper of Transport* and his colleagues at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum for further photographic assistance; also to Finbarr Corry, author of the *Automobile Treasury of Ireland*; Kilkenny's Kieran White and Barry Statham; Limerick's Richard Quinn and Shaun Wall; Banking enthusiast Don McClenahan; Belfast's autonumerologist Michael Wylie; ace photographer and equally superb rally driver Frank Fennell; Dublin's Frank Gavin; Robin Read and Chris Jones; Eddie Fitzgerald; the librarians of Alfa Romeo, Mercedes Benz, Ford, Dunlop, Burmah Castrol, Rolls Royce Ltd, and the New York Herald Tribune; Clara Clark of CLE; Treasa Coady of Townhouse Countryhouse Publications; Denis Sheehan and the Cork Examiner; Michael Mackey and Renee Stewart of the RIAC; Mrs Ann Mangan; David Winter, Marlboro Media; John Cooper, Chris Davies, Derry Lindsay and all at Three Candles.

I must also record my appreciation of the support and encouragement of the following friends; Brian Ireland of Tiga, Pat Cunningham, Bill Sweeney, John Cullen, the late "Bard of Kensington" Michael Mannion, Willie Heaney of Nenagh, Jimmy O'Donovan, PR folk Paul Dillon, Norman Freeman, John McMahan and Freddie Radford, Raymond Blake-Knox, author Gerard Mannix Flynn, Tony and Marge Sadar, Bob and Orna Cahill and fellow-artist Pete Hogan, May O'Flaherty, Miss King and all the ladies of Parson's Bookshop, Marlene, Cesarina and Karen Lynch, Mick O'Kane, Peter Stevens, Jeremy Hennessy, Paschal Bolger and the courageous "Junior" of the Barrett Cheshire Home.

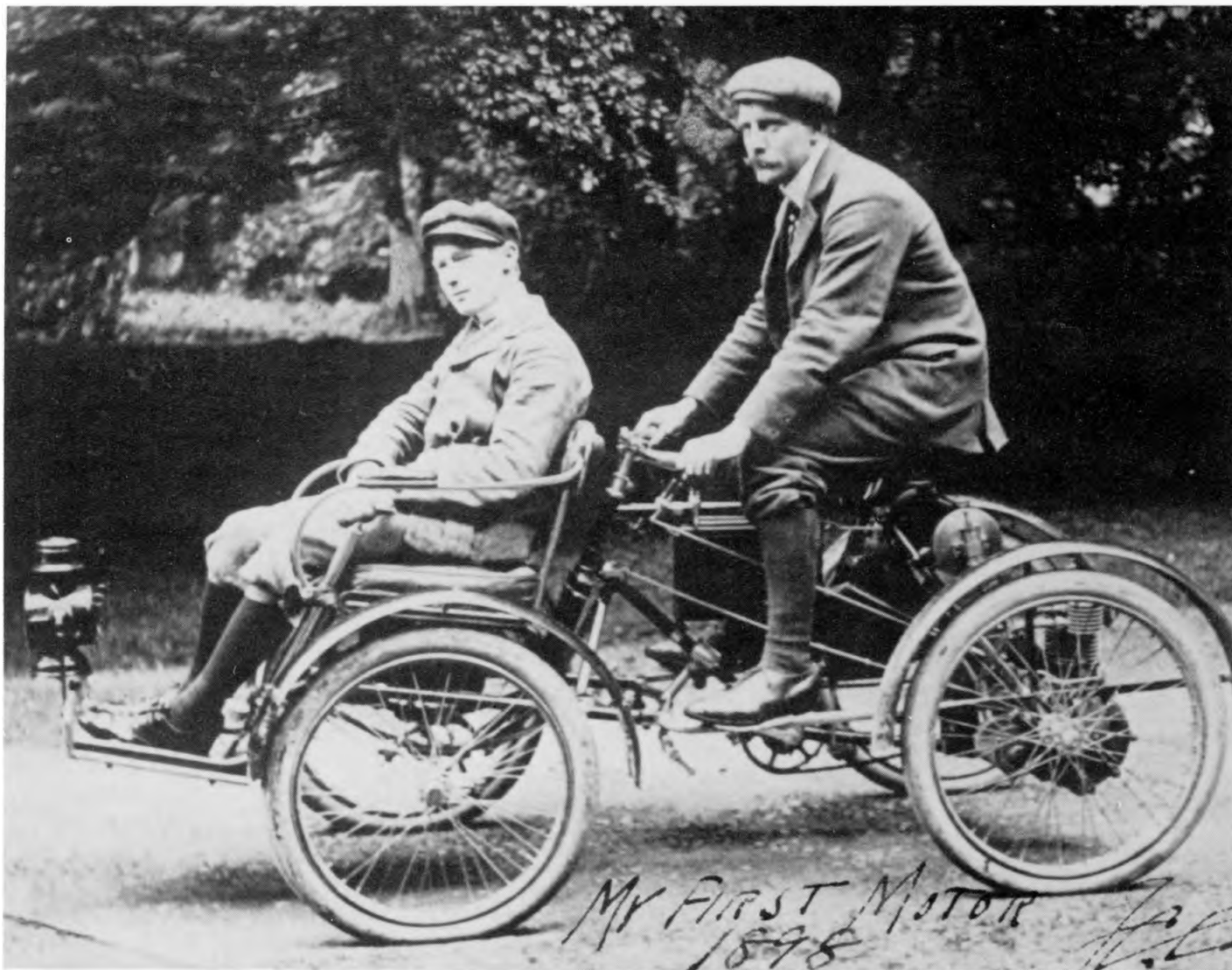
My thanks also for giving so generously of their time to Alicia Carracciola, Charlie Manders, Charles Martin, Bill Rockall, Prince Bira's niece, Narisa Chakrabongse, the late Gordon Burney and Nat Lepler, the much-missed Sammy and Suzanna Davis and Giulio Ramponi. And for their invaluable typing assistance I must thank in particular the super-efficient Caroline Nealon, also Naoimi Rush, Anne Cook, Madeleine Robertson-Squire, Veronica Smith, Patricia Holden, Andrea Egan, Linda Reid, and Adrienne Martin.

A word of appreciation is also due to the late Billy McMaster, both for his Irish motorsport book and his fine organisational work, and also to those enthusiastic officials of the Leinster Motor Club, the Irish Motor Racing Club, the energetic Galway and Limerick Motor Clubs, the Kildare and Carlow clubs, the Ulster Automobile Club, and all the other associations north and south of the island who have devoted so much of their time to maintaining the fine Irish motor racing tradition — and, equally laudable, uniting people of different political persuasions. Well done, ladies and gentlemen!

And a final Thank You to lovely Noreen in Synge's greeny Wicklow, whose hospitality enabled me to conclude this book within yards of the Leinster Trophy circuit, on which England's first World Champion Mike Hawthorn sampled one of his earliest successes and also the enthusiasm and camaraderie which was unique to Irish motor racing, and which he returned to enjoy many times before his untimely death.

This book is not for the freeloaders and *poseurs* who are attracted to the superficial aspects of modern motor racing. It is for the enthusiasts who appreciate the courage and admire the skill of the men and women who go down to the tracks in their racing cars.

It is written equally for the general reader who wishes to learn about Ireland's motor racing tradition without being smothered by technicalities. Recording every event may seem to have slowed the action but I hope that I have succeeded in conveying something of the atmosphere and drama of those early events, and the courage of the pioneering participants who placed Ireland so firmly on the international motor racing map.



▲ Jim Cooney (right), winner of first Irish Motorsport event which took place at Navan in 1900.

Ireland's first motorist, Dr. John Colohan of Dublin, in his Benz.
◀

1. THE BACKGROUND (1896-1903)

World's first pneumatic tyre factory in Dublin

In 1982 Belfast's John Watson came within a whisker of being the first Irish person to win motor racing's ultimate honour, the Drivers' World Championship.

It was a fitting achievement for the persistent Watson, whose long apprenticeship had included at least three close brushes with death and a Pandora's Box of mechanical and other misfortunes. But the brave Irishman's success represented more than just a personal achievement. It was the logical outcome of a national association with motorsport which stretched as far as eight decades back to 1903, when his country hosted the first major motor race to be held in Britain or Ireland. That 327-mile Gordon Bennett Cup epic brought all the great drivers of the time to Ireland including 1902 Gordon Bennett winner, Britain's Selwyn Edge; Tour de France winner Rene de Knyff; Paris-Madrid hero Fernand Gabriel; the wild Camille Jenatzy, first person to do a mile a minute in a car; and also the first American team to compete in Europe.

This tradition was maintained by the Ards Tourist Trophy and Dublin, Cork and Limerick Grand Prix events which attracted such folk heroes of the Twenties and Thirties as record-breakers Malcolm Campbell, Kaye Don and George Eyston; Bentley Boys Tim Birkin, Woolf Barnato and Doctor Benjafield; the Italian dare-devils Giuseppe Campari, Achille Varzi and the man generally considered to be the greatest driver of all time, Tazio Nuvolari; and his main rival the web-footed "Rain-Master" Champion of Europe, Rudolf Caracciola. These drivers were followed in post-war years by World Champions Juan Manuel Fangio, Nino Farina and Alberto Ascari, while the great Stirling Moss and Britain's first World Champion Mike Hawthorn also scored the Irish roads with their earliest significant successes.

With few natural resources and less industry, Ireland never became involved in motor manufacturing, yet it was the expertise of a Belfast inventor and the business acumen of a Dublin entrepreneur which provided a major stimulus to the motor industry in the form of the pneumatic tyre. The inventor was John Boyd Dunlop, who

made his first tyre to placate his cyclist son who constantly complained about being jolted on the roads and of being outpaced by his bigger school-mates. The Dunlop tyre made its competition debut at the 1889 Belfast Easter Sports where local dark horse Willie Hume won the three main cycling events, easily beating the reigning champions including the accomplished sons of Dublin businessman Harvey du Cros.

The dapper Huguenot paper manufacturer was an Irish boxing and fencing champion and founder of Bective Rangers Football Club which he had captained to its first Irish national title. He fathered no fewer than seven sons who in turn dominated Irish cycling until that fateful Belfast sports meeting. Following negotiations with Dunlop, du Cros set up the world's first pneumatic tyre factory in Dublin's Stephen Street in 1889 and his grasp of the potential of the Dunlop tyre, which hastened the greatest transport revolution of all time, subsequently earned him the Legion d'Honneur from the country his ancestors had fled in 1704.

A measure of John Boyd Dunlop's long and outstanding contribution to motoring is that it was a Dunlop-shod car which provided Selwyn Edge with his historic 1902 Gordon Bennett Cup race success — which led to the first international event to be staged in Britain, the 1903 Irish Gordon Bennett event — and over eight decades later helped Ireland's Jaguar-mounted John Watson to second place in the World Sportscar Championship.

In addition to Dunlop's development of the pneumatic tyre, Irishman Richard Lovell Edgeworth (father of the novelist, Maria) was an outstanding road engineer whose ideas led to improved road surfacing in Ireland and the UK, while as early as 1900 there was an authoritative Dublin-published automobile journal, *Irish Motor News*, edited by former racing cyclist Richard J. Mecredy, which circulated widely throughout Britain.

The first car to be imported into Ireland was an iron-shod vehicle, a Serpollet Steamer which Professor John Shaw Brown of Dunmurray near Belfast acquired on March 6, 1896. Brown was a

Fellow of the Royal Society and the inventor of the Viagraph, an instrument which enabled a profile to be made of a road surface. His Serpollet was exhibited in Belfast's Ulster Hall, where both the car and its owner's lecture on automobilism attracted considerable attention.

Although historians have credited Dubliner Dr. John Colohan with the honour of bringing the first internal-combustion engined car to Ireland, it was in fact in the southern city of Cork that the petrol-engined horseless carriage made its Irish debut. That was at the Easter 1896 Shandon Bells Bazaar to which the enterprising headmaster of Cork Grammer School, the Rev. Ralph Harvey, brought a Benz Velo in order to raise funds for the school. London dealer Harry Hewetson who brought over the car recollected "It was a sight to see how the Irish people wondered why the carriage moved so quietly and with so much ease, and at the bazaar people queued for rides in the Cornmarket Gardens at a shilling a time until 8.30 each evening."

A Daily Herald editorial described the car as "The means of transport of the future and the novelty of our decade," while another local paper noted presciently "the horseless carriage will we suppose give rise to a new industry. Oil stops will line the road and blacksmiths will now add knowledge of paraffin to their repertory." Not to be outdone by this editorial enthusiasm, a local wag commented "Instead of people remarking as they do 'There are points about that horse' they will be pointing to the fuel and saying 'There are horses about that pint...!'"

The first Dubliner to own a car was Blackrock's Doctor Colohan who was almost certainly the first Irish person to drive a car. Colohan had travelled extensively in Europe in the 1890's and he even worked briefly in one continental car factory to further his mechanical knowledge. The Dubliner had wanted to buy a car as early as 1892 but not wishing to experience the 4mph speed limitations of the old Highways Act, he waited until after Emancipation Day in November 1896 to invest in a Benz, which still survives in Ireland.

In 1899 Colohan took part in what was probably the first Irish race against the clock when he wagered he would travel the 135 miles to Galway in under twelve hours. His success undoubtedly sparked off further interest in the new mode of transport and soon everyone who was anyone owned a car. From possessing a vehicle it was but a short step to demonstrating its paces. Soon "scorching" in Dublin's Phoenix Park became such a menace that local by-laws were introduced to curb the reckless pace.

The original "scorchers" were of course the sinewy kings of the cycle racing tracks and in the 1890's the fleet Irish predecessors of reigning World Champion Stephen Roche and the doughty Sean Kelly had pedalled their way to many British and international successes. Harry Reynolds became Amateur Mile Champion of the World at London's Catford stadium in August 1896 and it was at meetings like this that Irish cyclists such as the du Cros brothers came into contact with the British riders Selwyn Edge, Charles Jarrott and J.W. Stocks, who were already exploring the possibilities of motoring, as was French champion Fernand Charron, one of the first successful racing drivers and winner of the opening 1900 Gordon Bennett Cup event.

It wasn't long before the Irish scorchers tried motorcycle pacing as an exciting extension of their sport. When J.W. Stocks came to Ireland for a motorcycling tour in 1900, the natives of Ballymena encouraged him to stage an exhibition ride on their newly concreted track. Stocks on his Ariel completed five miles in under ten minutes and the locals were impressed. An even larger audience watched him ascend a Derry hill with ease, while he was also persuaded to show his paces at the Brandywell race track.

However, the honour of staging Ireland's first contest between mechanically propelled vehicles belongs to the small town of Navan, whose enterprising Cycling and Athletic Club included an event for "Motors" in their sports on Sunday, August 16, 1900. The four entrants, each on an Ariel tricycle, were Dubliners H. Kenny, J. McDonald and R.W. Stevens, and Kells cycle dealer Jim Cooney, another former racing cyclist, whose elegant Kenlis Place home numbered Charles Stewart Parnell among its distinguished guests.



Engineer Richard Edgeworth (father of the novelist Maria) whose ideas led to improved road surfacing.

According to the local papers, the August sun had never shone more gloriously as bands played to a capacity audience of over three thousand. The race was divided into two two-mile heats and a five-mile final which was decided between the heat winners McDonald and Cooney. Although McDonald went well for a couple of laps, Cooney won by over half a minute in exactly eleven minutes, his success being no doubt aided by some judicious pre-sports day practice!

The Irish cyclist said "The meeting proved very exciting and a very good impression of the capabilities of motors was left on the minds of the spectators. Ireland's first motor race was a success and we fancy that race-promoting clubs whose tracks are suitable for speed will soon be anxious to include similar events on their programmes in future." One individual who was certainly impressed was medical student Oliver St. John Gogarty who won the supporting one-mile bicycle race. The future *enfant terrible* of Irish literature and politics and close friend of James Joyce was to prove as skilful a driver and aeronaut as he was a cyclist (and intrigued equally by art and invention, he wrote "Invention needs the same spark from Heaven for the man who can bend faith by rhythm as does it for the man who can transcend the limitations of time and space").

Within a month of the Navan race, another such event was included in the Portarlington Sports programme. Local knowledge once again triumphed as R.H. Poole from nearby Tullamore beat an over-confident Jim Cooney who had led at the bell. That sports organisers appreciated the draw of a "motor race" was well indicated by the inflated entry list which was circulated in connection with the Portarlington event. The programme listed at least four motorcyclists whose names had been included without their knowledge!

The pace on the open roads was still quite sedate at this time, but the motoring movement was spreading rapidly and it was only a matter of time before drivers began to organise themselves for social and sporting occasions. The first car run from Dublin to Belfast had been made in February 1898 and one of the MMC's five passengers was J.C. Percy who with R.J. Mecredy launched the Irish Motor News. The trip excited great interest with a welcoming party of Dromore schoolchildren making up for the hostility of some jarveys encountered on the way.

Prominent among the early motorists were Lord Iveagh of the Guinness brewing family; M.H. Gillie, editor of the influential Freeman's



John Boyd Dunlop (1840-1921), the man who perfected the pneumatic tyre.

Journal; Walter Sexton, R.J. Mecredy and J.C. Percy of Irish Motor News; Colonel Magrath of Wexford; Sir Horace Plunkett of Cooperative Movement fame; Sir William Goff of Waterford who owned a motor tricycle as early as 1897; and the magnificently named Hercules Langrishe of Kilkenny — who with Goff was a founding member of both the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland and the Irish Automobile Club. Other early converts to automobilism were Tipperary-born W.F. (Bill) Peare, who built Ireland's first garage in Waterford and also constructed a motor tricycle for Hercules Langrishe; Tullamore's R.H. Poole; Leopold Canning of Derry and Wicklow's Charles Segrave, whose son Henry subsequently became one of the world's most famous record breakers and the first person to travel at 200mph.

As the international automobile movement gathered momentum, the first motor race had been staged in 1895 over a daunting 732 miles from Paris to Bordeaux and back. It was won by Emile Levassor who drove his 3½-hp Panhard single-handed for 48 hours to win at an average speed of 15mph. Unfortunately, the 52-year old Frenchman also became motor racing's first fatality when he died after being thrown from his car during the following year's Paris-Marseilles event. Nine of the 22 starters finished that first race while

two of the six starters completed the first 1895 US race which was also the earliest to be won by a pneumatic-tyred car. That was the Duryea of constructor Frank Duryea, who had been overshadowed for much of the event by Irishman Jerry O'Connor, whose Benz was sponsored by the Macy department store.

The first race to cross an international frontier was the 1898 Paris-Amsterdam-Paris 889-mile event which was won by the former French cycling champion Fernand Charron. His Panhard averaged almost 27mph, an indication of the rapidly increasing power of the infant automobile. That race also included the earliest cars built specifically for racing, the streamlined Amadee Bollee machines which finished third and fifth. Because of the Red Flag speed restrictions, British automobile development was tardy compared to its continental competitors and the first British car to compete in a continental race was the Napier entered by Selwyn Edge in the 1897 Paris-Toulouse event.

Ireland's first organised Motor Tour took place in July 1900 when the Shannon development Company organised a trip from Dublin via Nenagh to Killaloe to mark the opening of its new riverside hotel. Eleven cars took part; three



Novelist, motorist, aviator, Oliver St. John Fogarty.

Daimlers, two Marshalls, two Ariel Quads, an Ariel tricycle driven by R.W. Stocks, a Mors, a Gladiator and a light De Dion driven by L. Fleming. Drivers included R.J. Mecredy, J.C. Percy, R.H. Poole and Dublin's leading car agent Hugh Hutton who was responsible for three of the entries, while Doctor Colohan's new Daimler boasted several novel features including electrical as well as tube ignition.

Special trains from Limerick brought a large number of people to Killaloe to greet the motorists while according to *Motoring Illustrated* "nothing would dissuade country spectators from the belief that the affair was a fierce race. There was applause for the likely winner and commiseration for those who were last!" Fleming's De Dion was the first car to reach Killaloe and all the entrants arrived safely. A subsequent advertisement by the Grappler Tyre Company claimed indeed that a driver using their products had been "The fastest finisher in the Great Motor Race to Killaloe."

The Irish Automobile Club was founded in January 1901 and its first big event was a 1,000 Mile Tour of Ireland. The Tour attracted sixteen cars including entries from such hardy veterans as Dr. Colohan, R.J. Mecredy, Harvey du Cros and Charles Jarrott, who brought five other motorists across from England. A large crowd gathered to see the cars off from Dublin's Shelbourne Hotel, while official approval was demonstrated by the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who accompanied motorists on the first day.

The car had now arrived to stay and as cycle dealers prepared to diversify into the automobile trade there was hardly anyone in Ireland who didn't want to see the new machine in action. From Cappoquin to Clare, villagers congregated to welcome the motorists, while Killarney and Tralee were also crowded with enthusiastic spectators. Some of the country folk complained that they had been given insufficient notice of the Tour and were thus unable to prepare a "proper welcome." Perhaps the most touching reaction came from a rural lady who gravely fetched her best tea-cup when asked for water for a very empty radiator. Another lady was however less impressed with "dem divils on wheels," while two Kilkenny girls bolted in terror when Charles Jarrott in his long black motoring mackintosh and dust-glasses approached them for directions.

While the motorists concentrated on tours and Sunday outings, the motorcycle fraternity were still the main standard bearers of speed. Tommy Millen, Leslie Porter and former cyclist Willie Nixon were prominent at Ballymena and other

northern venues, while R.W. Stevens beat fellow-Dubliner Harry Huet to win the feature 10-mile race at Ashtown in October 1902. This was the first Irish meeting devoted exclusively to motor-powered vehicles and the proceedings were enlivened by a petrol fire which sent officials scurrying rapidly infield. R.W. Stevens's Ashtown success was some compensation for his defeat in the previous month's Waterford Sports race by Coventry interloper S. Wright.

The Englishman's successful challenge didn't mean though that the traffic was all one way and former Irish cycling champion Harvey du Cros Junior had already won acclaim by finishing third to Charles Jarrott in one of the first 1899 motorcycle races at Crystal Palace. Hercules Langrishe had also taken part in the 1900 ACGB 1,000 Mile Tour of Great Britain in which according to Autocar "he distinguished himself with some very remarkable slide slips!" The successful yachtsman who in 1890 had won the Queen's Cup also won a motor tricycle race at Ranelagh Gymkhana before going on to beat C.S. Rolls in a car competition.

Harvey du Cros was now established in London as British agent for the French car manufacturers, Panhard and Levassor. He overcame French misgivings to enter the Panhard car which Charles Jarrott took to eighth place in his first motor race, the 1901 Paris-Berlin classic. Panhard's Rene de Knyff was so impressed with this performance that he offered Jarrott a drive in the following year's Circuit du Nord race. The Englishmen took du Cros's son George as his "mechanicien" and the young Irishman's resourcefulness helped Jarrott take second place behind Maurice Farman in the arduous 570-mile event. Their joint adventures included hurtling across a level crossing just feet ahead of an express train. George du Cros's brother, Harvey Junior, also competed in the light car section of the Circuit.

George du Cros accompanied Jarrott again in the four-day 1902 Paris-Vienna race, in which his celtic temper stood both men in good stead when they were delayed at a control by pedantic officials. Having already lost valuable time with mechanical problems, George was hurriedly changing a plug when the marshals rushed up to prevent him working on the car. According to Jarrott, the Irishman's quick response was "to wave a vicious spanner in their faces, accompanied with a warning in very forcible language to get away from the car!" Du Cros' adroit use of an oil can also discouraged the immaculately attired officials from further interruptions and he and

Jarrott were allowed to proceed on their way.

The Gordon Bennett Cup race was run in conjunction with the Paris-Vienna event and its result was to hold great significance for Ireland. Selwyn Edge won the race and the Englishman's success gave the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland the honour of staging the 1903 Gordon Bennett Cup. With an official hostility to the car which is still difficult to comprehend, it never appeared likely that England would stage the event. Attention shifted to Ireland which Edge suggested as a possible venue and the Irish jumped at the opportunity of running the big competition. As a Cork Evening Echo leader said "Ireland is above all a sporting country. In England, every yokel informs the police — in Ireland seventy miles an hour is not sufficient to satisfy the sporting proclivities of our rural population!"

With former motorcyclists Edge and Jarrott now committed and successful racing drivers, it was only a matter of time before some Irish bikemen followed in their tyre tracks. At the end of 1902, the Belfast pair Leslie Porter and Willie Nixon decided to transfer their attentions to four wheels. With no Irish or British car race and the Gordon Bennett Cup open only to national terms, the adventurous pair were forced to look further afield. They settled on the May 1903 Paris-Madrid race, which unfortunately turned out to be the holocaust which led to the end of the great city to city races. It also was to consume one of the intrepid Irishmen.

Porter who founded the Northern Motor Co. in 1899 and Nixon had already distinguished themselves in Irish motorcycle competitions, finishing second and sixth respectively out of the 15 entrants for Ulster's first hillclimb at Glenmachen. Porter also thrilled the crowds at a Belfast Easter race just before he left for Paris. The Irish Wheelman noted "Although the corners were by no means safe, Porter let his Werner out at almost top speed and on more than one occasion was sailing just a little too close to the wind."

The fabled "luck of the Irish" was noticeably absent from Porter's and Nixon's Paris-Madrid attempt. Shortly before they left Belfast, Nixon was involved in two incidents which could hardly have boosted his confidence. He had a narrow escape in Royal Avenue when his motorcycle caught fire and a fortnight before the French race he was knocked unconscious in a night accident with an unlit horse-cart. As the 28-year old Irishman left home he told a friend "I am only taking a single ticket for one can never tell what will happen...."

No sooner had the Belfast pair arrived with their Wolseley in Dieppe than Porter was arrested for running over a dog. He was locked up until the arrival of a magistrate who fined him twenty five francs for dangerous driving plus another seventy five francs compensation. Half-way down to Paris, Porter hit an open drain at 60mph which sent the Wolseley careering off the road. The impact bent the rear axle and they arrived in Paris with both rear wheels inclining inwards.

The Irishmen were seen off at the race start by Paris-based compatriot Frank Fenton, managing director of the Clement Gladiator Company, who was acting as commissaire. They were among the last to leave a crowded Versailles that fateful morning but within twenty five miles they had passed thirty other competitors. At this point they had a narrow escape when a private motorist reversed on to the road leaving Porter with no time to brake. The Belfast man kept his foot to the floor and there was an enormous bang as the two cars momentarily touched.

Some time later the Wolseley narrowly missed two fallen cyclists and then Porter and Nixon had to drive through a wall of flame after an incident with the American entrant, Terry. The Mors driver had tried to overtake Porter into a left-hand bend but he was forced on to the pavement as Porter also turned in. The Mors burst a tyre and then caught fire, skidding across the Wolseley's bows in a sheet of flame.

This was to be the last escape for the two Irishmen. As they sped along the fast straight from

Chartres to Bonneval at 11.55 that Sunday morning Porter saw too late the unmanned level crossing which concealed a left-hand curve. He tried to steer the Wolseley into a field but the wheels collapsed under the strain. The car hit the gateman's hut throwing both men out. Porter escaped with bruising but Nixon was killed instantly when he hit the wall and then fell back under the car which caught fire. The blaze consumed the seven thousand francs which Porter had given Nixon for safekeeping in case he was killed at the wheel.

Nixon was buried at Bonneval, the only people at his funeral being the local gendarme, the mayor and his two assistants and a representative of the French magazine, *Velo Sport*. Porter arrived back in Belfast to read his own obituary as he had also been reported killed. With such drivers as Marcel Renault and Lorraine Barrow among the many casualties, the Paris-Madrid race was terminated at Bordeaux and with the many fatalities was also buried the first chapter in international motor racing. Henceforth most major motor races would be run on more controllable closed circuits. Despite the international outcry, the Paris-Madrid event was soon pushed from the Irish headlines as the country prepared for the historic Gordon Bennett Cup race, the first major car competition to be staged in Great Britain or Ireland. Among the entrants was the Frenchman Gabriel in the Mors with which he had won that last great city-to-city race. ■

▼ Belfast's Leslie Porter (left) and Willie Nixon on their journey to death in the 1903 Paris-Madrid race.



2. BLENDING THE ORANGE AND THE GREEN

Ireland hosts first British Isles Race

James Gordon Bennett was the millionaire proprietor of the New York Herald. He was also a man of action who raced his yacht Dauntless across the Atlantic in 1870. The previous year he had been responsible for sending Stanley in search of David Livingstone and with a prescient eye on the emerging automobile he offered a valuable trophy for international motor racing in 1899.

The Gordon Bennett Cup was to be contested not by individual drivers or works teams, but by three-car national teams, with every part of a competing car manufactured in the country it represented. Race distance was to be between 550 and 650 kilometres and following the first race in France in 1900 subsequent events were to be organised by the winning national club.

Bennett oddly enough never drove a car and he never attended any of the races he endowed, but the events did much to stimulate the international manufacturers as well as publicising motor racing. Selwyn Edge's Napier success in the 1902 race was a strong psychological boost for the British motor industry and it was also fortunate from the point of view of British and international motor racing. Had a French car won, the Gordon Bennett Cup series could well have foundered entirely, as the French authorities would not have allowed the race to be held in the aftermath of the Paris-Madrid disaster.

However, English officialdom was also less than kindly disposed towards the automobile and this turned out to be Ireland's opportunity. From the time of Edge's 1902 success there was a strong Irish lobby in the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland led by the tireless Richard Mecredy. The Irish Motor News proprietor suggested Ireland as the logical venue and when he was supported by such distinguished racers as Edge and Jarrott the result was a foregone conclusion. There was indeed the small matter of parliamentary approval for an Irish race, but this didn't unduly worry one Irish columnist who wrote to the effect that the English were far too law-abiding altogether and the Irish would be prepared to hold the race official approval or not!

Government approval was forthcoming with



James Gordon Bennett

the success of a bill which was drafted and steered through parliament by Lord Montagu, father of the present equally energetic Lord Montagu of Motor Museum fame. The main point of the bill was the exemption of the competing cars from any speed limits on race day. Supporters of the bill included such diverse M.P.'s as John Redmond, Tim Healy and Sir Edward Carson. As the Northern Whig noted, "We see a wonderful blending of the Orange and Green. There is about this matter an unanimity of which some people considered Irishmen to be incapable."

Ecclesiastical approval was also wisely sought and won, the Bishop of Kildare and Loughlin declaring himself to be an ardent advocate of the race. The organisers made sure the event wouldn't infringe Sabbath susceptibilities and it was in fact planned for the public holiday of Thursday, July 2, 1903. The ACGB's Claud Johnson and Count Eliot Zborowski visited

Ireland where with Mecredy and William Goff they examined possible circuits from Kildare and Dunlavin to Slane and Tallaght. They settled for a circuit centred around Athy which was situated just 40 convenient miles from Dublin.

Originally it was intended to use a circular route which would have included Naas and Abbeyleix in the south. But a figure-of-eight configuration was eventually decided on, the 327-mile race distance being made up of three laps of the 40-mile eastern part and four laps of the 52-mile western section. The start was to be at Ballyshannon north of Athy, from where the cars would race up to Kilcullen and then do a sharp right for the drop back down to Carlow. From Carlow they would head back via Athy to Ballyshannon and Kilcullen, where they would wheel left to touch Monastereven before racing back to Athy via Stradbally and Windy Gap.



1902 Gordon Bennett winner, Selwyn Edge.

The road was rough in places, according to Selwyn Edge, but the surveyors and steamrollers were soon working overtime and improvements were subsidised by a fund set up by Car Illustrated magazine. Local farmers also got into the spirit of things by trimming their hedges and chopping the lower boughs off roadside trees. Not all the locals participated, though, and the enterprising Motor News proprietors met with considerable animosity when they decided to make up for the lack of sleeping and catering facilities by setting up a big camp on the Moat of Ardscull. This huge mound which commanded a good view of the course was the property of the Duke of Leinster who gave

Mecredy and company permission to pitch their tents. The locals preferred to regard the Moat as public ground and the Motor News men had to bring all their equipment down by road from Dublin as the town carters refused to deliver from Athy railway station!

As preparations went ahead, the various national teams were chosen, with Edge, Jarrott and J.W. Stocks driving Napiers for Great Britain. France was to be represented by pioneer racer Rene de Knyff and Henri Farman in Panhards and Fernand Gabriel in his Paris-Bordeaux-winning Mors. Gabriel replaced the original nominee Henri Fournier, who had been interviewed in Paris by the enterprising young James Joyce, whose immediate need for the Irish Times cheque far exceeded his knowledge or interest in motorsport.

The American team consisted of Alexander Winton and Percy Owen in Winton cars and Louis Mooers in a Peerless. This was the first US team to compete in a European event. Germany was to be represented by the two Belgians Camille Jenatzy and Baron de Caters and James Foxhall-Keene. The latter was an American of Irish extraction whose family had made their fortune in the early days of California and he and Baron de Caters replaced the original Mercedes nominees, Werner and Hieronymus, who had been rejected by the haughty German Automobile Club officials because they were players rather than gentlemen. The red-bearded Jenatzy was a former racing cyclist who in 1899 had become the first person to travel at 60mph in his aptly titled electrically powered *Jamais Contente*.

While the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company advertised a fast nine-hour service from London to Dublin and a special Gordon Bennett information office was opened in Lower Sackville Street, the French made the most dramatic entrance to Ireland. They arrived in Dublin Bay in the passenger ship Ferdinand de Lesseps, which was to serve as their floating hotel and garage base. To their credit they did try some of the Dublin restaurants which they found to be woefully short of Gallic cooking standards but they incurred the censure of one Irish scribe when they refused to drink whiskey unless it was from a bottle which they saw being opened.

The scribe commented "Herein the French were unnecessarily fussy, because whatever is wrong with Irish cooking, you can always gamble on the whiskey being drinkable!" Ironically, a few short years later, many of the French Automobile Club's top brass succumbed to food poisoning after a Parisian banquet.

The French were very wise to being their floating hotel as accommodation rates soared in Dublin while in Kilcullen two rooms were let for an exorbitant £50. According to Autocar, “jarveys unblushingly asked for ten shillings a seat from Athy to Ardscull, while twopenny mineral waters cost sixpence in the meanest shebeen.” To be fair to the Irish, though they didn’t have a monopoly of such skullduggery. The equally enterprising London and North Western Railway Company increased its advertised Holyhead to North Wall fare by fifty shillings owner’s risk and three pounds company’s risk.

Excessive compensaton for hens run over by one of the first cars to reconnoitre the course led to a plague of the feathered variety being loosed on the circuit, but while local hoteliers were fleecing the visitors it seemed as if most of the Irish were rooting for the British team. Even the police weren’t above taking sides as Charles Jarrott discovered. The Napier driver was practising at speed when he was confronted by a burly PC. The constable told Jarrott that he had been doing 15mph in a place where the limit was 14mph and as there had been many recent complaints about speeding he would have to take his name and address. When he discovered who Jarrott was he apologised profusely and sent him on his way, telling him to “Go as fast as you like as long as you beat them furriners!”

Competing cars wore their national racing colours. These were blue for France, white for Germany and red for America, while British team cars were painted green at the instigation of Count Zborowski who suggested the gesture as a mark of respect to the host country. Since that time green has remained the official British racing colour. Prior to the Gordon Bennett race, the

▼ Farman's Panhard (still with its Paris-Madrid number) at the weigh-in.



Polish-born Zborowski had lived intermittently in Ireland where he hunted with the Kildare and Meath Hounds as well as winning steeplechase events at Fairyhouse and Punchestown. Poor Zborowski was destined not to see the realisation of his dream of an Irish race, as he was killed in the La Turbie Hillclimb at Nice just before the Gordon Bennett event, when his cufflinks jammed open the throttle of his Mercedes (his son Louis was wearing the same cufflinks when he was killed 21 years later at Monza).

Zborowski’s death cast a shadow over the international racing scene but what really put the Irish event in jeopardy was the Paris-Madrid holocaust. Many of the French and English papers came out strongly against any further racing, but as the specialist magazines were quick to point out, the Paris-Madrid event was held on open roads which were impossible to control properly. The Irish race was being held on a closed circuit which would be well controlled by a force of 7,000 policemen. Thanks to the traditonal soft Irish climate, there would also be none of the dust which was a major hazard in the continental city-to-city races.

The Irish press was in no mood to suffer a postponement of the Gordon Bennett Cup contest at this late stage. The Dublin Freeman’s Journal hit back vigorously at “the English sensation-mongers in the press and out of it, who seem to have gone clean mad on the subject of motoring and motorists... It is of course the greatest folly to suggest that the French disaster may be a reason for abandoning the Irish race of which the conditions are so different. The contest on the second of July promises to be as safe for spectators as viewing an express train go by. In Ireland there is not now, nor never was, the slightest whisper of disapproval of the race.”

In the end, the French disaster had very little impact on the Gordon Bennett Cup event. The sole topic of conversation in Ireland was the race and thousands flocked to Naas the day before the event to see the weighing-in. This provided plenty of excitement and one spectator was so overcome he fell from the balcony of a nearby bank. Many of the cars had difficulty in beating the weight limit and de Knyff had to sacrifice even his seat cushion to qualify, while Mooers had to jettison both his car’s silencer and tool box.

It was also noted tha the valves of the German-made Michelin tyres were not wholly of German manufacture and the Mercedes team had to change hurriedly to Continental tyres. This disappointment came on top of the Cannstatt fire which had destroyed the complete Mercedes

factory and original race cars. Jenatzy and his team-mates must have been less than sanguine about their chances of success in the stripped 60hp touring cars with which they were forced to do battle. Both the car and tyres were however to stand at least one of the team in good stead.

On the evening before the race, the roads from Dublin were packed with cyclists and sidecars, while many asses and carts were pressed into service by people from the rural areas. The city motorists waited until night to leave Dublin, their numbers being augmented by the four hundred motorists who had arrived over from Holyhead. As an Autocar correspondent noted, "it was the greatest wonder that the drivers in the dark had no tumble, for on one footpath there would be two or three cyclists with lights on and on the opposite two or three more without lamps, and to complicate matters, jaunting cars would be proceeding along in a string of three or four struggling all over the road. This was the case all the way to Naas." So great was the public interest that the special trains proved inadequate to their task. At one station, waiting passengers commandeered two cattle trucks which they hitched amid applause to an already laden train.

The evening before the race was as Selwyn Edge remembered "one of the glorious evenings which stand out in one's memory. It had been a hot day and the peacefulness of the countryside

was in sharp contrast to the turmoil which would be raging within a few short hours. At one moment, nature in all her loveliness, unstained by the hand of man, was on all sides, but by daybreak all this would be forgotten and the thoughts of every man and woman in this island would be centred on a speed contest when the lives of many would be suspended by a hair. One error of judgment, one false turn of a wheel or the pressure of a lever a second too late and nothing but disaster could fall..."

The Englishman's feelings were no doubt heightened by the knowledge that as winner last year, he would be the first to start. But his compatriot Jarrott was also filled with strange forebodings as he recalled subsequently. As he watched the glorious sunset, "a strange feeling of impending disaster seemed to come over me. Never before or since then, before the start of a race, have I felt that it was possible that under any circumstances I could come to grief, and yet that night I felt that some great catastrophe was in store for me. Although I had not expressed the opinion, I had nevertheless in my own mind felt that no one had a better chance of winning the following day but myself. I went to bed early, having previously sealed up all my personal papers and addressed them to the persons intended, also leaving a note of general instructions in case anything happened the following day." ■



Jenatzy, (the first man to travel at a mile-a-minute), pictured at the Naas weight-in.

3. TRIUMPH OF THE RED DEVIL (1903)

Jenatzy scorches Irish roads in Gordon Bennett Race

The glorious sun of Wednesday evening was absent as dawn broke on the history-making race day of Thursday July 2. The smoke from many fires rose into the grey sky as cars, carts and cyclists streamed down the roads to beat the official closure at six o'clock. At twenty five past six, Joe Lisle set off in his Star car to warn officials and sightseers on the eastern part of the course while Lieutenant Cummings covered the western area. Although Lisle took a wrong turning and eventually broke down, everything else went according to plan. After hearing that some corners had been too liberally treated with dust-laying "Westrumite" officials quickly laid sand on the worst affected areas.

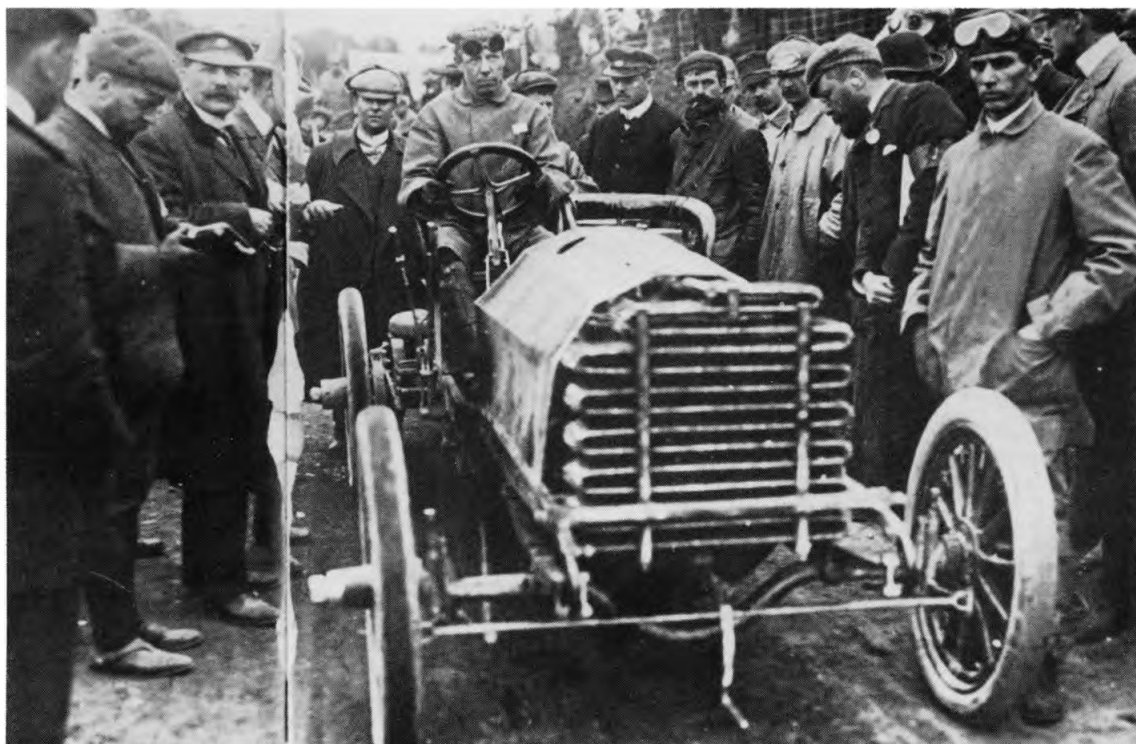
Meantime the 12 drivers got ready, with Edge in particular being surrounded by a large crowd of well-wishers. At 6.30, the racing cars were moved into position, all except Winton's machine which was suffering from a blocked fuel jet. As the sun made a fitful first appearance, race officials made a final check of their lap charts and clocks, one for each of the twelve competitors at the seven control centres, Castledermot, Carlow,

Athy, Kilcullen, Kildare, Monastereven and Stradbally.

Charles Jarrott went to wish the pioneer competitor de Knyff a good race and as he returned to his green Napier it suddenly struck him that for the first time he was starting a race on home territory. In all previous events he had been a disadvantaged foreigner not even able to speak the local language. Rene de Knyff remained seated in his blue Panhard and the Autocar correspondent noted that "As he sat imperturbably behind his steering wheel, his massive figure seemed the embodiment of calm courage, combined with the qualities of resourcefulness, dash and ultimate staying power."

As seven o'clock approached, the starter Captain Lindsay Lloyd got his pistol ready. At 6.58, Selwyn Edge and his cousin Cecil mounted their Napier and started the engine amid great excitement. Lloyd gave the two-minute warning and then started the countdown from sixty seconds. As Autocar recorded, he called out to Edge "Ten seconds, five, four, three, two — BANG! A great cheer rent the air. The stand

"Facing the starter with palpable nervousness" — Cleveland's Louis P. Mooers in his 17-litre Peerless. The race marked the first time an American team competed in Europe.



occupants shouted encouragement, the clutch took hold of the racing engine, the car leaped forward, disappeared beneath the stand, and as it took the dusty road beyond it was shut out by the white wall of its own raising and the first hope of England was gone."

The Gordon Bennett Cup race was on and eager to bring the coveted trophy back to his native France, the great de Knyff clipped on his goggles and made ready to follow Edge. More cheers rose from the crowds in the stand and the hedges as he was despatched, to be followed at 7.14 by the American Owen, who according to Car Illustrated was "looking somewhat young and fragile for his task."

The fourth starter in his high white Mercedes was the Belgian Jenatzy, whose excitable nature



▲ Pioneer racer Rene de Knyff, who eventually finished second.

The chivalrous Baron de Caters (his wife didn't want him to race). ▶



and red hair and beard had caused the locals to dub him "the Red Devil." Car Illustrated described the 35-year old driver as "A man of obviously high-strung temperament, with sandy hair and a Mephistophelian beard. His presence suggested the recrudescence of an extinct volcano." The Belgian's take-off was appropriately volcanic and great sheets of flame belched from the Mercedes as he made what Autocar described as the best start of the day.

The next competitor was Jarrott who like Edge was clad in a long white coat and green cap. The Napier driver also got a great send-off, as did the gallant Gabriel who was driving the boat-shaped streamlined Mors with which he had just won the Paris-Bordeaux race. With his check cap back to front, Mooers was sixth off in his Peerless, and Car Illustrated wrote that "as he faced the starter with palpable nervousness, one could only speculate on his chances of success, driver and car being wholly unknown quantities."

Mooers in fact stalled his engine before making an unsteady start, in sharp contrast to the cool Baron de Caters who in between changing from first to second gears found time to wave to his wife who was in the front of the grandstand which straddled the road at Ballyshannon. She had vainly hoped that he would decline the invitation to drive in the race.

J.W. Stocks was next away and like the following Henri Farman he made a cautious start. The

impatient Foxhall-Keene stalled his engine and then nearly ran over his mechanic when it fired up again. With Winton and his mechanic still struggling with their recalcitrant car it looked as if the race was going to be decided between Edge, de Knyff, Jarrott, Gabriel, Farman and de Caters. The start area buzzed with speculation as the crowd wondered who was now leading on that atmospheric opening lap.

After racing off from Ballyshannon, the cars headed north for Kilcullen where they took the sharp right turn to head south. This put them on the 20 mile drop down to Carlow where the cars were given their heads for the first time. Hardly had Foxhall-Keene left the start area, than Edge came flying up the road, his arrival heralded by a long whistle from a convenient traction engine. According to Autocar, "Edge's speed looked awful, as with a wave of his hand he screamed by over the rough ground under the grandstand. The stagger of the steering wheel made one's blood run cold."

The Napier driver's speed impression was no illusion and he completed the first 40-mile circuit in 46 minutes 23 seconds. But the sensation of the stage was the underrated Foxhall-Keene who made Irish hearts beat faster by lapping in 46 minutes 3 seconds to take the lead in his Mercedes. Jarrott too had made great progress to record 48 minutes 14 seconds and fully justify his pre-race hopes of success. By the time he reached Carlow, he had almost caught Jenatzy who had started seven minutes ahead of him. This undoubtedly added to the annoyance of the Belgian, who complained bitterly to Jarrott about being held up by Owen's Winton. Jarrott tried to pacify the Mercedes driver but Jenatzy "got into his car waving his arms and vowing that if the American did not get out of his way there would be bloodshed!"

On the run back up from Carlow, Jenatzy again hauled in the slower American and with a great flourish of hands and horns he attempted to pass him on the fast approach to the start and finish area. Owen didn't hear him at first and he suddenly pulled across the Belgian's bows in order to clear his team-mate Winton whose car was still stranded by the side of the road. The grandstand spectators gripped their seats with excitement as the fully wound-up Jenatzy cimbled all over the American who took some time to move back to the left side of the road. Not wanting to sacrifice any speed, Jenatzy took to the gutter to get past, the huge Mercedes fish-tailing from side to side as he used up all the road. "It was my most exciting moment of the race,"



Selwyn Edge, plagued by tyre problems.

Jenatzy confirmed afterwards. The grandstand crowd would have agreed but the episode could hardly have eased the anxiety of the fretting Baroness de Caters.

Jenatzy wasn't the only driver to have an eventful first lap and J.W. Stocks' race was prematurely wrapped up by a wire fence at Ballymoon Cross in what must be the earliest recorded case of the stopping power of catch-fencing. Despite a conservative start, Rene de Knyff had earlier gone wide at the same corner. The unlucky Stocks hit a bump just as he was preparing to brake for the corner from 70mph and he suddenly had no choice but to head for the escape road. He caught a support pole and some of the loose wire left by de Knyff and in a flash he and his mechanic were somersaulting from the trapped Napier. It was a situation the Englishman had frequently faced in his cycling days but he and his mechanic MacDonald were lucky to escape with nothing dented apart from their pride.

As the cars sped out of Kilcullen to take the long western circuit for the first time, the Frenchman Gabriel rapidly began to make up ground on the long straight from the Curragh to Monastereven. Although the treeless plains of the Curragh were a far remove from the poplar-lined Route Nationales of his Paris-Bordeaux success, Gabriel's streamlined 70hp Mors simply revelled in the unencumbered space. The Frenchman's 51.7mph opening lap turned out to be the fastest of the race and he caused hearts to flutter at Bloomfield Cross, when he slid on to the grass but was seen still changing up a gear as he bounded across the gulleys.

Gabriel made up over six minutes on Selwyn Edge on this section but the Englishman wasn't giving up by any means. Despite losing two minutes retrieving a wayward radiator cap, Edge was still three seconds ahead of Gabriel at the end of the first complete circuit of 92 miles. However, both these experienced drivers were being eclipsed by the flying Jenatzy. The Belgian volcano had erupted with a vengeance and throwing caution to the winds he had bounded into an impressive two-minute lead from Rene de Knyff in his bigger 80hp machine. If this was what he was capable of in a stripped 60hp touring car, what would have done with a pukka racing Mercedes?

Jarrott meantime had settled down to a fast and steady rhythm but this was rudely interrupted two miles outside the Kildare control when his engine started to misfire. He quickly traced the trouble to a loose plug wire and losing only a minute he was soon hammering onwards again, taking the left-hand turn which pointed him towards Stradbally and the desolate Windy Gap. The Englishman was destined to reach neither place. Just before Stradbally when he was doing over sixty on a straight stretch of road he suddenly realised that the car was not responding to the steering. Before he had time to brake, the heavy Napier dived to the right and shot up a grassy bank missing a telegraph pole by inches. Carried forward by the tremendous momentum,

Jenatzy approaches the Moat of Ardscurr. ▼



it toppled down the bank again, throwing Jarrott out as it somersaulted along the road to destruction.

With all the dust, Jarrott couldn't see his mechanic Bianchi, but remembering that the little Italian was probably held in by his armstrap, he picked himself up and stumbled after the car. The Napier had come to rest upside down trapping Bianchi under the red-hot exhaust. With tardy assistance from some scared spectators, Jarrott managed to pull Bianchi clear and then both he and his mechanic passed out.

When Jarrott came to, it was to discover that he and the Italian had been left for dead and had been covered with white sheets. The English driver wrote afterwards "I shall never forget the horror of the moment when it occurred to me that under the second sheet lay poor Bianchi dead. I called to him and to my relief he replied. I then asked him the somewhat superfluous question as to whether he was alive. He replied in a faint voice that he was alive but that he felt very bad."

Jarrott's accident also involved Jenatzy in a near-miss with a doctor who was rushing to the scene. Dr. Ormsby took a wrong turning and on receiving directions he reversed back on to the circuit just as the Belgian arrived at speed. Ormsby recalled "Only Jenatzy's cool swerving saved a terrible accident. He steered to the edge of the footpath, missing the back of my car by inches. Then he turned sharp into the middle of the road again and disappeared like a flash. It was an incredible display of driving."

But meantime the race continued, with the exuberant Foxhall-Keene damaging his car's rear axle by clouting a bank and the flying Jenatzy increasing his lead to three minutes from de Knyff. Edge was now losing ground, having experienced the first of the seven tyre failures which were to comprehensively bury his reasonable hopes of a repeat Gordon Bennett Cup success. The Englishman's misfortune promoted most of the other drivers and at the end of the third lap the order was Jenatzy 2 hours 40 minutes 2 seconds, de Knyff 2 hours 43 minutes 15 seconds, Farman 2 hours 47 minutes 37 seconds, de Caters 2 hours 52 minutes 10 seconds, Gabriel 2 hours 56 minutes 6 seconds, Edge 3 hours 21 minutes 25 seconds.

This was the last lap Foxhall-Keene completed before retiring at Kilcullen with his damaged rear axle. His team-mate de Caters had now become the darling of the crowd by first sacrificing his race chances when he stopped to ascertain that Jarrott and Bianchi were alright and then halting again to relay the happy news to grandstand officials. Each time he went past, he found time to give a reassuring wave to his anxious wife.

Winton had joined the race after losing 50 minutes on his fuel-starved car but the courageous American challenge was fading fast at this stage. Mooers had already retired his 17-litre Peerless with transmission trouble (the car subsequently redeemed itself by breaking many US speed records) while Owen after some early fast lappery was slowed with overheating and was now second last ahead of Winton. Jenatzy meantime was well clear of any such embarrassment and at the end of the fourth lap he had extended his lead to ten minutes over de Knyff.

The Frenchman was in turn being pushed hard by his compatriot Farman who was now only two minutes in arrears. For the remaining three laps there was to be a great dice between the Panhard pair for second place. Six minutes behind this duelling duo, de Caters and Gabriel were also neck and neck for fourth place. At the end of the fourth lap de Caters held the place by less than a minute — after 183 miles of racing. A lap later it was Gabriel who had grabbed fourth by the same margin. Gabriel however was now suffering badly with a misfiring engine, the likely result of neglecting to pierce the cork which he had substituted for an ill-fitting petrol cap.

Paris-Madrid winner Gabriel sets fastest lap at 51.7 mph.



A heavy rainshower at one o'clock did little to dampen the enthusiasm of the three thousand strong crowd at the Moat of Ardscoil. The Auto-car correspondent described the Moat as "the best viewing point — with good glasses the clouds of dust could be distinguished as cars arrived and left the control at Athy, five miles away. Away in the distance a fine puff of what looked like steam could be discerned, which gradually developed in size and clearness as the racing cars flew into sight. As every circuit was completed and the racers were familiarised to the crowds, the enthusiasm of the spectators increased enormously."

The curve beyond Ballyshannon was also an exciting vantage point. Jenatzy regularly took this faster than any other driver, deliberately running his offside wheels up the grassy bank in order to gain a faster exit. The Belgian's enthusiasm was also well in evidence at the controls where unlike the other drivers he approached the line at racing speed, only braking at the last possible moment. While other competitors got out to stretch their legs or grab some food, Jenatzy invariably remained fretting in his Mercedes, anxious only to be on the road again. His impatience nearly caught him out, though, at Ballymoon Cross where once he left his braking too late and had to take to the escape road. But in a flash he grabbed reverse and while the onlookers were still marvelling at his swift reactions he was already accelerating through the gears to racing pace again. He was living up to his new "Red Devil" sobriquet, a title he was to keep for the rest of his racing days.

There were no pit signals in those days and it was only when drivers stopped at the various controls that they could find out their latest positions. On the fifth lap, Rene de Knyff began to get the message that perhaps his imperturbability was getting the better of him. He quickly put on a sprint to gain two minutes on Jenatzy. The experienced Frenchman had so often seen the Belgian disappear into the blue only to destroy his car.

This time however Jenatzy's car was staying in one piece and to complicate matters for de Knyff, Henri Farman was making rapid progress and had closed to within two minutes of the French veteran. But although Farman temporarily led Knyff by half a minute at the end of the penultimate lap both drivers had left their efforts too late. Once Jenatzy heard of their progress he simply increased pace to gain four minutes over the final two circuits. To reduce wind resistance he even pushed his mechanic down under the dashboard,

which added considerably to the excitement at one of the final controls when the Mercedes was seen rushing up the road with no one apparently on board but the driver! There was no doubting the visual evidence of the American absence, as Owen completed his team's retirement by dropping out with overheating on the final lap. The tyre-troubled Edge was still sadly sliding backwards, but his progress was in inverse ratio to the admiration he was gaining for his determination to finish at all costs.

But nothing was going to stop the invincible Jenatzy who had stamped his authority on the race from the first complete circuit. Just after five on that momentous day the dashing Belgian approached the finish line for the seventh and last time. The Red Devil finished as he had driven, tearing across the line at unabated speed to score a final triumphant groove on the Irish roads which he had so impressed with his erratic artistry. He was cheered to the echo as he stopped in a cloud of dust, no less than eleven minutes ahead of the next driver, Rene de Knyff. His time was 6 hours 39 minutes and he had averaged 49.25mph for the 327 miles.

The French pioneer's last lap had been an anxious one as Farman was breathing down his neck for the final 40 miles. De Knyff held on to second by just one short minute. The misfiring Gabriel finished fourth, 20 minutes behind Farman, while the gritty Selwyn Edge completed the course two hours down, only to be disqualified for having been pushed at a control. The anxious Baroness de Caters had her patience stretched to the bitter end. Her gallant husband failed to appear on schedule on the final lap. The rear axle of his Mercedes had failed with just 10 miles left of the 327-mile marathon, a poor reward for the Belgian's able and chivalrous driving. It had truly been a day for all moods. However, the most disappointed folk of all were the French L'Auto publishers, who had distributed 90,000 copies of their magazine in Paris declaring de Knyff as the victor before it was confirmed that in fact Jenatzy had won!

An account of Jenatzy's race win would hardly be complete without his first-hand description of what it was like to compete in those heroic early days of road racing. The Belgian likened the sensation of racing to being in the centre of a hurricane; "The car in which you travel seems to leave the ground and hurl itself forward like a projectile ricocheting along the ground. As for the driver, the muscles of his body and neck become rigid in resisting the pressure of the air; his gaze is steadfastly fixed about two hundred

yards ahead; his senses are on the alert to detect the slightest abnormal signs.

“When in the distance a cloud of dust proclaims that another car is being overtaken, a delightful feeling of triumph comes over you. This is the time when you need to recall all that you know of the features of the landscape, for then begins a real journey into darkness. The cloud of dust, at first light, thickens gradually till the only objects which can be distinguished are the treetops on the edge of the road. When you finally emerge, you see the rival car only a few yards ahead, and the dust cloud changes into a trail of flints and pebbles. If the other competitor sees you he will draw aside, but usually he does not heed your signals. There seems to be no room to pass, yet you pass all the same...”

Of those gallant Gordon Bennett Cup finishers, Farman went on to design aeroplanes and he became the first person to travel one hundred

miles in the air before dying gracefully of old age. De Caters subsequently became Belgium's first aeronaut and like Edge and Jarrott he died in the early Forties. The Chevalier Rene de Knyff who became one of motorsport's most famous international administrators died in 1955 at the age of 90, while poor Gabriel was killed in a 1943 air raid on Paris.

Camille Jenatzy also came to an untimely end 10 years after his Irish success. On a boar hunt in the Ardennes forests he decided to play a practical joke by imitating a wild animal. The impression was up to his usual enthusiastic standard and, confusing him for the real thing, a colleague shot him, severing an artery. The wild brave Belgian winner of the 1903 Gordon Bennett Cup race expired while being taken to hospital, fulfilling a prophecy he had once made in his racing days that he would die in a Mercedes car. ■

The invincible “Red Devil” nears the end of the 327 miles marathon. ▼



4. WORLD RECORD AT PHOENIX PARK (1903)

“The Champions of New Locomotion . . .”



▲ Charles Rolls of Rolls-Royce fame starts the Phoenix Park Speed Trials.

Not everyone could afford to travel to Athy for the Gordon Bennett race but less affluent Dubliners were able to see the race heroes in action at the subsequent Phoenix Park Speed Trials. And to add to the compensation, they were able to watch two of the competitors drive faster than man had ever travelled before. The Park trials were part of the Irish Automobile Fort-night which also included speed trials at Cork and Castlewellan, and hillclimbs at Killarney and Ballybannon.

But before Saturday's Phoenix Park event, Dubliners turned out in their thousands to welcome back the Gordon Bennett Cup cars as they returned on the night of the race. All the villages

on the Naas road were lined with people while in the city streets the crowds were forty to fifty deep in places. The joyous welcome prompted James Joyce to write a story "After the Race" which commenced with a description of the cars "which came scudding in towards Dublin, running evenly like pellets in the groove of the Naas Road."

The French magazine *Velo* wrote enthusiastically both of the welcome and the excellent race organisation which "was the best we have ever seen, with not a cross-road or gate not guarded by a policeman. We will never forget the thrilling welcome of the crowd on our return to Dublin, our carriage going at walking pace past the thousands of persons massed on the pavement and hailing the champions of new locomotion as if they were victorious soldiers returning."

That the big race had whetted the sporting appetite and imagination of Dubliners was amply demonstrated by the crowd which poured into Phoenix Park for the July 4 Speed Trials. All the trams were packed as they left the main terminus, forcing people who lived along the route to walk to the Park. Many had arrived by the time the opening motorcycle trial commenced at 8.45 a.m. and the glorious weather brought thousands more for the afternoon car events.

The "Quality" who packed the special finishing area grandstand were the only people who had to pay an admission charge. Most spectators watched the proceedings from the other side of wooden fences which were built just behind the broad access paths which ran on either side of the main straight. Once again the organisation was first class, with flag marshals stationed every 200 yards. When the road was open each marshal displayed a white flag, which he dropped as soon as a car entered his section, raising a red one in its place. The all-clear signal came from the finish line by the elevation of the white flags in sequence up the line as soon as the cars had left the road.

The touring cars raced in pairs while the racing cars competed singly against the clock. They each covered a distance of 2,853 yards, which neatly encompassed one mile and one kilometre sections. To reduce the dust, the roads were covered in part with Westrumite. One major hazard was the Phoenix Monument which stood solidly in the middle of the race course. The steps, lamp posts and paving surround were all dismantled but many of the more discerning auto aficionados congregated here, in the confident expectation that some intrepid motorist would argue with the monument before the day was out.

Although Jenatzy had had to return home the previous evening, Selwyn Edge, Rene de Kynff, Gabriel and the convalescing Jarrott were each present at the Park. The support of such determined racers as Baron de Forest, Leon They and the English pair Ernest Hutton and the Honorable Charles Rolls also guaranteed a lively meeting. The proceedings were opened by motorcycle races which were followed by the touring car trials which included such stalwarts as Harvey du Cros and Arthur Rawlinson. Fastest driver of the 20-heat touring car competition was J.W. Cross who returned a time of 2 minutes 6.2 seconds for the 2,853 yards. But it was the racing cars which people wanted to see most of all. By noon the Phoenix Park crowd had swollen to over thirty thousand.

They were not to be disappointed. No sooner had the Lord Lieutenant and his party arrived at lunchtime than Leon They opened the proceedings by taking his Decauville to a 51mph win from Arthur Rawlinson in the Light Car class for cars under 650 kilograms. The talented Frenchman subsequently dominated the 1904 and 1905 Gordon Bennett Cup races before dying of consumption at the early age of 29. They's Light Car event was followed by the Irish Auto Club's Challenge Cup contest for racing cars under 1,000 kilograms, which produced a great duel between J.E. Hutton, Baron de Forest and Charles Rolls. The latter's Mors recorded a speedy 61 seconds for the standing mile and 28.8 seconds for the Flying Kilometre. However, the finishing speed of the other two was even greater and Hutton recorded a total of 1m 28.6 in his Mercedes to beat de Forest who did 1m 29.6 in his Paris-Madrid Mors.

De Forest only made the Speed Trials after an all-night session on the Mors with his mechanic Cyril Ward. The car hadn't been running smoothly on Friday night and when they finally got to the root of the electrical trouble it was nearly Saturday morning. Then they damaged the dynamo when putting the engine back together again and at ten o'clock they were faced with the frustrating prospect of missing the race after all their hard work. Neither man would accept defeat, though, and Ward raced across the city to North Wall where he rounded up some of the mechanics who were preparing to go home on the Ferdinand de Lesseps. The mechanics were delighted to help and in a short time they had the car running on full song. With no time for any preliminary run, de Forest jumped into the car and took his place on the start line for his first heat with just minutes to spare.

Paris-Madrid hero Gabriel got a great ovation as he demonstrated his winning Mors before the start of the next race, the little Breton waving repeatedly in response to the enthusiastic crowd. As he finished his tour, de Forest, Rolls and company lined up for the Daily Mail Challenge Cup for the fastest car over the Flying Kilometre. This turned out to be the closest contest so far, with Hutton doing a time of 28.8 seconds, only to be pipped by, first, Frenchman Louis Rigolly who did 28.4 in his huge Gobron Brillie, then Rolls, who got down to 28 seconds in his 80 HP Mercedes. The sensation of the race though was de Forest who returned a staggering 27.2, which was just a whisker outside the 26.8s (83.41mph) world record recently set up by the Frenchman Duray.



Selwyn Edge starts.

The crowd's delight knew no bounds when this news was broken to them and no doubt the excitement stimulated further business for the fruit hawkers who according to *Motoring Illustrated* were selling "Motor Strawberries at millionaire motor prices!" The *Irish Times* reporter who was in the thick of the lively throng noted that it hadn't taken them long to familiarise themselves with the finer points of the racing, "They were soon dogmatising on the various performances as if they had been for years exponents of the new craze!"

The enthusiastic spectators were in for a bigger treat as the Flying Kilometre competitors prepared for a second battle in the *Autocar* Challenge Cup race. While de Forest and Gabriel made last minute adjustments to their cars, Selwyn Edge blasted down the road to record 30.8 in his new Napier. Hutton improved on this time by half a second and next came Rolls who got down to 28 seconds. Then it was the turn of Louis Rigolly whose giant 100 HP Gobron Brillie emitted a great sheet of flame as it plunged across the line in near-record time of 27.2 seconds.

The last two competitors, Gabriel and de Forest, were the most popular pair in the Park. Gabriel's streamlined Mors quickly gathered speed after a good take-off and the Phoenix Park erupted with excitement as soon as it became known that he had equalled the world record of 26.8 seconds. All eyes then turned to de Forest and the crowd's attention was well rewarded as the Belgian blasted down the road faster than man had ever travelled before. De Forest broke Duray's 83.47 world record with a time of 26.6

seconds, an average speed of 84.09mph.

Although the record wasn't officially recognised owing to the slight slope over the kilometre section, the crowd went wild when the Frenchman's speed was announced. The tremendous pace had also stimulated some of the more staid Automobile Club members to a fine pitch of excitement and they quickly arranged two sporting matches to round off the day's memorable activities. De Forest agreed to race Hutton over the complete distance while some friends of Charles Rolls clubbed together for a 30 guineas Cup for a match between himself and Hutton. The motor magazine noted that "needless to say, when these matches were announced, a burst of cheering broke out from the sporting Irish crowd. No cars of such power had ever before raced side by side."

Hutton might not have had the fastest car in the Phoenix Park but there was no doubting his resourcefulness as he took on both de Forest and Rolls. The Englishman managed to beat de Forest by a few cars' lengths by maintaining the early lead he had earned through some nifty gear changing. He then gave Rolls a run for his money. As *Autocar* recorded "Hutton got away first and led going to the Phoenix Monument round which he came with a blood-curdling jump and swerve, which slowed him to such an extent that together with the loss of his cap and goggles, although he was a length and a half to the good entering the kilometre, Rolls there came by him and won by thirty yards."

It was a suitably dramatic climax to an exciting day's sport and though it was to be over twenty years before cars raced again in the Park, the Speed Trials had been a distinct hit with the Dublin crowds. Their success with both drivers and spectators undoubtedly sowed the seed which finally germinated in the Phoenix Park international sports car races of the Twenties and Thirties and the annual two-day race meeting which still takes place there. It's fair to acknowledge, though, that some cynics ascribe the Phoenix Park's appeal to the fact that as it is a public park race organisers are not allowed to make an admission charge!

Anything that followed the excitement of the Gordon Bennett and Baron de Forest's record-breaking success was bound to be anti-climatic. However, these feats had only whetted the appetites of the northern Irish people who turned out in large numbers to see the cars compete in the following Tuesday's tests near Newcastle in Co. Down. The hotels and houses were packed for miles around while special excursion trains

brought in large numbers of people from Belfast. The first event was a hillclimb at Ballybannon and this was followed by a speed test between Clough and Castlewellan.

The Ballybannon hill was in the beautifully timbered countryside which adjoined the home of Lord Annesley. The backdrop of the Slieve Donard hills and the beautiful July weather made for a perfect occasion for visitors and locals alike. Before the hillclimb, however, spectators and officials were given a salutary lesson in the speed and danger of the latest automobiles. As crowds milled about the foot of the hill and officials made their final preparations, a car was seen descending at full speed.

Although people yelled at the driver to stop, the car only seemed to accelerate. Spectators and officials scattered as it climbed the footpath. The machine only stopped its headlong rush as the incline changed on the ascent to Castlewellan village. Its driver, Villain, whom the crowd considered to be aptly named, was immediately surrounded by angry marshals and his Prunel car im-

pounded on the spot. It took the Frenchman some time to explain that his brakes had failed and the crowd then realised that only his fine steering had saved many of them from serious injury. As admiration replaced anger, there were drinks all round to celebrate Villain's skill and courage.

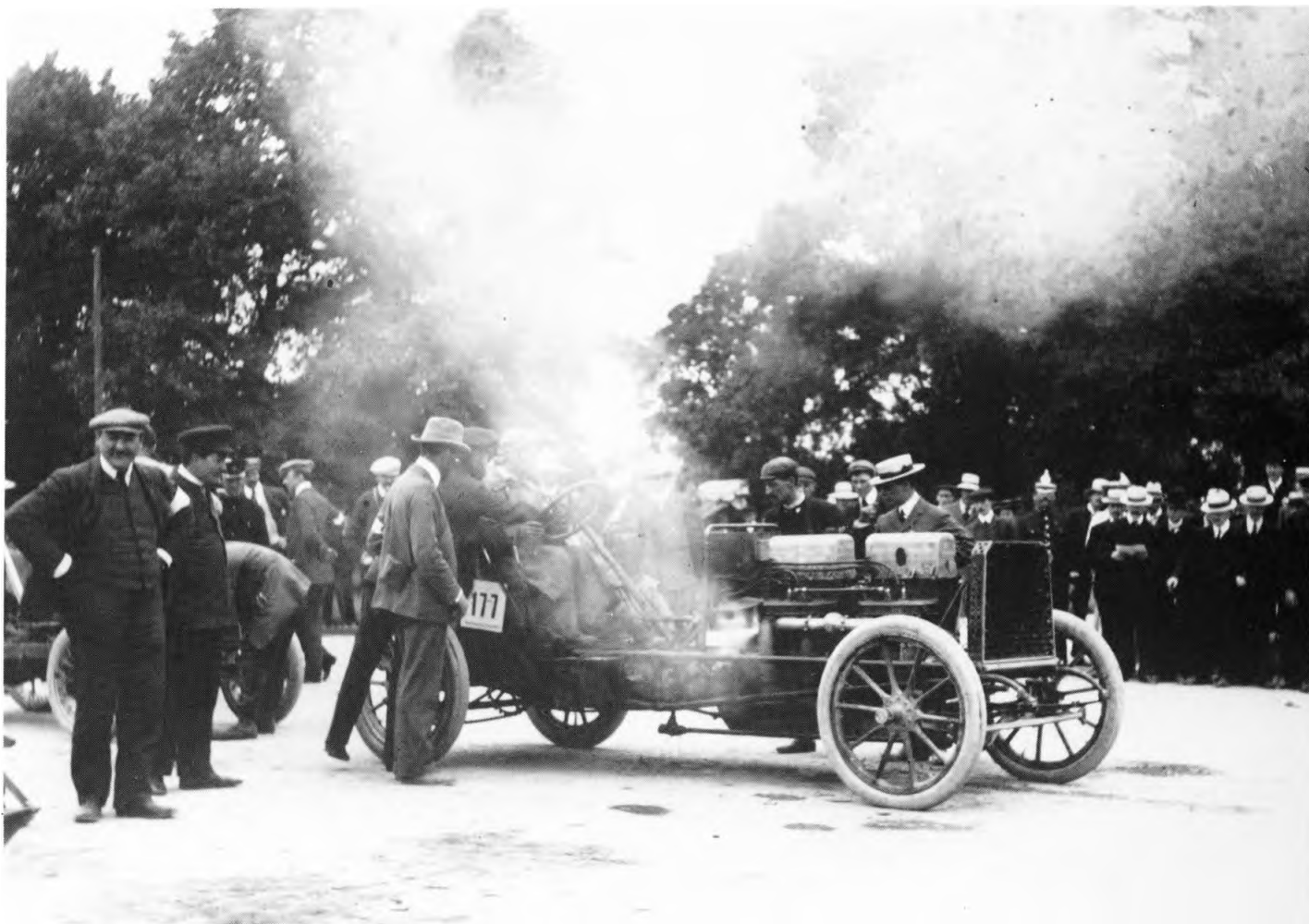
E.T. Baker whose Duryea had also won at Phoenix Park made light work of the first touring car class to win with a time of 1 minute 2.8 seconds. John Scott Montague then took his class in his Daimler but the quickest overall in the touring section was John Hargreaves who recorded 59.4 seconds in his Napier.

The light racing car class was won by Arthur Rawlinson in his 30hp Darracq with a time of 56.4 seconds, but once again it was the larger racers which provided the main excitement. Louis Rigolly opened the proceedings with the quick time of 37.6 seconds in the Gobron Brillie. J.W. Stocks then equalled this with the huge 45hp Napier which had been built just too late for Edge to drive in the Gordon Bennett race.

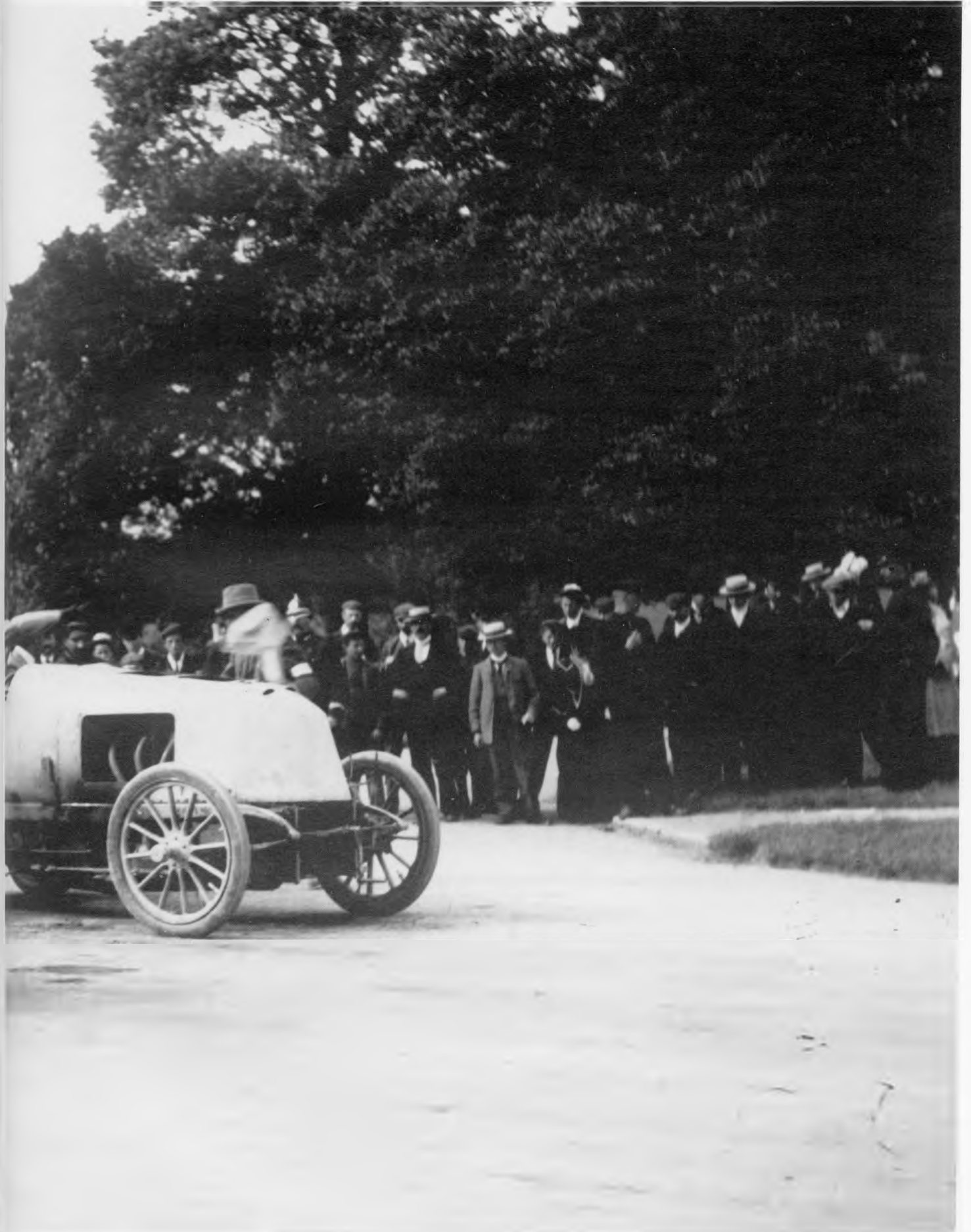
▼ Rigolly, less than half a second off the 83 mph world record.

(overleaf) ►

Baron de Forest, who broke the record at 84.09 mph, prepares to start with Ernest Hutton (left).







However, both Stocks and Rigolly were soon displaced by the Mercedes works driver Wilhelm Werner, former chauffeur to the German Kaiser, who did a flying 36 seconds in Jenatzy's Gordon Bennett-winning car.

There was further excitement when as the contest seemed decided Rolls in his 80hp Mercedes took two seconds off Werner's time. But to his and most other people's amazement, he was in turn beaten by Campbell Muir, whose 60hp Mercedes romped up the hill in the best time of the day, 32.4 seconds. The locals greeted Muir's Henry Esmonde Trophy success with great applause. Muir had become a familiar figure during his many days of previous practice on the hill!

The race organisation at Castlewellan apparently fell short of that in the south. The Irish Independent complained of official bungling and Autocar wrote "little assistance was to be had from the officials and no times were returned for several events." The officials also had to contend with the angry natives of Castlewellan who were exceedingly miffed to find that the subsequent speed trial from Clough would terminate a mile outside the town rather than in it, as originally planned. The reason for the change of plan was to avoid the steep descent from Ballybannon into Castlewellan town. Rolls in particular was adamant that it would be suicidal to come down the hill at racing speed. According to Motor "The alteration in the plans didn't suit the locals and there was every prospect of a bad time as around here they are a tough crowd!" And they'd even built a special grandstand!

Twenty two cars formed up to do battle on the revised 2.5 mile course from Clough to the top of Ballybannon hill with the touring cars once more launching the proceedings. The overall handicap contest was for the Graphic Trophy for which scratchman J.W. Cross turned in the quickest time of 3 minutes 29.8 seconds. J. Scott Montague with a credit of 1.5 seconds finished just two seconds behind the Humber driver, while another Light Daimler pilot E.M. Instone was third. Owing to some doubt about the times, these three drivers staged a re-run in which Cross put the matter beyond further doubt by winning in 3 minutes 27 seconds. Arther Rawlinson followed up his Phoenix Park success with best time of 3 minutes 24.6 seconds in the light car class.

Then it was the turn of the big cars and according to Motor the early-starting Rolls "came along in fearful style, his wheels rocking off the ground." The Englishman's time was a fine 2



Mercedes works driver, Wilhelm Werner, who competed at Castlewellan.

minutes 14.2 seconds but once again Campbell Muir efficiently reduced this to 2 minutes 12.8 seconds. Napier's J.W. Stocks then shaved a fifth of a second off this time but even this performance was eclipsed by the flying Louis Rigolly. The Frenchman's Gorbion Brillie found more scope in the speed test than in the preceding hillclimb and he beat Stocks by seven seconds with a time of 2 minutes 5.4 seconds (exactly a year before he became the first person to officially break the 100mph barrier at Ostend).

Several competitors were now beginning to tire of the arduous programme and many returned to answer the call of business in England. Rolls however sat out the Irish Fortnight to the final Kerry hillclimb to become a firm favourite of both spectators and scribes. As one correspondent wrote: "To see the son of a peer of the realm sitting on the uncovered motor car, with kit bags, petrol tins and spare tyres to quaint and somewhat dirty sundries, all fastened with straps, strings and canvas strips was a sight to please any democrat!"

Rolls' mechanic was London-Irish gentleman T.C. Moore Brabazon, who subsequently achieved much honour in both flying and motor

racing circles and in British public life, as an M.P. and a government minister. According to Moore Brabazon, Rolls was a little on the parsimonious side and while in Ireland, the pair regularly slept under the car by the side of the road in order to save on accommodation expenses!

Although the entries were much reduced for the Cork and Kerry events, public enthusiasm for the cars was as strong as ever and thousands turned out for the Saturday July 11 Cork Speed Trial. This took place on the long Carrigrohane Straight which started on the outskirts of the southern Munster city. The weather was the best for years and private enterprise thrived, with young men ferrying people across the river on their shoulders at twopence a time and lemonade seller's prices keeping pace with the soaring temperature.

Twelve cars competed in the touring car handicap trial with R.W. Leaden, George Iden and P.G. Garrad each winning their class on the 2.25 mile course. Iden's MMC was fastest with a time of 2 minutes 48.2 seconds but he was convincingly beaten for the overall prize by J. Warren who got down to 2 minutes 7.8 seconds in his rapid Gardner-Serpollet steam car.

With no other starter, the Frenchman, Villain, made up for his Castlewellan disappointment by winning the light racing car class in 2 minutes 49 seconds. However the competition was keener in the bigger class for the Cork Constitution Cup which Rolls won narrowly from Ernest Hutton. The Mors driver completed the 2.25 mile course in 1 minute 49.6 seconds compared to 1 minute 52.8 seconds for Hutton's Mercedes. Lt. Mansfield Cunningham finished third in 2 minutes 0.8 seconds. The proceedings ended with a close match between Rolls and Daimler driver Scott Montague which the latter won by a car's length.

Cork unfortunately saw the last of the good weather and a torrential downpour reduced the number of both cars and spectators at the Kerry hillclimb. The July 15 event took place on a 1,200 yards stretch of the Killarney-Tralee road near Ballyfinane. Local curiosity was sufficient for 800 people to brave the rain and their zeal was rewarded with fast driving in the County Kerry Cup competition.

With the rain easing off for the racing, Charles Rolls once again gave value for money as he thundered up the hill in his Mors to win with a time of 1 minute 1.8 seconds from Daimler driver P.G. Garrad. J.W. Cross should have contested the final run-off with Rolls as he had been second fastest but he was unable to start his Humber.

Despite the weather, the beautiful Kerry area made a favourable impression on the overseas visitors and, as Motor magazine commented, the Killarney hoteliers also charged the most reasonable prices of the whole Irish Fortnight.

The concluding events of the Irish Fortnight were perhaps less exciting than the grander opening races but they nonetheless made a lasting impression on Irish people both north and south. Slieve Donard overlooks the modern Kirkistown racing circuit which has helped to produce so many fine Northern Irish drivers, while Carrigrohane eventually hosted the Cork International Grand Prix series. And in 1981 Tim Flynn from Kerry won a British single-seater motor racing championship — for the second time!

With the departure of the Gordon Bennett visitors Ireland didn't host another major international race meeting for two decades. But such events as the 1,000 mile Trials and the Portmarnock Strand events — the first sand races in these islands — kept the competitive spirit alive, while many new clubs were also formed. Thus were the firm foundations laid for the staging of such great international events as the Ards TT and Phoenix Park Grand Prix races as well as the emergence of so much local racing talent. ■

Cork and Kerry winner Charles Rolls.



5. FIRST LOCAL EVENTS (1903-1906)

Hill Climbs – Portmarnock Strand Races

No sooner had the last Gordon Bennett visitors left than local enthusiasts began to discuss the idea of staging further races in Ireland. Motor News embraced the idea with considerable ardour. The Dublin magazine came out with a strong leader which advocated holding a major race in 1904 over the Gordon Bennett Cup course. The event was to be an alcohol race!

The projected alcohol race had nothing to do with post-closing time shennanigans. It was in fact a serious attempt to combine Irish sporting and motoring inclinations with the country's limited natural resources. As Motor News explained "For any ordinary motoring competition, Ireland could not possibly have the same attraction as the Gordon Bennett race. We suggest another project, which we think would be of inestimable value both to Ireland and to motoring generally. We believe that alcohol has a great future as a motive power and if it can replace petrol Ireland would benefit immeasurably, for the country is very favourably circumstanced to produce alcohol. The fluid can be obtained from various substances such as potatoes and beet. It may also be got from peat or turf."

Motor News envisaged government support for the race which would be between three-car national teams, with each driver a native of the country he represented. Each competing country would use fuel of its own manufacture. The English team, however, would use Irish alcohol! Although the Light Highways (Ireland) Act which enabled the Gordon Bennett race to take place on open roads was effective only to the end of 1903, this could be renewed by including it in the Expiring Laws Continuance Bill at the end of the year.

The idea of an alcohol race was not as far fetched as it sounds. Subsequent petrol supply crises and price increases in the 1970's and 1980's forced many car manufacturers to consider alternative sources of power. In 1979, Brands Hatch's John Webb and Jackie Epstein introduced single-seater Formula Talbot racing for methanol-fuelled cars. As early as 1901, an alcohol race had been held in France. The following year, the French Ministry of Agriculture spon-

sored the two-day Circuit du Nord in which Dubliner George du Cros accompanied Charles Jarrott to second place behind Maurice Farman.

The head of the Irish Department of Agriculture, pioneer motorist Horace Plunkett, was also very much in favour of alcohol for both cars and industrial use. His contention was that petrol supplies would soon be insufficient to meet local demand and the use of a home produced fuel could work wonders for the Irish economy. The Automobile Club of Great Britain also favoured the idea of a 1904 alcohol race, its official journal saying that "There is a great need to support petrol with another fuel. If a car can be made to serve the purpose efficiently, a new home industry would be created and the agriculture of the UK would be supplied with a practical reason for encouraging the development of the automobile." Racing driver Charles Jarrott also added his considerable support, writing to Motor News of the need for an alternative fuel — "particularly in view of the fact that petrol prices keep going up and the whole motor industry is more or less in the hands of the oil companies."

Despite all these encouraging noises, however, and the fact that a Gobron Brillie alcohol-fuelled car had just done over 83mph at Ostend, the projected 1904 Irish alcohol race never got off the ground. Drivers in the Circuit du Nord event complained that the use of alcohol had reduced their cars' performance by up to twenty per cent (no such complaints, though, in modern Brazil where alcohol distilled from local sugar cane powers a large proportion of its road cars). But what really stifled the race plan was the indifference of the Motor Trade, whose support was essential to the success of any major event. Although it is easy to criticise the Trade for its lack of interest — which was to affect future Irish and British events — it is worth remembering that motoring was still in its infancy at this time. The Trade was perhaps wisely learning to creep reliably before racing alcoholically.

It was going to take more than manufacturers' indifference, however, to quell the Irish enthusiasm for motoring competition. A May 1904 Motor News editorial noted that "Portmarnock



"Motor News" editor, R. J. Mecredy, who supported the alcohol race.

Strand has become quite a chirpy hunting ground for motorcyclists trying their paces. It would be an ideal place for car races — and we expect to see some before the end of the season!" This was welcome news for Irish speed fans, as Dublin's Board of Works had just refused to consider any further Speed Trials in the Phoenix Park, telling the Irish Automobile Club that the public objected to the Park being closed for part of the day. Many IAC members felt that Portmarnock was a far more suitable venue, as cars could race four abreast in safety, unlike the Park where the Phoenix Monument provided a formidable obstacle to massed-start racing.

The first race to be held at Portmarnock was for motorcycles and its success encouraged the IAC to plan an event for August 1904, to coincide with the annual Dublin Horse Show. The two-day race meeting had to be rescheduled for September 17 when it was discovered that the tide might be unsuitable. All the leading British journals publicised the Irish event and the local interest was well matched by a good English entry which included C.S. Rolls, J.W. Stocks and 1902 Gordon Bennett winner, Selwyn Edge. With

good access roads and a convenient railway station, Car magazine described Portmarnock as "an ideal racecourse. The velvet Strand is over two miles long and at least 200 yards wide in parts and very smooth. Its position is very beautiful, irregular sandhills bound the course while seawards there is a splendid view of Howth Head, Ireland's Eye and Lambay Island."

With such a fine situation and an encouraging entry, all the IAC needed for a successful race was reasonable weather. Luck was on its side and the September sun helped attract about 5,000 people for the first day's racing. The band of the Dublin Metropolitan Police played popular airs between events and the organisation was so thorough that even J.W. Stocks was refused admission to the club enclosure as he wasn't sporting the right badge! Events ran a little less smoothly on the second day, the outgoing tide leaving deep gulleys which had to be filled before racing could commence.

The Speed Trials took place in two-car heats over a measured mile which started at the Portmarnock end of the strand. Appropriately enough, one of the first events was won by local landowner T.L. Plunkett, who had worked hard to prepare the course. Plunkett's Darracq was beaten by Percy Martin's Daimler in the touring car final for his class, while cross-channel visitors H. Sturmeay, Frank Churchill and A. Huntley-Walker also won their events. The one significant exception to the successful overseas invasion in the touring car class was 20-year old Algernon Lee Guinness's win in the unlimited section. Algy won his heat and in the final he held off the experienced Arthur Rawlinson to score the first win of what was to be a distinguished racing career.

Just as at Phoenix Park, it was the big racing cars which proved the best draw and the second day's speed events attracted over 10,000 spectators. Though disappointed to hear that Jarrott and Edge has been unable to travel over, they were well entertained by some hard-fought races and the debut of the Edge's latest Napier racing car, which was driven by Scottish record-breaker Arthur Macdonald. Arthur Rawlinson took the IAC Challenge Cup for the light racing class, beating G. Wilton by just 20 yards. Rawlinson then took his Darracq to a first-heat success in the big racing car class, while Guinness and Arthur Macdonald also won their heats. Macdonald went on to win the final with a time of 57.4 seconds from C.S. Rolls in the Mors and Algy Guinness.

Although both cars and spectators were a little



Pioneer motorist, William Goff, class winner in the first Irish Hillclimb.

lost on the expansive strand, the racing cars gave a good impression of speed in the Flying Kilometre Speed Trials which rounded off the programme. The fastest time was put up by Arthur Rawlinson who averaged 77.62mph, while Guinness was second quickest at 74.52mph. The visiting drivers were enthusiastic about Portmarnock, Macdonald noting that it was superior to Daytona where he had recently set up world records.

The specialist press also praised both the racing and the organisation but, sadly, the Portmarnock races were not to be repeated. It was discovered at the last minute that admission charges could not be made on the public strand and the IAC suffered a net loss of £170 on the proceedings. The deficit was unacceptable to many of the rank and file members, some of whom also referred to the lack of Trade support. Motor News was left to fume ineffectively, as it did when unruly spectators delayed Edge at the subsequent Filey sand races. "Such a thing as crowd encroachment on the track was unknown at Portmarnock," wrote the Dublin journal sadly.

The Portmarnock races made history as they were the first in the British Isles to be held on sand, the previous year's Southport races having taken place on the promenade. Although such venues provided acres of safe space, the sand invariably exacted its own tribute, insinuating itself into the delicate mechanism with alarming results. Neither did the food tents escape the sand's attention and one Portmarnock reporter noted that it even penetrated the sandwiches and human combustibles! After the Portmarnock event, it was to be twenty troubled years before

another big Irish race was planned and sporting motorists had to confine their enthusiasm to hill-climbs and Tours, which included speed trials (in hillclimbs and speed trials, drivers competed individually against the clock).

The first Irish hillclimb was held in September 1903 at Glendhu in the foothills of the Dublin Mountains. Organised by the IAC it took place over a distance of seven eighths of a mile with an average gradient of 1 in 12. Pioneer motorist William Goff appropriately won the class for 4-cylinder cars setting fastest time of 5 minutes 1 second in his Napier, while another IAC man Walter Sexton (Siddeley) won the 2-cylinder section. Ireland's first woman competitor, Mrs. R.J. Mecredy took the single cylinder section in her little 6hp De Dion.

The Glendhu climb was repeated in 1904, when Goff was again fastest, getting down to a time of 3m 15s in his 20hp Clement. F.V. Westby won the under-20hp class while Mrs Mecredy again won the small class as well as finishing fourth overall out of the 11 starters.

This pace was quite sedate compared to that being set by one of Ireland's best known grandsons, Henry Ford, who in 1904 broke the world land speed record by hurling his 16.7-litre Ford Arrow across the frozen Lake St Clair in Michigan at 91.37 mph. This record represented further motoring history in that it marked the only time a manufacturer set a world record in an petrol-fuelled car of his own construction.

No shyster as a PR person, Ford had the news of his success promptly relayed around the world with the expected sales results for his fledgling company. It was a deserved reward for the pioneer who had perfected the mass assembly line system which not only accelerated car production but also reduced prices and so hastened a worldwide transport revolution. The tongue-in-cheek American who referred to Ford's revolution as being more significant than Lenin's may have had a point.

The 1905 Irish season opened with a new climb organised by the enterprising North of Ireland Yacht Club at Cultra in Co. Down. This third Irish hillclimb attracted a fine 27-car entry, and a large number of spectators saw Grenville Craig, Alan Craig and Robert Workman win their classes, the latter making best time of 1m. 17 seconds for the 700 yards course. Mrs Workman made a brave attempt to be the first Ulster lady competitor but her car's driving chain broke on the line. This initial Ulster competition was followed by the IAC's third Glendhu climb which was held in May and attracted 15 drivers, in-

cluding pioneer motorist Dr. Colohan who scored two class wins. Fellow-Dubliner Thomas Henshaw who subsequently raced in the Isle of Man set fastest time of 2 minutes 11 seconds in his Daimler to beat William Goff by 26 seconds. An indication of the increased power of the cars is that some IAC members were already seeking an alternative venue as they felt the cars were now cornering too quickly for safety.

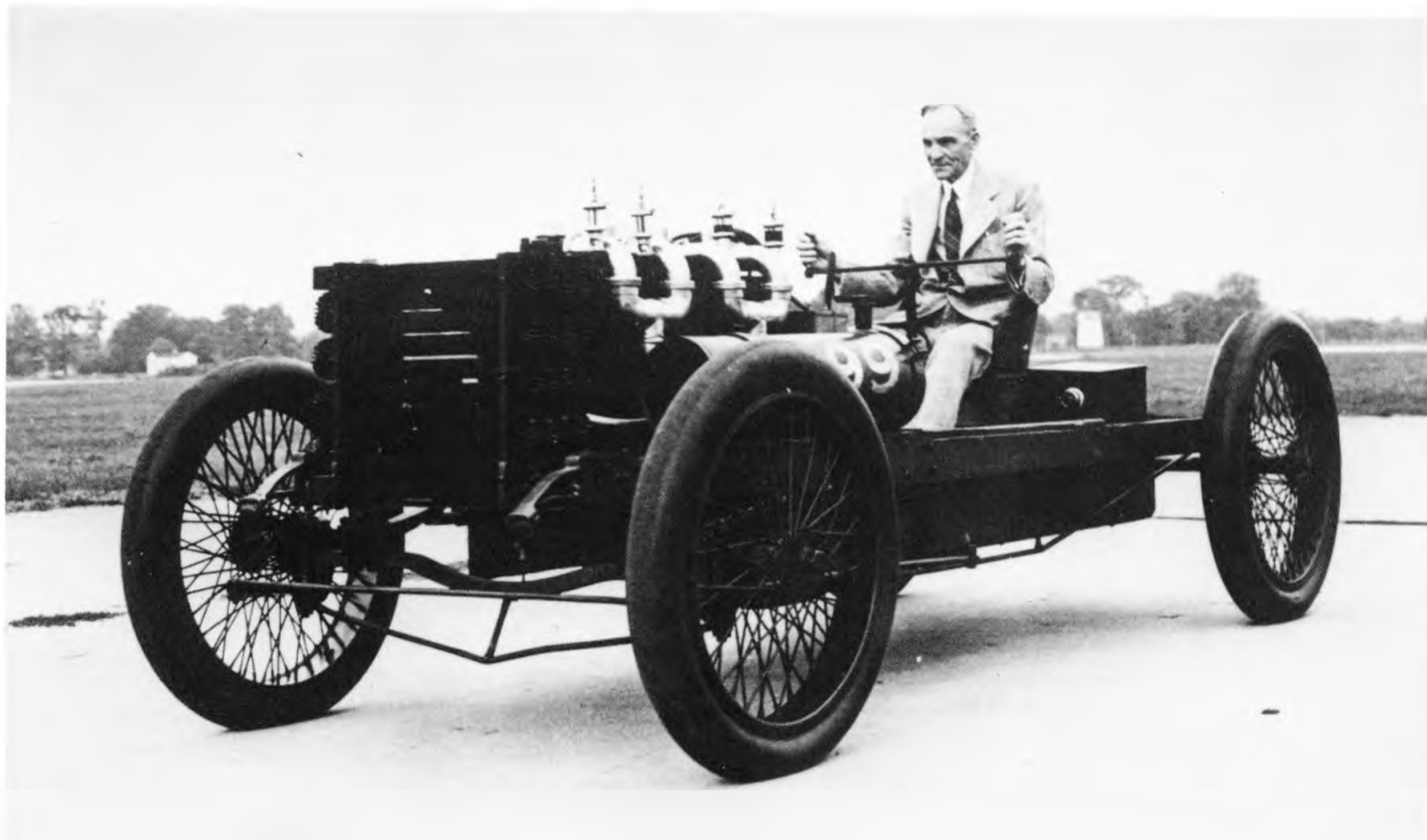
In July 1905, the IAC tried a new climb at Glenmacnass in the Wicklow Mountains. The man behind this event was Charles Segrave, who not only canvassed the entries but brought 30 visiting motorists back to his nearby Kiladreenan home, where no doubt some of them regaled 9-year old Henry Segrave with stories of their speed and daring. Dubliner Sam Robinson who like Henshaw also subsequently raced at the Isle of Man, made his debut at the Glenmacnass event to beat Segrave in their class. R.J. Mcreedy, J.H. Peare and Stanley Cochrane were the other class winners, the latter setting fastest time of 1m 35 secs in his Mercedes.

Charles Segrave also helped organise the following month's Callow climb in which 33 drivers competed, despite the previous night's rain storm which all but wiped out the original Ballynaslaughter course. Algy Guinness finished second in the two classes he contested and the other class winners were W.H. Green, George Colley, (father of the future racer and writer

Dudley Colley), T. Henshaw and Stanley Cochrane, who again set fastest time of 1m 8 seconds. Guinness was second fastest with a time of 1m 11 seconds in his 60hp Darracq and according to Motor News he and Cochrane "drove spectacularly, taking the curves with great daring and scattering streams of water eight to ten feet into the air."

The first 1906 event was an April evening hill-climb held at Gilnahirk near Belfast by the Ulster Centre of the Motorcycle Union of Ireland. T.H. Dunlop set fastest time of 1m 33 seconds to beat W. McCammond by six seconds. The Motorcycle Union staged a similar event three weeks later at Bangor, where S. Corry was fastest of the four car entrants. The second RNIYC Cultra climb took place the following month, with J. Cunningham in his Daimler setting fastest time of 50 seconds to beat F. Gardner by 11 seconds. The next but less official speed event was William McTaggart's End-to-End record of 20 hours 55 minutes in his 10hp Argyll. The Dublin trader was subsequently severely rebuked by Motor News which was concerned about his high average of 19mph on the public roads!

Motor News's misgivings may have been due to the fact that it didn't want any adverse publicity to mar the IAC's forthcoming big Reliability Trial. After being thwarted in its efforts to hold a major road race, the club with encouragement from the Dublin magazine had channelled its enthusiasm



into organising a Reliability Trial along the lines of the successful Scottish Trial recently introduced by the Automobile Club of Great Britain.

Although the Reliability Trial unfortunately clashed with the Scottish event, the club attracted an entry of 37 drivers of whom 28 started the four-day competition. The Trial started from Dublin on June 13 1906 with return stages to Carlow, Dundalk and Gorey and a hillclimb on the final day. The weather was perfect for the first two days but drivers' rash complaints about excessive dust were dampened by the rain which bucketed down during the following day's Gorey stage, in which Moore Brabazon was also "the target of a genuine motor-phobist" who doused him with a pail of water. The Meath man was driving a new Minerva which he had just brought over from Antwerp and despite the unwelcome wetting he went on to set fastest time of 2m 21.8s in the final day's Callow hillclimb.

John Boyd Dunlop Junior apparently enjoyed greater spectator appeal than Moore Brabazon and at Glenealy a bouquet of flowers was thrown into his car, round which was a note of welcome from the local postmaster! Dunlop was debuting his new Humber in which he beat Thomas Henshaw for best car in the amateur section. The Trial's open section was won by Sam Robinson in a Clement-Talbot from Harvey du Cros Junior, who was giving the latest Austin its maiden voyage. Waterford pioneer motorcycle constructor Bill Peare was fourth in this section. He didn't lose a mark or suffer a single puncture and his record of reliability in this and later Irish Tours subsequently earned him the title "Lord Non-Stop!"

Another notable Trial entrant was Jack Chambers of Belfast who finished tenth in one of his own cars. Chambers had been building cars since 1904 and these were the only automobiles to be constructed in any significant quantity in Ireland. Manufactured up to 1925, the Belfast cars were sold throughout the UK as well as Ireland and they also found satisfied customers in France and Spain. A journalist visiting Spain in 1926 found a sturdy 10-year old Chambers still in daily use as a hire car. Built by the brothers Robert and Jack Chambers, a former Vauxhall employee, the first cars were powered by a 7hp flat-twin engine. Before lack of capital forced the brothers out of business, final models featured four-cylinder side-valve engines of 2 and 2.4 litres.

The 1906 Trial was considered a success by most of the motoring journals which also praised the IAC for including the amateur section which

attracted 16 entries. They pointed out that but for clashing with the Scottish Trial, the Irish event would have had many more Trade entries. The message wasn't lost on the IAC which planned a more suitable date for the following year's Trial. The 1906 event was followed by an August climb on Wicklow's 1.5 mile Ballynaslaught hill, where F. Wilkinson scored three class wins in his little Stanley Steamer and was only just beaten for fastest time overall by Daimler driver F.A. Bolton who recorded 2m 24s.

R. Dunlop in a Humber won the car section of the August MCUI run from Belfast to Castlewellan while J.N. McCammond won the subsequent Ballybannon hillclimb in his Darracq. John Boyd Dunlop Junior came down from Belfast to win the driving test at the IAC's Dublin's gymkhana, but despite the strong northern interest in motorsport Belfast was still without a motoring club. Ireland as a whole was without a major race and the IAC prepared for its 1907 activities by communicating with the leading Irish M.P.'s with a view to relieving the Isle of Man of its prestigious Tourist Trophy event! As with the Gordon Bennett Cup event, members were hoping to exploit the hostility of some Manx people to the race. ■

Regular Tour competitor Bill Peare who opened Ireland's first garage in Waterford.



6. NATIONAL RELIABILITY TRIALS (1907-1919)

“Cheers and Good Wishes on All Sides”

The country's first official Motor Show was staged in January, 1907, at Dublin's RDS, where the 50 different marques on display demonstrated the progress made by motoring since the dramatic Gordon Bennett event. R.J. Mecredy's Motor News, which was also a best-seller in England, undoubtedly stimulated the increased interest in motoring, as did its regular series of technical and travel articles by such articulate correspondents as the redoubtable engineer and songwriter, Percy French.

On the international racing front, a year after the Gordon Bennett series had ceased, France had in 1906 hosted the first Grand Prix motor race over a distance of 767 miles (tell that to a modern 200-mile Grand Prix sprinter!). The previous year the Isle of Man held the first Tourist Trophy race for standard touring cars, while racing finally got off the ground in England with the 1907 opening of the purpose-built banked circuit at Brooklands, Surrey. The public imagination was soon caught by the exploits of such drivers as Selwyn Edge who in June set up a new world distance record at Brooklands, where he averaged 65.8mph for 24 hours in his Napier.

The world land speed record had risen from 84mph at the time of the Irish Gordon Bennett event to 121mph in 1907, while manufacturers were now spending heavily on racing and were engaging professional rather than owner drivers, whose activities were increasingly confined to touring car racing. As related in the following chapter, T.C. Moore Brabazon of Tara scored a notable success when he won the touring car section of the 1907 Circuit des Ardennes. Back in Ireland the pace was more sedate but hillclimbs and trials still kept the competitive spirit very much alive. A new club was opened in Limerick, where local man Malcolm Shaw won its first speed judging competition at Adare Manor. Daimler driver Alan Craig took the April MCUI hillclimb at Bangor, while the following month's third Cultra climb produced the largest-ever Ulster entry, as H.C. Craig beat 69 other entrants to set fastest time of 65 seconds.

Pride of place on the competition calendar went to the annual four-day Reliability Trial which



Northern hillclimb frontrunner Charles Hurst.

featured a speed trial at Derry's Magilligan Strand, the first speed event apart from a hillclimb, to be staged since Portmarnock. The Trial started with a run from Dublin to Portrush on Wednesday, May 22, and following the Magilligan action competitors headed back to Dublin on Thursday. The final two stages were from Dublin to Waterford and back, with a hillclimb on each day. The Trial again attracted considerable public interest and the IAC organisers received a letter from Carrickmacross businessmen, worried that they might not pass through their town as planned.

Entries were double those for 1906, with no fewer than 68 cars making a long procession through the Dublin streets "with cheers and good wishes on all sides." Once again the Royal Irish Constabulary did sterling work, manning all the major junctions, while enthusiasts in some areas put up signs warning of culverts and other obstructions. Large numbers of country people turned out to see the cars and according to one report, "The mills and schools of Armagh, Antrim, and Tyrone all seemed to have a holiday for the occasion. In many cases, the children were arranged in rows outside their schools, with the headmasters at their head!" The reception was equally enthusiastic in the south, with groups of Kilkenny girls presenting bouquets of lilac to the competitors.

All the cars reached Magilligan Strand without difficulty where they discovered that the circuit had been laid out by intrepid officials under a hail of bullets, IAC planners having overlooked the fact that the local militia frequently used the areas for target practice! Fortunately the soldiers took time off for the speed event which took place on a three-mile course. The fastest driver was E. Herington who did 3m 19 seconds in his 30hp Ariel, while Jack Chambers also scored a class win in one of his own cars.

Herington's main rival was Daimler driver Thomas Henshaw who managed to beat him in the two subsequent hillclimbs. Henshaw completed the one-mile Hollywood climb in 2m 3s to win by 20 seconds, while he had eight seconds to spare in the 1718 yards Graiguenamanagh climb which he won with a time of 1m 49s. Henshaw was the only amateur to take an award in the open section, which was won by fellow-Dubliner Sam Robinson. IAC Secretary Walter Sexton took the limited section while John Boyd Dunlop won the Goff Challenge Cup for the best petrol consumption; according to the ponderous formula for the test he averaged "424 pence per ton-mile!"

While the big Trial was finishing in Wicklow, the new Limerick club went ahead with its Delmege's Glen hillclimb which was won by J.P. Goodbody in a Peugeot. Under the watchful eyes of the Lord Lieutenant and Lady Aberdeen, the IAC then held two climbs on the same July day which were both won by Thomas Henshaw. The Daimler driver climbed the 1284 yards Altidore hill in 1m 51s and the 1.5 mile Ballynaslaughter course in 2m 28s. A model N Ford driven by P.D.

Perry dominated its class to boost Irish sales of the new car.

Despite Motor New's disapproval, William McTaggart the following month lowered his End-to-End record to 15 hours 21 minutes, while F. Eastmead of the Sunbeam company went one better to set up a return End-to-End record of 38 hours 45 minutes for the 769-mile round trip. Motor News was still making noises about an Irish Tourist Trophy race and the London Motor Illustrated agreed that Ireland would be an ideal place to stage a race. It would be many years before the Motor News dream was realised but the motoring world was once again being left in no doubt that Ireland was ready and willing to stage another big speed event.

The IAC planned its toughest Reliability Trial to date for 1908, an 800-mile marathon over six days. But as usual the RNIY club once again opened the season, this time with a reliability trial rather than the traditional Cultra hillclimb. The persistent Mrs Workman won the ladies' prize while W.J. Patten took the men's award. Belfast's Harry Ferguson was fastest in the season's first hillclimb at Carnmoney with a time of 1m 10s, which also won him the handicap award from T.H. Dunlop. Ford driver I.G. Davidson was fastest of the six drivers who contested the MCUI climb at Glendun Bridge near Ballycastle, while John Boyd Dunlop Junior made another successful southern foray to win the amateur section of the Ballynaslaughter climb, in which the fastest car by far was the 60hp Napier entered by Selwyn Edge and driven by F.G. Cundy. A new event was the Garvagh, Enniskillen, climb staged in July by the Motor Yacht Club of Ireland,



Belfast car builder.
Charles Chambers
about to lose a tyre.





Ballynaslaughter hillclimb action during the 1908 Reliability Trial.

in which Thomas Henshaw set fastest time of 1m 3s. J.B. Dunlop, S. Pringle and B.L. Winslow were the other class winners. Driving an Argyll, Harry Ferguson beat Alan Craig to win the October hillclimb at Bangor.

Despite, or because of its increased distance, the May 1908 Reliability Trial attracted an entry of 68 cars. Competitors were faced with stages from Dublin to Cork, Killarney and Belfast and a concluding hillclimb in Wicklow. The huge public interest impressed Autocar, which found it to be in cheerful contrast to English apathy. Writing of the crowds in Kerry and Tipperary, Autocar said "The passage of each car was greeted with wild Irish yells and immense enthusiasm, which leapt to boiling point when some of the faster cars indulged *pro bono publico* in a little make-believe racing. The memory of those wild excited encouraging gestures and cries will remain with us and will rise afresh in the memory when the scowls and bitterness of the stolid, solid, unimpressible English country folk mar a summer's drive!"

One competitor who didn't share the cheering was Portmarnock's T.L. Plunkett who overturned his car on the second day near Kenmare and broke several ribs. Motor News man Tom Murphy was also badly bruised after a violent argument with a gatepost when his car became tail-happy outside Cork. but there was no such misfortune for F.G. Cundy who took Edge's Napier to a clear win in the Speed Trials at Kerry's Rossbeigh Strand (which was being used instead of Magilligan). Cundy also beat Thomas Henshaw

to win the Hollywood hillclimb, but the Dublin driver had his revenge in the final Ballynaslaughter climb in which he beat Cundy by seven seconds. All the speed events, incidentally, were timed by the legendary ACGB watchkeeper A.V. Ebblewhite, soon to become a permanent fixture of the new Brooklands racing track. Thomas Henshaw won the Trial's amateur section, while J. Hedge took the Dunlop Cup for scoring the highest aggregate marks for reliability, hill climbing and speed performances. The Trial also marked the competition return of Paris-Madrid survivor Leslie Porter, who drove his Calthorpe to a class win in the Hollywood climb.

In France where Porter had once campaigned, the country's prestigious Grand Prix was cancelled as the 1909 European Trade Depression curbed manufacturers' interest in racing. but the Irish Reliability Trial maintained its new six-day format and once again attracted an impressive entry of 47 cars. Apart from the Reliability Trial climbs, most of the 1909 Irish events were staged by the enterprising Ulster Centre of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland. Its first event was the April Bangor handicap climb which was won by Chambers driver Charles Hurst, with S.P. Corry making fastest time in his Stanley Steamer. Hurst also made best time in the May Ballycastle Trial in which James Holden won the handicap award.

The RNIYC Cultra climb attracted no fewer than 30 entries but there was never doubting Edwin Craig's ability to win in his new 60hp Itala. Vauxhall driver E. Graham was quickest in the

August Magheramore climb near Larne which was won on handicap by T.H. Dunlop. The final climb of the year resulted in a bit of motoring history with what appears to be the only recorded success by a gentleman of the cloth! It's not recorded whether or not he had Outside assistance, but the Rev. E. Archdall soared upwards in his little 10hp De Dion to beat all-comers in the Limerick Club's Newport climb.

The Reliability Trial itinerary brought competitors all around Ireland from Dublin to Portrush, Bundoran, Galway and Killarney. The first timed events were the Magilligan Strand Speed Trials in which Percy Kidner's Vauxhall was fastest overall, beating Humber driver G.A. Phillips by five seconds. Phillips and his car proved to be one of the most consistent combinations on the Trial and he went to finish runner-up in the two other timed events, the Speenogue hillclimb near Derry and the Killarney Farmer's Hill event.

For the first time in the Trial, marks were awarded for the condition of the cars at the end of the event and for this purpose they were detained overnight. Some engines were also examined and the unfortunate Kidner was disqualified when it was discovered that the engine size of his Vauxhall differed from that on the entry form. The Talbot car which had made fastest time on the two hills was also disqualified. Thus Phillips took the three timed events while C.G. Jackson in a Metallurgique won the 100 guineas Dunlop Cup and Humber took the 200 guineas Dunlop team prize. An interesting entry which made a non-stop run was a 15hp Deasy which was manufactured in Coventry by expatriate H.H. Deasy and marketed as "The car with an Irish name."

The year ended with a notable Irish aviation success, when A.C. Moore Brabazon won the Daily Mail prize for the first person to fly a mile in an all-English plane. The Tara Hill man also held the first flying licence to be issued in England. Moore Brabazon's success further stimulated the growing Irish interest in flying. The IAC played a major role in forming the Irish Aero Club whose first committee included such motoring stalwarts as William Goff, W.Sexton, J.B. Dunlop and Harry Ferguson. Moore Brabazon's speed achievements were not confined to the air and by 1909 he had competed with distinction in many major car events. He wasn't the only Irishman to be racing abroad. Apart from Leslie Porter's return to competition, Algernon Lee Guinness was now breaking world speed records, as well as being one of the most consistent competitors in

the increasingly successful Isle of Man TT car races.

In 1909, at Newcastle, Co. Down. Harry Ferguson became the first person in the British Isles to fly an aircraft of his own construction. But the period between Ferguson's flying exploits and the first world war was a lean one for Irish motoring competition although the eight previous years had seen the registration of over 5,000 vehicles in the country. Only three hill-climbs took place in 1910. The annual Cultra event was won on handicap by F.M. Heyn, with J.W. Scott setting fastest time, while the Bangor and Magheramore climbs were won by H. Whitehead and R.C. Robb respectively, with E. Graham setting best time at each event.

The only 1911 event was the Cultra Hillclimb in which Charles Hurst was fastest. Bearded veteran Willie Hume won the handicap section to add a motoring success to his unique distinction of having been the first man to win a cycle race on a pneumatic tyre. Even the RNIYC faltered in 1912, when it abandoned its annual Cultra climb in favour of a paper chase and speed guessing competition which was won by S.G. Robinson.

The decline in competitions was due as much to the apathy of private owners as to the indifference of the Motor Trade which was also affecting motorsport on the other side of the Irish Sea. In 1913 the IAC proposed a 100-mile race to mark the tenth anniversary of the Gordon Bennett Cup race and Tipperary county surveyor E. Hackett was quick to suggest a suitable course in the Clonmel-Cashel area. But without any significant Trade response the IAC was forced to abandon the idea, although the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders shortly afterwards announced its support for a hillclimb at Craigtantlet. This first climb on the 1.25 mile hill above Belfast which was destined to be one of Ireland's longest-run motorsport events attracted thousands of spectators and no fewer than thirty starters including Leslie Porter.

Behind overall winner Harry Ferguson, one of the best performances came from R.C. Robb who shot to second place in a series of broadside slides. Talbot driver J. Coote won the private car class of that opening 1913 event, while Leslie Porter finished his 10-year racing career on a typically knife-edge note, smashing a wheel as he skidded into the banking.

Within a short time of abandoning its Gordon Bennett Race commemoration event the IAC agreed to suggestions for a July race at Rosslare Strand. Unfortunately, bad weather forced postponement until September when many of the

original entrants were unable to come, including London world record breaker Percy Lambert and Harry Ferguson, whose duel with arch-rival R.C. Robb had been eagerly awaited. With the august Ebby Ebbelwhite presiding over the clocks, the racing took place over two days on a two-mile course. Talbot driver Sam Robinson was fastest with a speed of 73.47mph, winning every race in which he competed to take the 200 guineas Dunlop Cup. The fastest private entrant was C.P. Kirk, who averaged 53.25mph to win the 100 guineas Dunlop Cup, while J.A. Carvill and Thomas Talbot-Power were the other race-winners. Despite the postponement from its original date, the IAC considered the Rosslare event a success and a further meeting was planned for 1914.

The growing interest in small cars encouraged the Irish Automobile Club to stage a four-day Light Car Reliability Trial in May the following year and this was to prove the final Irish motoring event of 1914 before the dark clouds of war tumbled down over Europe. The event attracted an entry of 20 drivers and once again people turned out in large numbers to see the cars. The Trial was covered in a series of stages from Dublin to Ardee, Arklow, and Carlow, with two hill-climbs on the third day.

The fastest driver on the opening Glendhu hillclimb which attracted a huge Dublin crowd was French constructor Jules Nardini in one of his own cars. J.T. Wood (GWK) took the class for cars costing under 150 guineas, a win he repeated in the Ballinascorney climb in which Singer driver E.J. Roberts was fastest overall. The highlight of the Tour however proved to be the disqualification of the resourceful Nardini.

Before the event started, the Frenchman's car had been found to be overweight for its class. However, IAC officials allowed him to compete on condition he carried no more fuel in his tank than the amount weighed. A subsequent inspection revealed that Nardini was in fact driving on a full tank, for which his Irish explanation was that it had been filled by "the spirits people" without his knowledge. Nardini's Tour finally came to an end when the IAC caretakers discovered his mechanic tinkering with the car's gear ratios after forcing his way into the club garage where the cars were held under guard each night. The Frenchman was disqualified and as Motor News wrote, "The crowning humiliation came when the club steward refused to allow the car to pass through the club's premises into Dawson Street — Anne's Lane was good enough in his opinion!"

What proved to be the final Irish motoring



First Craigantlet winner, Harry Ferguson.

event before 1920 was a 1915 run organised by the Dublin and District Motor Cycle Club in which Gerald Moyne won the car class in his Calthorpe. The 1914-18 war sadly stifled Harry Ferguson's revolutionary Fergus car, the first in the world to feature a rubber-mounted engine. As in every other European country, the war also took its toll of Irish motorists and sportsmen. Victor Robb was killed on the western front, while Henry Segrave was lucky to be able to return to convalesce at his Tipperary home after being shot down from 17,000 feet.

The big European powers did not have a monopoly of the fighting and in 1916 Irish republicans rebelled against British rule. Their activities eventually led to the setting up of the Irish Free State in 1921. Among the prominent motorists killed in the 1916 uprising was the republican O'Rahilly, who once wrote for Motor News, whose own valuable files and records were destroyed during the rebellion.

But inevitably as in other times and other places, man's sporting instincts survived the bitter events of the pre-1920's. Ireland was soon preparing for a new and exciting chapter in its history when north and south would combine to hold some of the greatest races seen in these islands. But first, the story must be told of the international successes of Irish drivers up to the war.

7. IRISH SUCCESSES OVERSEAS

(1900-1914)

Vanderbilt Cup Record by Tracy

It may come as a disappointment to the Irish drivers of the 80's to discover that they were not the first from the Emerald Isle to compete successfully overseas. Apart from the pioneering exploits of Harvey du Cros and Herules Langrishe, many of the early English, continental and American speed events featured Irish drivers or drivers with strong Irish associations. These included Algernon and Kenelm Lee Guinness, Dubliners Thomas Henshaw and Harry Robinson, T.C. Moore Brabazon of Tara, 1903 Paris-Madrid veteran Leslie Porter from Belfast and Waterford's Joe Tracy.

The most notable early American driver was Joe Tracy who scored many successes in the early 1900's but before this another Irishman had distinguished himself by leading the first-ever race to be held in North America. He was Jerry O'Connor and the race was in snowy November 1895 from Jackson Park to Evanston and back. Sponsored by the Chicago Times-Herald, the historic event attracted six entries.

O'Connor who was backed by the famous Macy Store, was driving one of three modified Benz cars entered, similar to the Velo which was the first machine to reach Ireland. The race favourite was Frank Duryea, who had just constructed the first petrol-engined automobile to be built in the States. Despite the advantage of his pneumatic tyres, Duryea fell by the wayside with a broken steering arm and after only five miles O'Connor led easily from the rest of the field. He survived an altercation with a streetcar to lead into Evanston but aware that Duryea was back in the fray he then threw caution to the winds, as he slithered across the snow at increased speed, determined to keep the American at bay. His impetuosity inevitably led to two further collisions and with only 15 miles to run he was forced to retire.

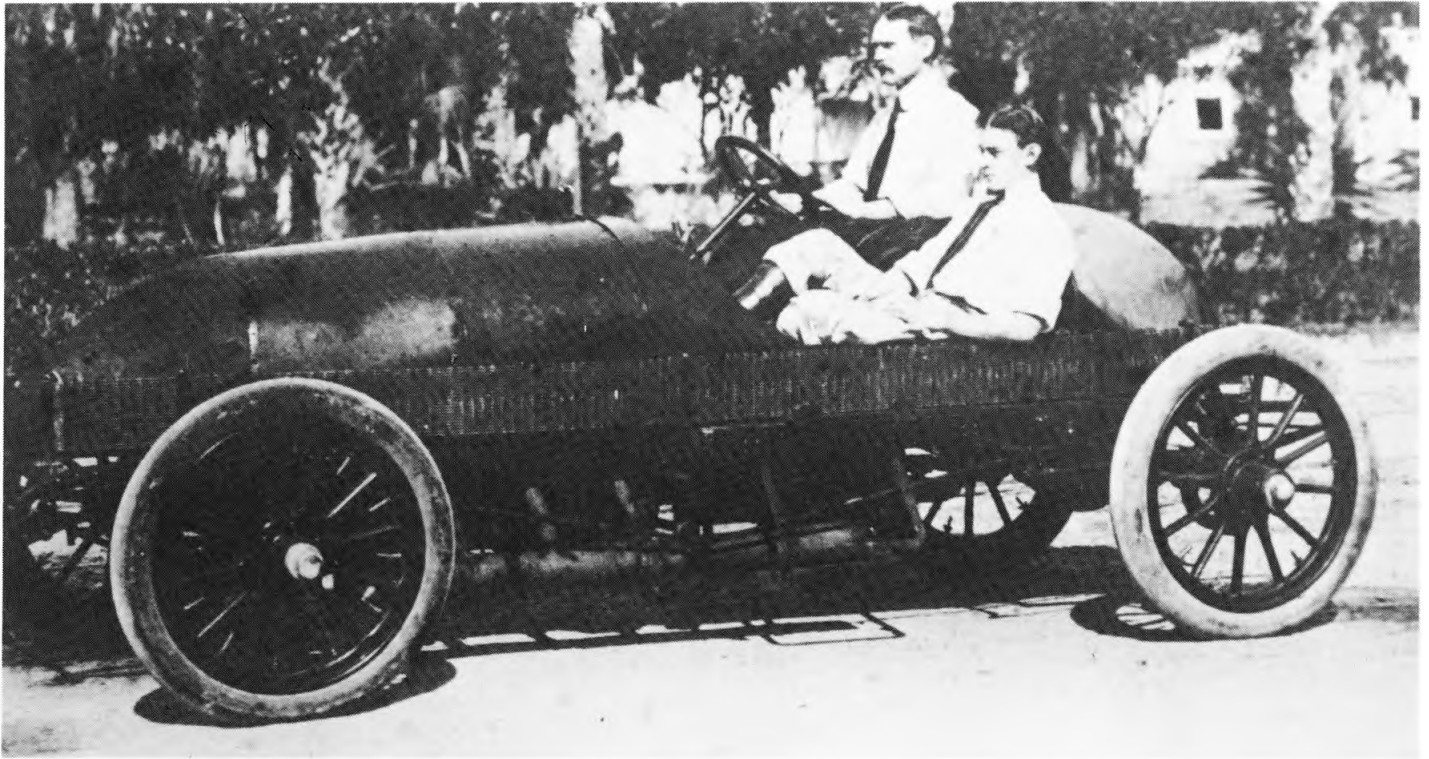
Had the Irishman shown more restraint he would have had the honour of winning the first U.S. race, as ignition trouble lost eventual winner Frank Duryea 50 minutes near the end of the event. For those purists who think that skull-duggery is a recent motorsport phenomenon, a disappointing footnote to that first US event is

that while Frank Duryea was recovering from his nine-hour drive, his brother Charles gave journalists a photo of the winning car with himself at the wheel, which led to the long-held belief that it was he who had won!

Joe Tracy, however, bore a wiser head than O'Connor and in a short brilliant career he became America's most successful early racing driver. Tracy emigrated from Waterford at the age of 19 in 1902 and a keen interest in mechanical matters led to his race debut the following year. After many promising local results he achieved national headlines by driving his Renault to second place in the 1905 Havana 100 mile race. He then became the only Irish driver to compete in the Gordon Bennett series when he drove the Locomobile in the 1905 French event which was won by the great Thery. The Locomobile was plagued with gear trouble forcing Tracy's retirement, but back in the States he quickly made up for this disappointment with a fine second place in the Vanderbilt Cup Eliminating race.

Despite earlier misgivings, the Vanderbilt Cup series had become one of America's most talked-about sporting events and hundreds of thousands thronged the new York track for the 1905 race which attracted such famous drivers as Louis Wagner, Camille Jenatzy, Vincenzo Lancia, Louis Chevrolet, the temperamental French ace Victor Hemery and Tracy in the all-American Locomobile. A cracked engine block meant an all-nighter for Tracy and his crew on the eve of the race but the car held together for the 300-mile event itself in which the Irish driver raced to third place behind Hemery and 1904 winner Heath. This marked the best showing up to that time by an American car and driver in an international race. American automotive engineering had lagged behind European achievement but the performance of Tracy and his all-American machine provided a welcome psychological stimulus for the fledgling American industry.

The following year, Tracy set fastest lap and dominated the Vanderbilt Eliminating race after he and his mechanic Al Poole had used wads of chewing gum to plug a badly leaking radiator.



▲ Waterford's Joe Tracy, the most successful early American driver.

The subsequent Vanderbilt Cup event once again attracted some of the world's top drivers and even bigger crowds, with an unruly mob of 250,000 swarming over the New York venue. Tracy started as one of the race favourites but his hopes of success quickly crumbled as after 20 minutes he suffered the first of many tyre failures.

He enjoyed only two trouble-free laps but on one of these he showed his class by setting fastest lap at 67.6mph, a new Vanderbilt record. A subsequent skid during which he injured a boy and a drunk who were standing in a prohibited area proved too much for the sensitive Tracy who stepped out of his car, saying he would never race again.

It was a sad and premature end to a very promising career for the speedy Irishman who later undertook research into fuel economy for the US government during the 1914-1918 war and also became a leading figure in the American veteran car movement. "Old 16", the 100mph Locomobile in which Tracy set fastest lap in that final 1906 Vanderbilt Cup race, is now regarded as one of the most historic cars in the US. Despite its age, it is still campaigned in veteran runs by Jerry Helck, son of the famous motoring artist Peter Helck.

Much nearer home, the Guinness family of brewing fame provide two of the most successful brothers in early motor racing. They were Algernon Lee Guinness and his younger brother

Kenelm, better known as Algy and Bill Guinness. Algy Guinness cut his competitive teeth at the age of 20 in the 1904 Portmarnock Strand races, where he took his Darracq to a heat win in the Light Racing Car class. He next turned his attention to speed trials across the water, setting fastest time at the 1904 Bexhill Trials where he beat Selwyn Edge with a 100hp Darracq.

Algy also set best time at the following year's Bexhill event again beating the experienced Edge. The same year he drove in the Isle of Man Gordon Bennett Eliminating Trials, where one journalist noted "The strange anomaly of an Irishman driving a Scotch car with a French name!" Algy raced on the Manx circuit with the handicap of a new mechanic, his lurid cornering having frightened his practice assistant into early retirement. But cheered on by such stalwarts as Tullamore's H.Poole and Leslie Porter, the white-sweatered Algy was only three minutes behind Edge at the end of the opening lap. A broken piston unfortunately sent his Gordon Bennett hopes skywards, but it wasn't to spoil his love affair with the island circuit and four months later he was to return for the September Tourist Trophy race.

Before that second 1905 IOM appearance, Guinness distinguished himself at the July Brighton Speed Trials, where he won the Autocar Cup which had previously been held by Phoenix Park winner Baron de Forest. Driving his big

Darracq, he got the better of a tense duel with J.E. Hutton to win at 89.35mph. He then finished second to Clifford Earp's Napier in the following month's trials at Blackpool just ahead of Moore Brabazon. Algy returned to the Isle of Man but once again misfortune struck when a wild slide on the second TT lap sent him crashing into retirement against the stone steps at Hillberry corner. Harvey du Cros did well to finish sixth in the same race — his first outing since the Blackpool trials, when he was knocked unconscious by a flying bonnet cover.

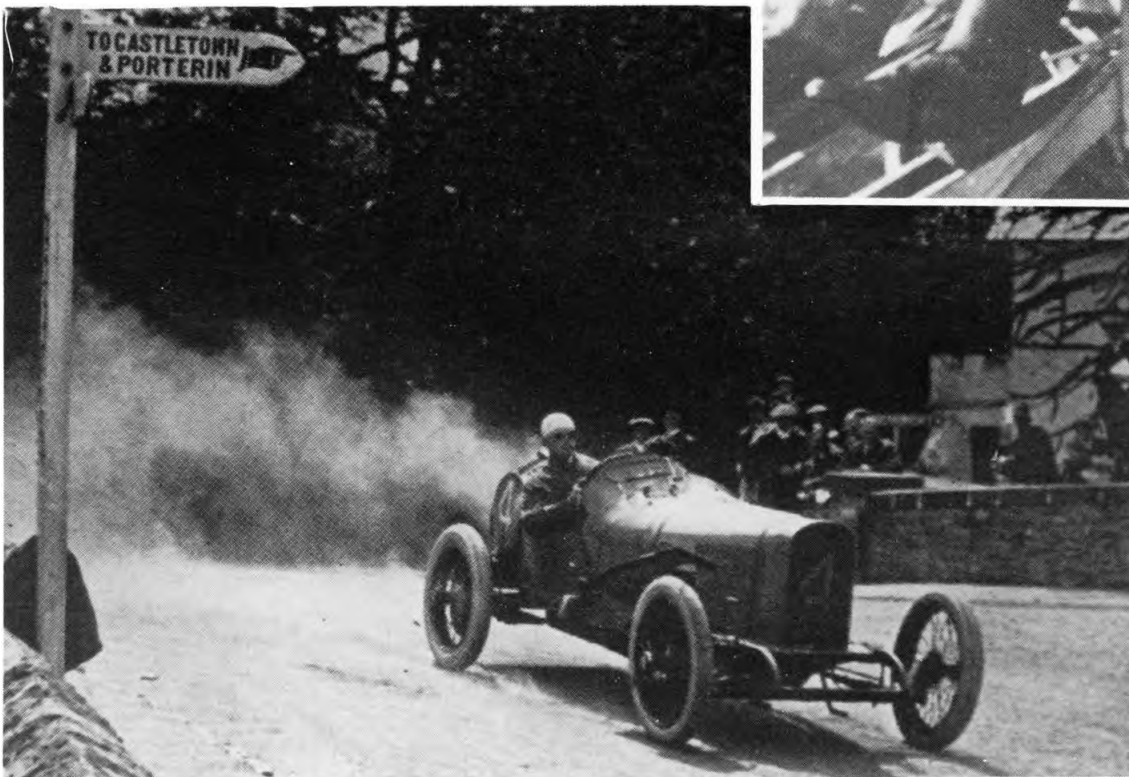
Algy Guinness's Isle of Man fortune improved in the 1906 TT when despite tyre trouble he finished a good third to Charles Rolls and Paul Bablot. He ended the race as spectacularly as he had driven throughout, swerving wildly as he crossed the line at speed. Algy's 1906 exploits also included breaking the World Standing Kilometre record at Blackpool after an exciting early tie with S.F. Edge's brother, Cecil Edge. In October, Algy crossed over to France where he made light of the greasy conditions at Dourdan to win the racing car class and establish a new 112mph European record. The following weekend, he beat Edge and the continental opposition at the Gaillon Hillclimb, where he smashed the record jointly held by Rigolly and Barras. The latter was the man who according to Sammy Davis set up a world record in 1904 with some assistance from the resourceful Guinness, who moved the marking kilometre stone a bit nearer

its companion the night before the record attempt!

Algy Guinness's younger brother Bill, who had frequently acted as his mechanic, now commenced racing himself and the pair competed for the first time as rivals in the 1907 Tourist Trophy race. Bill progressed from 13th to seventh place before retiring with differential trouble. Algy was seventh on the opening lap and five circuits later he was up to second behind Oscar Cupper in a Metallurgique. Cupper ran out of fuel and a



▲ Moore Brabazon of Tara, successful driver and aviator.



Bill Guinness winning the 1914 T.T.
◀

big cheer went up from the grandstand when it was announced that Algy had passed the Bungalow in the lead on the last lap. The celebration was premature, however, as Algy himself went dry just three miles from victory. But little daunted and with his cap set firmly back to front in the style of the early racers, the Irishman promptly set off for the next meeting at Saltburn Sands, where he set up a new British Flying Kilometre record at 111.84mph. Six weeks later, he won the cup for the fastest 100 kilometres in the Belgian Circuit des Ardennes where he finished third, just 90 seconds behind the race winner.

That event marked a memorable Irish success as the winner was none other than T.C. Moore Brabazon who thus became the first Irish driver to win a continental race. His ancestral home was Tara Hall on the slopes of one of Ireland's most historic places, the Hill of Tara, home of the ancient Kings of Ireland. Moore Brabazon's interest in cars had begun in 1900 when he saw the 1000 Miles British Trial. While at Cambridge he became friendly with Charles Rolls, for whom he acted as mechanic in subsequent speed events. He got a bird's-eye view of the Irish Gordon Bennett race by the simple ruse of wearing overalls and carrying a pail of water.

The following year, 1904, he spent some time at the Darracq factory, where he accompanied their famous driver, Louis Wagner on many test outings. He borrowed a Mors for the 1905 Brighton Speed Trials, where the big car back-fired as it was being started, sending both driver and mechanic hurtling into the crowd! But Moore Brabazon soon tamed the mighty Mors to win a silver cup at the subsequent Blackpool Speed Trials.

The Meath man's next big outing was at Brooklands in 1907, where he was an easy leader until his Minerva caught fire. Although the car burnt itself out mechanics were able to trace the trouble to a faulty valve. The system was improved for the Circuit des Ardennes event, which Moore Brabazon dominated, despite having to change tyres 11 times! He also finished second in the Liederkarke Cup race and these two successes resulted in an offer from Selwyn Edge to drive a Napier in the 1908 French Grand Prix.

The French Automobile Club however refused Edge's entry but the determined Moore Brabazon obtained an Austin which was little more than a touring car. Despite the lack of power and being almost blinded by tar, he was the first Austin driver home, finishing 18th, just behind Jenatzy who also had a troubled race. This was to be the

Irishman's last speed event and it was spoilt for him by the death of the French motorcycle ace, Cissac, who was killed right in front of him after his car hit a tree. Moore Brabazon then turned his attention to flying and after gaining the first pilot's licence issued in Great Britain he went on to win the 1909 Daily Mail £1,000 prize for the first mile flight in an English plane. He also became a successful tobogganist, winning the 1927 Curzon Cup on the hazardous Cresta Run — where he continued racing until he was over 70! Moore Brabazon was appointed British Minister of Transport at the start of the second world war and he was subsequently made a Peer, entering the House of Lords as Lord Brabazon of Tara.

The Guinness brothers, meantime, were keeping their flying activities closer to the ground and following his third place to Moore Brabazon in the 1907 Ardennes race, Algy Guinness made a successful early acquaintanceship with the newly-opened Brooklands track. He covered the flying quarter mile at over 115mph, which so impressed visiting entrepreneur Douglas Ross that the American offered Guinness £5,000 for his Darracq convinced that it would win everything within sight in the States!

In 1908, Algy returned to the Isle of Man where he finished second in the Four Inch TT, 90 seconds behind the winner after almost seven hours' racing. The TT featured no fewer than four Irish drivers, including Leslie Porter who took fourth place in his Calthorpe. From the Isle of Man, Guinness progressed to Saltburn Sands where he once again set fastest time at the annual meeting. This was his last outing in the 200hp Darracq and when he next raced in 1914, it was at the wheel of a Grand Prix Sunbeam. He took this car to fastest time of the day in the Beacon Hill climb, his last pre-war event.

Although Algy Guinness invariably competed as a private entrant, his brother Bill was very much a technical driver who quickly found himself in demand for works drives. Bill Guinness's first works seat was in the Sunbeam team, for which he made a spectacular debut in the 1913 French Grand Prix. He had worked his way up to sixth place when in an accident which was uncannily similar to the one which terminated his racing career, he hit the parapet of a bridge and plunged twenty feet into a river. Both he and his mechanic were lucky to escape with bruising, and Guinness resumed racing two months later, taking an excellent third place behind French aces Georges Boillot and Jules Goux in the Coupes de l'Auto event. He then broke several long-distance world records at

Brooklands with Dario Resta and Jean Chassagne. He also made a name for himself as an engine tuner and after exhaustive experiments he designed his own sparking plugs using mica insulators. His success with these plugs led him to found the famous KLG plug firm, whose original premises still stand in London's Putney Vale.

In 1914, Guinness finished third in the Brooklands Light Handicap race but it was in the Isle of Man that he really made his name by winning the 600-mile Tourist Trophy classic. The IOM event was nearly an all-Guinness benefit, as for most of the race he and Algy circulated in 1-2 formation on the circuit where they had originally partnered each other as mechanic and driver. Algy eventually retired from second place with differential trouble, leaving brother Bill to win easily from Minerva driver C. Riecken. The war clouds were now darkening Europe and it was to be five years before either Guinness would race again.

Harry Robinson was another Irish driver to compete abroad. On his first continental trip as mechanic to Weigel driver R. Laxen in the 1908 French Grand Prix, he had a lucky escape when their car overturned on the opening lap. Driving a Calthorpe, Robinson was running third in the 1908 Isle of Man Four Inch race when he inverted again after steering failure. He also went well in the 1911 French Coupes des Voiturettes until he was given water instead of petrol! But his luck changed when he became the first Dubliner to win in Europe by storming to success in the subsequent Boulogne hillclimb, in which his Calthorpe easily outclassed the opposition including French Grand Prix winner Georges Boillot.

The European hills had earlier attracted veteran explorer H. H. Deasy, who made Swiss motoring history in 1903 by becoming the first person to drive a car up the mountain railway line between Montreaux and Riches des Naye. Deasy whose exploring activities gained him a gold medal from the Royal Geographic Society, also won a gold medal in the 1901 1,000-mile British Tour, as well as a prize in the 1903 Grand Touring Car Competition at Nice. He eventually turned his attention to car construction, manufacturing cars under his own name at Coventry from 1906 to 1911.

Apart from proving a happy hunting ground for the Guinness brothers and Dublin motorcycle TT winners Stanley Woods and Tyrrell Smith, the Isle of Man was also popular with other Irish drivers. Dubliner Thomas Henshaw finished with a flat tyre to take third place in the 1907 Graphic Cup hillclimb there, despite being flung out of a car in an accident the previous day. As already



Moore Brabazon winning the 1907 Circuit des Ardennes.

related, Paris-Madrid veteran Leslie Porter also distinguished himself with a fine fourth place in the 1908 TT — after a typically fraught race which included a crash at Hillberry, a broken lubricating pipe and defective brakes. Porter finished the race covered in oil and with the throttle as his only means of braking for the final five laps!

As in John Watson's subsequent career, Lady Luck was noticeably absent from Porter's side but he lacked neither courage nor ability and his consistent 1908 TT lap times were noted by many experienced observers. The following year, he raced at Dieppe where after spinning on a corner he skidded through a gate and found himself in yet another confrontation with the French railway system. After extricating himself from the railway siding, the intrepid Belfastman went on to finish eighth in the Coupes des Voiturettes. He also won the Regularity Cup — appropriately for consistent driving! This was to be Porter's last continental event before he returned to Belfast to concentrate on his car business.

France, however, was destined to finally claim the gallant Leslie who joined the Air Corps in 1916. The adventurous Irishman disappeared only weeks after his first flying engagement and it was announced in January 1917 that he had crashed and died across the German lines. His bizarre fortune followed him to the end when four months later it was announced that he had been confused with a namesake and that he was in fact alive. The confusion, alas, was in the latter report. The final chapter in the life of the man who had read his own obituary after the Paris-Madrid crash came with the return of his camera by the Germans. The concluding frame showed

Porter about to take off on his final fatal flight.

Fellow-Belfast man Harry Ferguson who became the first person in the British Isles to fly an aircraft of his own construction was another driver to try his hand abroad. But after flying, literally, in the practice for the 1912 French Grand Prix during which he twice somersaulted his Vauxhall, the inventor wisely settled for the comparative safety of Irish hillclimbs. Ferguson's French effort however, was typical of the enthusiasm and competitiveness of the Irish drivers who achieved overseas success which was out of proportion to their numbers. The post-war years were to see further such outstanding achievements notably by the Guinness brothers and Henry Segrave. Though born in Baltimore USA to an Irish father, Segrave had lived in Ireland since the age of two, first in Wicklow, then in Portumna. He was to become one of the world's most famous record-breakers on land and water and the first person to travel at 200mph. ■



Record breaker, Algy Guinness.



Leslie Porter's Paris-Madrid driving permit.



8. STAGE SET FOR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS (1920-1928)

Ferguson brings TT to Ireland

The period from 1920 onwards saw a big reduction in the size and weight of competition cars. Gone were the huge 15-litre monsters of the early 1900's to be replaced in the case of the new 1920 Grand Prix formula by engines with a maximum of three litres, which the 1922 regulations further reduced to two litres. Despite the reduction in engine size, these cars delivered much increased power and provided much less wind resistance than the flying bedsteads negotiated by the heroic drivers of pre-war years. The use of superchargers (by which a mechanical system was used to force the petrol-air mixture into the cylinders) also dramatically increased the power output — though frequently with terminal results for the less robust engine units.

In the United States, Tommy Milton had bettered the world land speed record in 1920 when he recorded 156mph in his Duesenberg at Daytona Beach, Florida, while nearer home Henry Segrave won the first Brooklands 200-mile race from Bill Guinness. Irish-American Jimmy Murphy became the first driver from the States to win a major European event when he dominated the French Grand Prix at Le Mans while continental and British race fans were seeing the first of such great drivers who would thrill Irish fans at Ards and Phoenix Park as Rudolf Caracciola, Sammy Davis, Kaye Don, and the Italian trio Giuseppe Campari, Achille Varzi and the great Tazio Nuvolari, who like many of his famous predecessors had also graduated to four wheels via cycle racing and motorcycle competition.

Post-war Irish motorsport got off to a modest start with a May 1920 paper chase which was organized by the ever-reliable RNIYC at Cultra. The event attracted 40 drivers and resulted in another success for veteran former racing cyclist, Willie Hume. The Irish Automobile Club made tentative plans for a Reliability Tour but this never got off the ground owing to insufficient support from the manufacturers who were still rebuilding after the war. In August 1920, Harry Ferguson dusted down his racing Vauxhall to give a 90mph demonstration at the Magilligan Strand motor cycle trials. Although the civil strife which lasted until the end of 1921 made any sort of sporting



Harry Ferguson, ceaseless campaigner for an Irish International race.

event impossible, the energetic Ferguson was now working overtime to establish a major Irish motor race.

The Belfast man also leaned heavily on the Motor Traders' Association which eventually in 1922 declared itself in favour of holding an Irish hillclimb and race. Although the sound of guns had yet to finally disappear from the troubled countryside, Ferguson was a rare practical visionary who was not prepared to dwell on the recent troubles but to push forwards towards a united vibrant Ireland.

He said at the time “The whole idea behind our programme of motor events is not sportingly only. It is something more, which should be of greater interest to Ireland just now — industrial development. I do not think we shall get peace and prosperity in Ireland by having peace with England only. Peace and cooperation between north and south will have to come, and there is only one way that will happen and that is through industrial cooperation. It is on this principle that we are organising our sporting events, and they must be organised to bring north and south together as much as possible. Nothing is more conducive to friendship than sport, and when behind sport there is cooperation for industrial development in a country that needs it so badly as we do now, there is a chance to do some good.”

The far-seeing Ulsterman practised what he preached and, though they had been on opposite sides of the political fence, he lost little time in contacting Ernest Blythe, Minister for Commerce in the newly formed Dublin Free State government. Blythe responded promptly and encouragingly to Ferguson’s initiative, writing “I have no hesitation in expressing approval of the scheme which you indicate. If you can promote a series of local races leading up to international car and motor cycle races in 1923, you will do exceedingly good work. I have no doubt that the Free State will provide legislation taking the powers necessary to enable them to let you have the roads for an international race.”

Motor News and Autocar also wrote enthusiastically of the prospects of an Irish race and plans went ahead for a July 1922 Light Car race on a circuit at Clady, near Belfast. Sadly, however local political trouble caused the event to be cancelled, but this setback was to some extent offset by the willingness with which the new Northern Ireland parliament passed the Road Races Act, which gave authorities power to close the roads for speed events. Later in the year, the first Ulster Grand Prix motor cycle race took place on the Clady circuit, an event that was to become one of the classics of the World Motor Cycle Championship calendar.

Royal Irish Automobile Club members were meantime waxing eloquent about a circuit around the Curragh, which they considered to be ideal for a projected 1923 Light Car race. But the civil war in the south made such an event impossible and the only 1922-23 motoring event was a 24-hours Reliability Trial. Organised by the Dublin and District Motor Cycle Club, this was won by GN driver Captain Cooper. As the civil

war eventually dragged to a close, the Free State government made plans for the ambitious Tailteann Games sports festival, which the organising minister said should include a race for cars. Early in 1924, Bill Guinness and Henry Segrave inspected a proposed circuit around Dublin’s Phoenix Park which they both described as being ideal for racing. They suggested that the Phoenix Monument be removed from its central road setting and that substantial cash prizes should be offered to attract British and continental teams. But a legislative backlog prevented the Dublin government from discussing a Bill to close the Park roads and in 1924 only four motoring events took place in Ireland.

The first was a Reliability Trial which was organised by the newly-formed Cork and District Motor Club and won by Frank Daly in an Essex. The Leinster Motor Cycle and Light Car Club then held an Easter run to Tramore and back which was won by R.D. Gibson.

In June the Dublin and District Motor Cycle Club staged a reliability trial to Donegal which included a hillclimb at Glengesh which was won by Singer exponent Robert Cox. The following month, 38 western drivers took part in a Galway trial which turned out to be a benefit for Headfort man Harry Palmer. The trial was followed by a new speed event at Kerry’s Inch Strand which included a class for hackney cars! This was won by Dodge driver R. Lavin, while F. Carroll took the race for private Ford cars which was held over a similar 10-mile distance.

It was in the north of Ireland that most progress was being made towards staging a major speed event. A May 1924 meeting of Belfast motorists and traders agreed to sponsor an “Ulster Grand Prix” race and a hillclimb. The hillclimb which was held at Red Brae, Carrickfergus, in July attracted 130 entries. Despite a thunderstorm, thousands of spectators turned out to give Harry Ferguson a great reception as the Austin driver averaged 59.2mph up the easy gradient to take the sportscar class. English visitor C.G. Cathie did well to finish second, while Belfast motor dealer Willie Noble took the private class in his Star.

The success of this event whetted appetites for the October “Grand Prix” which was to take place over the famous Clady motorcycle course. The race was for three classes of cars, ordinary touring cars up to 1200 and 1700cc and standard sports and touring models up to 2200cc. Drivers and mechanics had to be normally resident in Ireland. Twenty four entries were received and all looked well for the country’s first major post-war speed event, until Belfast driver Stanley Pyper was

killed when he overturned his Alvis during practice at Aldergrove Corner. The race committee decided to postpone the event out of respect to the unfortunate Pyper, who achieved the unhappy distinction of becoming the first person to be killed in an Irish motoring competition.

Harry Ferguson and many of the Belfast enthusiasts were now becoming a little restive with the Dublin-based Royal Irish Automobile Club which Ferguson described as "doing good work but rather neglecting the sporting side." A meeting was held in Belfast to discuss the best means of organising closer cooperation between Dublin, Belfast and the RAC in London. This meeting led to the formation the following year of the Ulster Automobile Club and paved the way for the staging of the great TT races.

The 1925 season opened with a St. Patrick's Day reliability trial organised by the Dublin and District Motor Cycle Club which was won by R.D. Cox. The Ariel driver also took the handicap section of the April Cornelscourt hillclimb near Dublin, in which J.J. Reddy set fastest time in his Armstrong-Siddeley. The RIAC now had an international date reserved for a motor race in August but pressure of work in the Dail made any discussion of a road-closing Bill impossible and the club had to relinquish the date. Meantime, Cornelscourt winner J.J. Reddy went on to take first prize in the May hillclimb at the De Selby Quarries near Tallaght, Dublin. The best-supported event was the UAC-organized Craigtantlet hillclimb which attracted 35 cars. Lancia driver E. Graham beat David Yule to win the unlimited saloon section, while Victor Ferguson drove his little Austin to success in the small sportscar class. The unlimited sportscar event was won by Star driver R.V. Sutton, while returning English visitor C.G. Cathie (Star) just beat H. Rodis for fastest time of the day.

In June, the DDMC held an all-night trial to Donegal and back in which Arthur Huet and H. J. Hosie won the major awards from an entry of 26 drivers. This was followed by a new event organised by the Drogheda and District Motorcycle and Light Car Club at Ballyboghil. Described as a hillclimb this was more in the nature of a speed trial as the average gradient was only one in 35! Salmson driver A.M. Ellis set fastest time of 70.4 seconds on the one-mile course to beat Dublin trader Jack McEntaggart.

Portmarnock was back in the news the following month when the RIAC agreed to a request from the Leinster Motor Cycle and Light Car Club to describe the car section of its August speed trials as the Light Car Championship of Ireland.

Insufficient notice of this rather grand status meant that only five cars competed, with P.J. Tracy taking the title in his Alvis from Citroen driver H.P. McEntaggart after a race over 25 miles.

Tracy did his title justice by winning another new event, the Dean's Grange Speed Trials, which were held with a 400-yards start over a half-mile stretch of the Dean's Grange-Cabinteely road. Fastest time of 29.8s was made by Alvis driver J. Lacey who was second on handicap. J.J. Reddy was third, while 1911 Boulogne Hillclimb winner Harry Robinson made a welcome competition return to finish sixth. September also saw another new event, the speed trials which were organised by the Cork club at Killeagh aerodrome. Chrysler driver J.A. Cross set fastest time while class winner C. O'Sullivan went on to beat Cross in the subsequent Cork reliability trial. The best-supported competition of the year was the Castlewellan hillclimb which attracted 45 starters. Harry Ferguson's brother, Victor, won the small sportscar section while J. Robb took the unlimited touring class and C.G. Cathie set fastest time of 71 seconds to win the big sportscar event. The final event of 1925 was another Ballyboghil "hillclimb" which was won on handicap by local man F. McKeever from previous winner A. M. Ellis.

Although not on the RIAC calendar, 1925 also saw an impromptu street race between two young ladies in the midlands town of Edenderry which gained newspaper headlines. Unimpressed by the ladies' dash and daring, the local magistrate endorsed the licences of both the intrepid Misses Manners and O'Rourke. This action provoked a spirited appeal from a well known sports scribe who asked not only for a repeal of the endorsements but also a re-run of the race! He was even inspired to put his appeal into verse.

'Who will set bounds to an Irish race
Especially in the matter of pace?
And who will heed a speedometer's dial
Especially at a Motor Trial?
Remit the endorsement, noble Brehon,
And let them run the race again.
Sandbag the bank and let the court
Judge between Manners and O'Rourke.
Then motorists will stand on high stools
And watch them passing at O'Tooles's;
And photo-men from near and far,
Will snap up quick the winning car;
And young and old will shout 'Abu',
District Justice O'Donaghue!"

The opening event of 1926 which also saw the birth of the Society of Irish Motor Traders, was the 143-mile St. Patrick's Day Trial which included two ascents of Wicklow's Sally Gap. Jack McEntaggart in a Citroen beat 15 other starters to take the premier Ariel Cup prize.

The first speed event was the two-day competition held by the Ulster Automobile Sports Club to round off their May motorcycle meeting at Magilligan Strand. Rhode driver T. McMillan won both the 25-mile handicap events for touring and sports cars while J.M. Carson in an Alvis returned fastest time of 27 minutes 9 seconds. The subsequent Knock reliability trial was won by Morris Cowley driver W.J. White, while J. Buckley in a Clyno triumphed in the June Dublin to Donegal trial.

The inaugural July Phoenix Park motorcycle races attracted a crowd of over 50,000 which encouraged Motor News to remark that a car event was now overdue at the Dublin venue. Northern interest in motorsport was also on the increase and Magilligan Strand had its biggest ever attendance for the second UASC car races. Flying sand and spray caused a high mortality rate with only two cars surviving each of the 25-mile handicap races. C.J. Chittick won the touring car event, while another Star driver, J.E. Coulter took the sports car section. Chittick and J.M. Carsons were fastest in the one-mile standing start competitions for touring and sports cars.

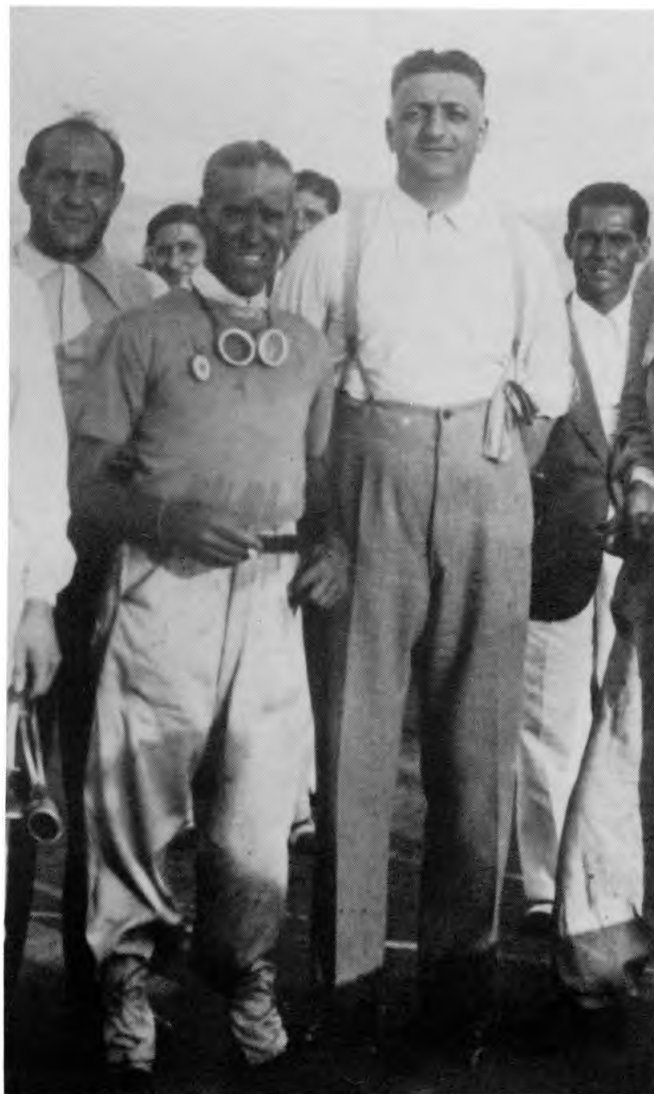
While Oliver St. John Gogarty was frightening his literary friends with slide-inducing speeds around the Phoenix Park, fellow-Dubliner J.J. Tamplins took his smaller Citroen to success in the two-day August reliability trial organised by the Dublin and District Motor Cycle Club. The UASC postponed the following month's planned Red Brae hillclimb in favour of another Magilligan Strand race as they feared the hill was becoming too dangerous for sportscars.

The night before the Magilligan event, however, heavy gales swept the area, leaving the strand badly rutted. Some officials were in favour of postponing the meeting but in deference to the competitors, they allowed the races to go ahead. Conditions were appalling and local driver C. Wilkinson had a lucky escape when he overturned after winning both the touring and sports car 10-mile handicap events. Worse was to follow as Brooklands visitor G.E. Norris was killed instantly when his Lea Francis overturned just after taking the flag to win the flying mile race. "This is suicide" the Englishman had remarked before he set out on his last race.

Despite the Magilligan fatality, the UASC held another meeting there in April 1927, following the annual Dublin St. Patrick's Day trial which was won by J. Beggan in a Citroen. Harry Ferguson was quickest in each of the Magilligan standing-start one-mile events, while C.A.R. Shillington also took Ferguson's Austin to success in the 25-mile handicap race for sportscars. M.J. McCoull in his Gwynne took the 25-mile touring car event, while George Strachan won the 10-mile thresh in a similar car. C.A.R. Shillington went on to share the premier award in the June all-night Knock trial with W.J. White, while Robert Cox won the following month's Dublin-Galway trial.

July also saw a new event, the End to End Trial, in which W.J. White and Jack McEntaggart won the major awards. The revived July Castlewellan hillclimb attracted an entry of 36 cars. Harry Ferguson won his class but the fastest

Enzo Ferrari (second from right) who was to feature in TT races with double-winnerv Tazio Nuvolariv (with goggles). ▼



driver overall was W.H. Connolly whose time of 70 seconds beat the previous record. The final event of 1927 took place at Magilligan Strand, where the two feature 10-mile October races were won by local man George Strachan, who was soon to become the only Irish driver in the first long-awaited Tourist Trophy race.

While the civil war and the backlog of work had delayed progress in the south, the energetic Ulster Automobile Club had campaigned ceaselessly for an Ulster road race. Belfast Newsletter correspondent Wallace McLeod also espoused the cause and his vigorous campaign further increased public interest and support. The government of Northern Ireland also weighed in with offers of all possible assistance. McLeod and Harry Ferguson travelled to Brooklands where such drivers as Malcolm Campbell, Archie Frazer Nash and Bill Guinness offered their whole-hearted support.

Though naturally disappointed at the lack of momentum in the south, the Dublin Motor News wasn't going to be left out of the act. It enthusiastically endorsed the Ulster efforts, saying that only a real road race would provide the most searching and most natural test of both man and machine; "Since the early days of motoring, a road course cannot be found in England. As we have pointed out more than once, the next best thing for the British sports enthusiasts is to hold a road race in Ireland. It is hopeless to try and get actual racing conditions on Brooklands track and the well meaning efforts to do so have been laughed at by continental motorists who know what real road racing is like."

Following the 1922 Treaty, motorsport in Northern Ireland was held under the jurisdiction of the RAC, while the RIAC looked after events in the Free State. At the end of 1927, it was decided at a meeting of the Ulster Automobile Club to formally request the RAC to hold a major race in Ulster. The London governing body quickly agreed to put the matter before its competitions committee. The following January, a delegation from the RAC which included racing-driver journalist Sammy Davis arrived in Northern Ireland to examine two suggested courses. One was in the Portadown Lurgan area, the other ran through Dundonald, Comber and Newtownards. Not only the UAC but also the urban and district councils of each area gave the deputation an enthusiastic welcome.

Apart from the enthusiasm of the local club, the government and councils, the RAC must have been impressed with the success of the Ulster Grand Prix motorcycle races which had been



Early TT entrant "Scrap" Thistlethwaite.

staged in Northern Ireland since 1922. The result was that a month later, the RAC gave the go-ahead for a car race on the Dundonald-Newtownards circuit. The club suggested August 18, 1928 as the date for a 410-mile event comprising 30 laps of the 13.6 mile Ards course. The race was to be a revival of the Tourist Trophy series originally held in the Isle of Man and it was open to standard cars normally constructed and catalogued and offered for a sale on February 29 of that year. Each car had to run complete with electric starter, mudguards, wings, windscreen and hood — the robustness of which had to be proved by its erection and use for the first two laps of the event!

Belfast now had its own automobile journal, Irish Motoring, which had been launched the preceding year. Irish Motoring celebrated the arrival of the TT with an editorial which summed up the sound economic thinking which as much as local sporting inclinations lay behind the venture. It wrote 'Exactly 40 years ago, the Dunlop tyre was invented in Belfast, but through lack of courage and enterprise no local advantage was taken of that epoch-making event and an industry which has become world-wide was lost to the city. That was a colossal blunder which we hope will never be repeated. It is with this fact before us that we draw attention to the potential advantage to the Province accruing from the forthcoming Car Race.

"Some people have the idea that racing serves no useful purpose, and that the Ulster Car Race is being run for the amusement of a few motoring

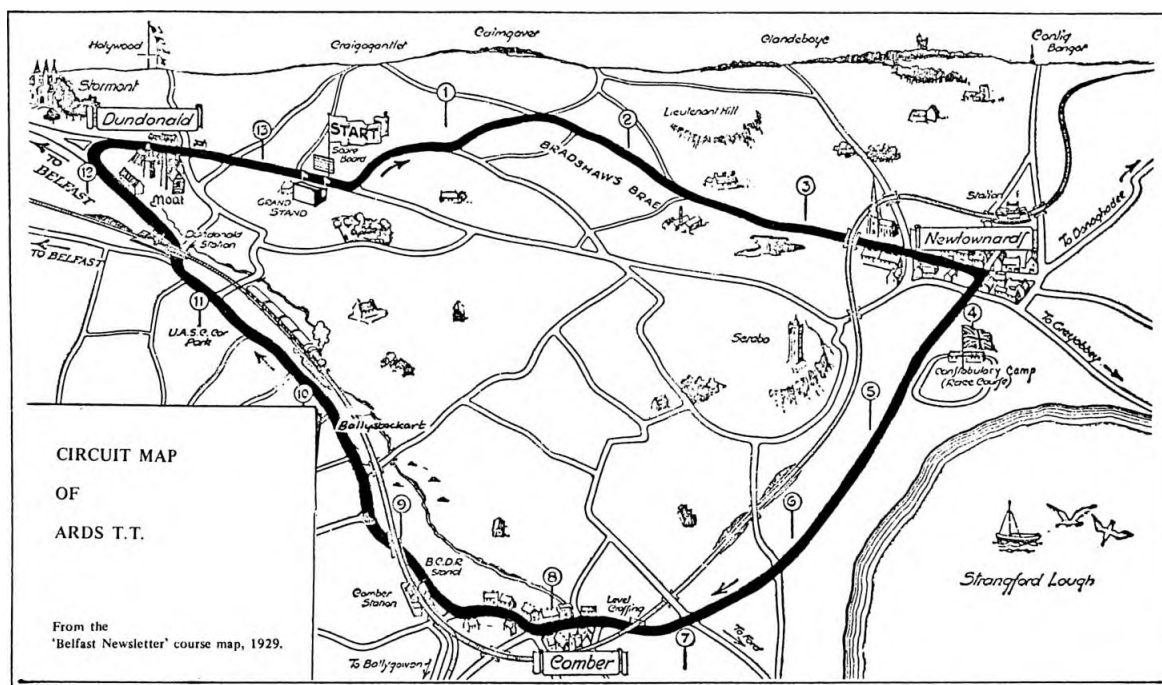
enthusiasts. They never made a greater mistake, as the basic idea behind the whole movement is the establishment of new industries in Northern Ireland. From an engineering standpoint, Ulster is one of the most highly skilled communities to be found anywhere, and whilst in shipbuilding and other allied trades its prestige stands high, it is rather unfortunate that from a motoring standpoint we are barren of manufacturers. There is only one way to get this trade and that is to focus the minds of the captains of industry on Ulster, and this was the idea which prompted the Local Committee to organise the race. So far as manufacturing facilities are concerned, Belfast which is the natural gateway to Northern Ireland, offers a very favourable field. Centrally situated on the Irish Sea, it is within easy access of England, Wales and Scotland. In addition to ventilating the resources of the province from a manufacturing standpoint, the Car Race will be the means of bringing thousands of visitors to the Province who would otherwise have gone elsewhere," it concluded.

Harry Ferguson also wrote of his hopes of attracting overseas car manufacturers. Just as the development of the US motor industry had forced manufacturers there to decentralise when they reached maximum output, it was possible that some UK or European constructors would see the advantages of establishing an assembly or manufacturing industry in Ulster. The Belfast man

said that as a result of local enthusiasm and government support "the thoughts of motor manufacturers in Great Briain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium and the USA will for some time to come be centred on Northern Ireland in preparation for the great event on August 18."

As the historic 1928 race weekend approached, preparations went ahead at breakneck pace with resurfacing and other improvements around the 13.6 mile circuit. The sound of hammering and sawing filled the local countryside as hedges were trimmed and grandstands erected. The stout stone walls and hilly terrain provided safe and exciting viewing but in addition stands were erected at strategic vantage points such as Dundonald, Quarry Corner and Crees Cross at the top of the exciting descent to Bradshaw's Brae. The stand admission prices were 25 shillings for numbered and reserved seats and 15 shillings for unnumbered ones. Veteran Gordon Bennett driver Charles Jarrott had an early run around the circuit and he predicted that the race winner would average 65mph, while a very impressed Kaye Don said "it is certainly a driver's circuit and one in which the experts will have a big advantage."

Shaped like a kite, the Ards circuit embraced every conceivable type of bend, gradient and hazard, including railway bridges, a level crossing, a hairpin at the end of a flat-out straight, shops which jutted out in such places as Comber



and an equally vulnerable town hall in Newtownards. The circuit which was to be covered in a clockwise direction commenced just before the lefthand Quarry Corner. From here the cars would race uphill through a series of sweeping bends to Crees Cross at the top of Bradshaw's Brae, which descended in a series of terrifying swoops and then through a railway bridge to Newtownards. From the town's wide Regent Street the cars had to turn sharp right and pick their way through a narrow gap before the formidable town hall which led into Conway Street.

Exiting the town through the equally tight South Street, competitors would then accelerate to maximum speed on the fastest flattest section which followed to Comber. This part wasn't entirely hazard-free, as it included a deceptive bend at Moate and a level crossing with room for only one car where road and railway met at an angle of 45 degrees! After negotiating Comber's Square, drivers would funnel through another narrow gap which was flanked by Niblock's chemist shop and, opposite, Mawhinney's butcher shop, which was well sandbagged for good reason. From Comber, the circuit led through Carstand Bridge to a twisting undulating five-mile section past the tricky Ballystockart Bridge before the 20mph hairpin at Dundonald, the nearest point to Belfast. A short straight and an uphill sweep led back to the start and finish area.

Quarry Corner was to prove a popular Ards TT vantage point



With so many hazards, the circuit was plainly going to be a spectator's as much as a driver's course with the prospect of thrills and spills galore. The weekend of the race was the busiest in Belfast for years, with large crowds congregating for practice and pre-race preparations, and hordes of schoolboys besieging the various team garages. Local man George Strachan was an early casualty when he was forced to go hedge-hopping to avoid a horse and cart during some unofficial practice. However in the best traditions he got his Gwynne car back together again in time for the big event.

The race entries were a mixture of works, semi-works and private teams. Although the official Bentley team withdrew as they felt that the handicap arrangements gave them little chance against the smaller cars, the marque was ably represented by the flamboyant Tim Birkin. The equally dashing 'ladies' man' Scrap Thistlethwaite entered the largest car of the race, the impressive 6.7 litre white Mercedes. Other notable entrants were Brooklands record holder Kaye Don and George Eyston in Lea-Francis cars, 1927 Le Mans winner Sammy Davis in a Riley, and world land speed record-breaker Malcolm Campbell in a new Bugatti. The Le Mans-type massed start promised to be one of the highlights of the race. There was the prospect of even further confusion as competitors would have to erect their cars' hoods before they moved off. Little wonder the area around Quarry Corner and the startline was almost obliterated by crowds from an early hour on race morning! ■



9. TOURIST TROPHY RACES (1928-1931)

Winning debuts for Don and Nuvolari



They're off! "It all seemed one big blur. . . ."

The first Ards TT race of 1928 was the most exciting motorsport happening in Great Britain or Ireland since the 1903 Gordon Bennett race. Estimates of the attendance ranged from over a quarter to almost half a million persons, who basked in the pre-noon sunshine while loudspeakers played holiday music and advertising aeroplanes flew overhead. Spectators were reminded of the handicapping system which was by means of credit laps and ballast, the 1100cc cars for example starting with three laps to their credit. A large notice board displayed the leaders' names and the laps covered, and the first car to complete 30 laps was the winner. Bonnets were painted in different colours to denote the cars' class.

Bill Guinness officially closed the roads for the 11 o'clock start which as Riley driver Sammy Davis recalled was nothing short of sheer pandemonium! As the 44 drivers and the 44 mechanics sprinted across the road "the air

seemed full of figures rushing about, of curses, all more or less venomous, of hoods being snapped up, of crews clambering into cars, and of the roar of started engines — it all seemed one big blur and muddle. I just had one vision of teammate Staniland going off all-out with Chick his mechanic waving a leg in the air, still only half in the car, and then we were in a huge pack of cars, clouds of stinging dust, dodging, braking and accelerating as we fought for position. Cars were all over the road; some people were getting by on the grass, some seemed to be on the pavement, and some hemmed in were cursing the drivers ahead good and proper."

The speed of the bigger cars told as the drivers raced through the zig-zag of Bradshaw's Brae and headed down the flat-out swoop into Newtownards. And it was the scarved Bentley Boy Tim Birkin who bellowed past the grandstand at 95mph to lead on the road at the end of the first lap. Right at the tail of the jostling pack was the

hapless Thistlethwaite who had been delayed with plug problems. Bugatti driver Malcolm Campbell was in even bigger trouble, as his car caught fire when he came in to lower the hood. Leaking petrol ignited on the hot exhaust and within minutes the car was blazing furiously, sending thick clouds of smoke across the track. Poor Campbell was practically inconsolable as the car burnt down to the chassis.

There was further excitement as Riley driver Edgar Maclure broke his car's rear axle against the bank and a Salmson came to grief at Comber. Then Dick Watney's badly-geared Stutz got the wobbles at Ballystockart to finish with its front wheels up the bank and its rear end half-blocking the road.

The two race leaders also drove into trouble. Road leader Tim Birkin lost valuable time with a broken oil pipe, while Dick Barnes dissipated the advantage of his maximum credit laps when he crashed his little Austin. Londoner Vernon Balls then took over only to overturn his Amilcar while flat out at Newtownards. On recovering in the nearby hospital, he lived up to his name by heading for the nearest exit in an attempt to resume racing. One of the most exciting battles was taking place in the 750-1100cc class, in which Sammy Davis was shadowing the new race leader, Riley teammate Clive Gallop. The next class also featured a close dice between the Alvis trio of H.W. Purdy, C.M. Harvey and Leon Cushman. Sammy Davis had to take to the

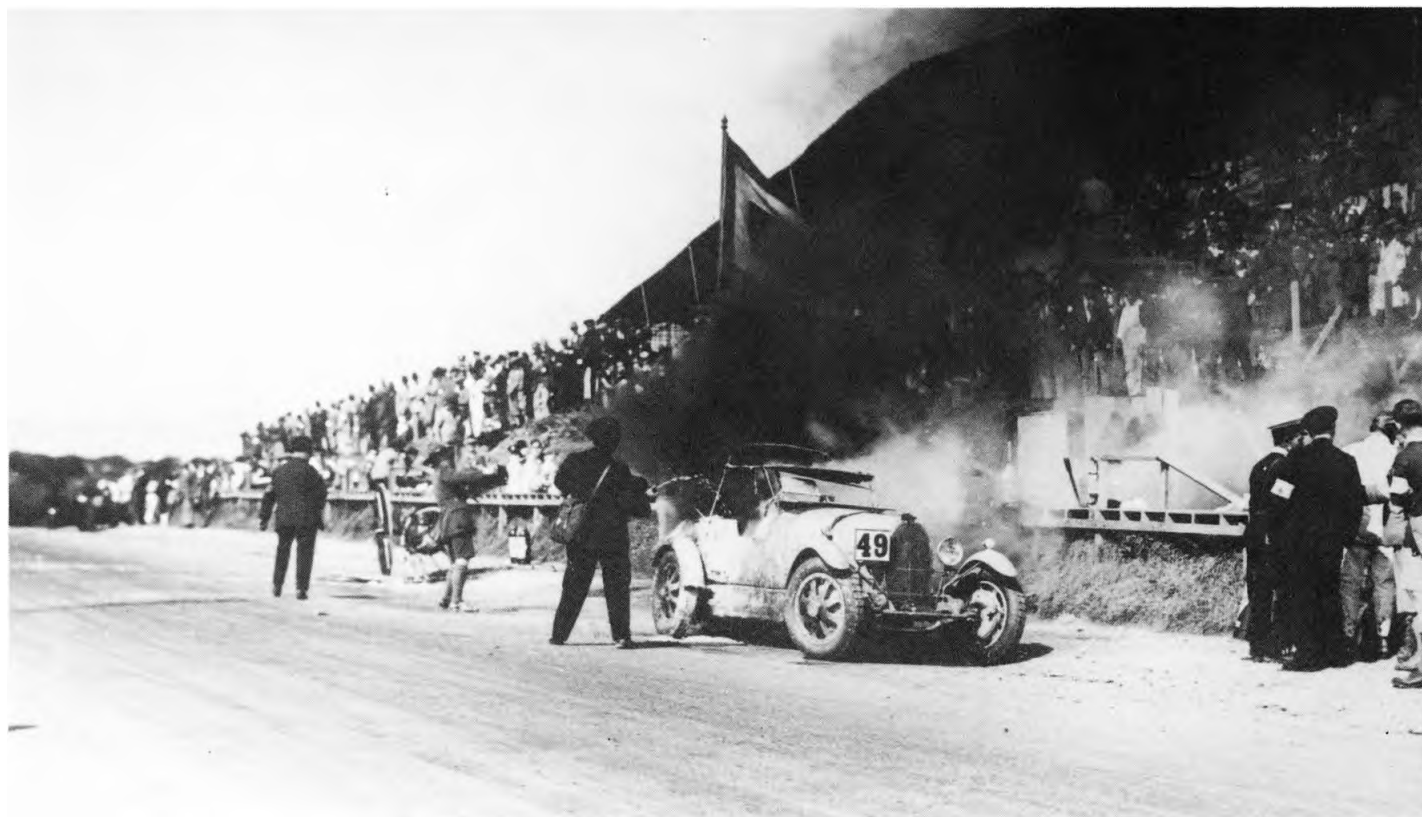
escape road at Comber after an altercation with another driver, but he caught up quickly with Gallop only to see his teammate take to the air after hitting a kerb at Ballystockart.

Gallop's sudden retirement gave the race lead to Davis but it was to be on a short lease. As flurries of rain hit the circuit several cars spun and, just after Comber, Sammy himself lost it when he over-corrected while trying to negotiate two gyrating cars. With deranged steering, the Riley driver had to watch as the Alvis pair Purdy and Harvey competed for the lead. But Harvey in turn went out at Ballystockart, while Purdy blew a piston and at two third's distance it was the



Quick pit stop for Kaye Don. ▲

Early drama as Malcolm Campbell's Bugatti catches fire.
(The Lloyd's underwriter's car was uninsured!)



◀
Dublin-born Kaye
Don wins inaugural
1928 TT.



First Monaco
Grand Prix winner,
Grover Williams,
55 (later to die
with the French
Resistance), follows
three other
competitors in
1929 TT.

underrated Kaye Don who came to the fore. The driver of the Lea-Francis had driven a steady race but even he had had his moments and at Mill Hill he narrowly missed Urquhart Dykes who had just overturned his Alvis.

Leon Cushman in the remaining Alvis had, however, no intention of letting Don disappear into the distance and with five laps to go the gap was down to 40 seconds. Two laps later he had reduced Don's margin to 35 seconds and on the

second last lap there was only half a minute between the two men. But the unruffled Don continued to lap coolly and consistently and as Cushman struggled with a rapidly decreasing petrol and oil supply, the Lea-Francis driver stroked home to a finely-judged 13-second success. His time was 5 hours 58 minutes 13 seconds and he had averaged 64.06mph. It was a popular win for the quiet Londoner and a highly appropriate one too, as though most people did





German strong-man Otto Merz, (former chauffeur to the assassinated Archduke Ferdinand of Austria) who entered for the 1929 TT.

not know it, Don was in fact Dublin-born!

Cushman's second place was also a well-judged effort, as he ran out of petrol after crossing the line. The Austro-Daimler pair H. Mason and Cyril Paul were third and fourth and despite his stop, Tim Birkin did well to finish fifth and win his class. Lea-Francis driver George Eyston finished sixth and one of Birkin's socialite friends, Lord Curzon, also drove a good race, holding second place for a time before being forced to retire his Bugatti with a petrol leak. The disappointed Lord didn't take his misfortune lying down and he subsequently sued H.H. Evans of Covent Garden who had supplied the petrol tank. TT scrutineer H.P. McConnell gave evidence that the inner tank had leaked where rivets had been used and Curzon was awarded £25 damages. It mightn't have been much compensation, but it was more than Malcolm Campbell had to show, as his Bugatti was uninsured — an ironic and expensive oversight for a man who was a Lloyds Underwriter!

The first 1928 TT had been an unqualified success and the following year's event attracted works entries from many of the major teams including Alfa-Romeo, Alvis, Bugatti, Lagonda, Mercedes and Riley. Most of the 1928 drivers

returned while newcomers included the 28-year old German, Rudolf Caracciola, winner of the 1928 German Grand Prix; the excitable Italian Giuseppe Campari; the mysterious first-ever Monaco Grand Prix winner, Grover Williams (later to die with his racing colleague Benoist in the French Resistance); and future world land speed holder, John Cobb. Another intriguing entrant was the German Otto Merz, who had been chauffeur to the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and was with him when he was assassinated at Sarajevo in 1914. Merz was so strong that he could drive nails through wood with his bare hands.

Despite the leaden skies, an estimated half a million spectators gathered around the 13-mile circuit, obliterating the country slopes and urban pavements alike. Handicapping was again by credit laps and ballast, but cars were allowed to race without the hoods up — which they first had to stow away after the usual Le Mans-type start. The hoods of the smaller cars were easier to slide than those of the bigger machines so the start was even more chaotic than the previous year's.

Lagonda driver T.E. Rose-Richards was first away closely followed by Jack Bezzant in the sole Aston Martin. The latter's surprisingly swift progress apparently went to his head and he only managed a further 300 yards before he smote the bank at Quarry corner. Le Mans driver Glen Kidston took his Bentley into the road lead at Newtownards before a turn on the supercharger of his white Mercedes set Caracciola well ahead on the approach to Comber. The flying German led by a quarter of a mile at the end of the first lap from Kidston and the Bentley pair Rubin and Birkin (whose mechanic was none other than the great W.O. Bentley himself). It then started to rain and Rubin's race was rudely terminated when he spun and overturned at Mill Hill. The rain might have been expected to favour the smaller cars, but incredibly it was Caracciola who continued to go quicker while everyone else slowed up. The apparently web-footed Mercedes driver even found time for a cool 14-second stop to fit a small glass windscreen — before setting up a lap record of 77.81mph which was to last for the next two years!

Glen Kidston was also in a determined mood and lap after lap he reduced his times by some razor-edged driving. But after an hour and a half, he lost it at Bradshaw's Brae at 90mph to wreck the Bentley against the unforgiving bank. Many other drivers were also in trouble, Kaye Don retiring with a blown piston and Williams going out with oil trouble, while red-headed Dan



Higgin, Arrol-Astral driver E.R. Hall, and Lea-Francis exponent W.H. Green also exited violently after separate attempts to demolish Newtownards Town Hall. Dublin motorcycle ace Stanley Woods damaged the front axle of his Lea-Francis in another crash while Major Hayes's Bentley caused hearts to flutter when it suddenly shed a wheel. An even more embarrassing loss was suffered by John Cobb's mechanic, whose dentures took off after their car clobbered the bank outside Comber!

The racing continued ahead of all these shenanigans, with the consistent Caracciola maintaining his deft progress through the wet and mud. Despite giving away two and a half litres to the German, Tim Birkin was still running well in second place on the road. The burly Alfa Romeo driver Campari was also making great strides but the race leader until the final stages was the gallant Archie Frazer Nash in one of the little Austins. Frazer Nash's progress was a great personal triumph for the popular Englishman, as he had recently suffered a near-fatal illness, during which his car company had been sold against his wishes. Riley driver Sammy Davis was once again in the wars, lying second in his class and involved in a dangerous dice with Marinoni and the Phoenix Park winner, Ivanowski.

Campari (right foreground) who fought through to second place in 1929 TT.

Sammy recalled afterwards — "We had a prolonged struggle, only Marinoni in front being able to see clearly. Several times I thought we should all pile up, and to judge from Ivanowski's expression as he scabbled at his mud-covered visor, he thought the same. At Ballystockart, Marinoni missed a crash by inches, and a mile further on Ivanowski charged a bank. After that, all three of us frankly agreed to separate!"

Rudolf Caracciola — virtuoso performance by 1929 victor.



Conditions on the circuit continued to be treacherous, as the rain alternated with dry periods, making a continual transition from dry to wet surfaces. After spinning his OM at Bradshaw's Brae, Frank Clark again hit the bank at Ballystockart. As a breakdown gang attempted to clear the road they were hit by Triumph driver R.W. Grindley and Clark and Belfast man John Kelly were both killed. Soon after this tragedy, Otto Merz crashed his Mercedes at Dundonald hairpin and though he got going again he was disqualified because he had torn off a damaged mudguard and was thus not winning in touring trim as per regulations.

But all this excitement was lost on the single-minded Caracciola, who took away Campari's second last credit lap as he moved to unlap himself from the leading Austins. On the twenty-seventh lap, he passed the gallant Frazer Nash and now in second place he had only to overtake Campari to win. The Italian was going well but he was no match for the German skater who passed him on the second last lap to splash home to a memorable success.

Caracciola's virtuoso performance moved even his Bentley rival Birkin, who penned a generous tribute to the German's skill. "I cannot give enough praise to the inspired driving of the winner," he wrote. "He averaged 72.82mph and I, who came in eleventh and second of those who started from scratch, was more than pleased with 69.01. Not for one instant did he falter; the rain was blinding and the roads never more slippery, but whenever he passed me at that terrific speed, I felt no envy, but only incredulity at his skill, his courage and the endurance of his car. He broke records with ease under a deluge of rain, on a road that was at times almost flooded, and never sacrificed the safety of others to his own ambition."

Caracciola's team colleagues had additional cause to be delighted with his success. Team manager Neubauer picked up a wad of money from a local bookmaker who had allowed Caracciola terminally generous odds, while the English Mercedes agent Gaedert also won enough to buy a little Fiat for his wife! Neubauer's joy was somewhat tempered when the Mercedes management forced him to write a letter of apology to Irish race officials for his intemperate language over the Merz incident.

If the 1929 race was a German benefit, the following year's TT was certainly a success story for the Italians. They were represented by a formidable team of the new 1750 Alfa Romeos driven by the great Tazio Nuvolari (another



Nuvolari (right) and Campari, first and second in 1930 TT.

former racing cyclist and motorcyclist who was regarded by many as the greatest driver of all time), the fiery Campari and the brilliant cheerless Achille Varzi, Nuvolari's arch rival. The Italians were typically impulsive Latins who could not be relied upon to refrain from dicing with each other to the bitter end. But any prospect of a suicidal internecine battle was forestalled by a telegram of exhortation from Mussolini himself who warned "I am sure that in a strange land, each of you will battle only for a victory for the Italian flag, forgetting all jealousy and personal feud."

As the Italians tried to come to terms with this unaccustomed discipline, there was high drama in the Mercedes camp when it was discovered that Rudi Caracciola's car was ineligible, as its supercharger was three millimetres longer than standard. Deeply disappointed at not being able to race, Carracciola was given a hero's reception by the crowd when he arrived to watch the event with his wife Charly. The German's absence robbed the race of much interest but this was quickly overlooked in the excitement of the tremendous practice pace of the 1750 Alfas which lapped faster than most of the bigger cars.

As usual there was great public interest in the race and first-time visiting journalist Rodney Walkerley later recalled that he had never seen such excitement. Each day he had to struggle to get in or out of the Grand Central Hotel and,



Tazio Nuvolari shadows teammate Campari, before going clear to win.

frequently incorrectly identified as “one of the Eye-talians,” he had to sign autographs in the name of Varzi or Nuvolari before he could make his escape! Although the rules which had kept Frau Caracciola out of the pits the previous year had now been relaxed, Walkerley found that the Royal Ulster Constabulary who policed the pits were ‘all seven feet tall, armed and obdurate.’ They turfed the Londoner out of the pits, despite the fact that he had a pass signed by the chief constable. “I couldn’t care if it’s signed by Jasus himself,” said one burly policeman, “Ye cannot pass, so get the hell out of it.” Irish hospitality indeed!

The 1930 TT saw changes both on the road and in the handicapping system. The pits had been enlarged and white lines had been painted across the track to denote “no-passing” areas at the narrow corners of Newtownards, Comber and Dundonald. A new handicapping system was employed, with cars being allotted time bonuses as well as credit laps. The start procedure was also sensibly changed so that the cars moved off in groups, depending on their time handicap.

First away of the 32 starters were the big Bentleys which had been entered by the Hon. Dorothy Paget, and hardly had the last of the smaller cars left the start than Tim Birkin blasted by, well clear of Kensington Moir, who was hotly pursued by Campari, Nuvolari and Varzi. The

Alfa trio knew that with a lap in hand, they had only had to keep the Bentleys in sight to win. Such was the pace of the Alfas that they each broke the class record on their standing-start first lap.

Speeds were also up in the other classes and while the little Austins led the smaller machines Kaye Don (1487 Alfa) headed his class, well clear of the Lea-Francis and the fast front-wheel drive Alvis cars. After two hours’ hard racing, though, the bigger works Alfa Romeos had eaten well into the Austins’ handicap lead, with the irrepressible Campari leading the chase ahead of arch-rivals Nuvolari and Varzi. But Campari was overtaking some of the slower cars in the clearly-marked no-passing zones and after complaints from drivers and marshals he was eventually called in for a reprimand. It took the excitable Italian some time to notice the official signal and when he did come in he merely slowed and didn’t stop. Tim Birkin saw him “shouting in his famous operatic voice at a great regiment of officials shouting back, waving blackboards and tumbling over each other to catch him up; then he rushed off, and as I came past at about 100, I nearly blew team manager Giovanni back into the pits.”

It now started to rain and once again the slippery Ulster roads sent several cars crashing into retirement. Sammy Davis nearly collected the butcher’s shop at Comber but Peacock in another Lea Francis was more accurate and a direct hit sent him into retirement with a broken axle. Then Austin driver Waite overturned at

Nuvolari’s great friend Borzacchini, second in 1931. He and Campari were killed shortly afterwards at Monza.

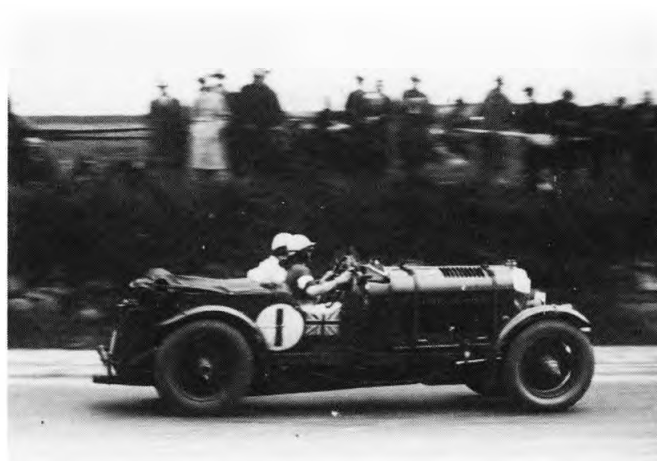


Ballystockart, while Kaye Don had a miraculous escape when his Alfa also inverted and he was pulled clear as it burst into flames. Tim Birkin was the only driver who was making any impression on the works Alfa Romeos but after a skid at Comber his brave efforts ended when he was momentarily distracted at Ballystockart and the only major crash of his racing career sent him into retirement against a stout stone wall.

The little Austin "Ulster" cars scurried along safely meantime and bravely maintained their lead until two laps from the end, when Gunnar Poppe was passed by Nuvolari, Campari, Varzi and Cyril Paul, who was going great guns in his Alvis. Ards debutant Nuvolari maintained his lead to the end of the rain-sodden event to head a memorable 70.82mph Alfa team success from Campari (who was originally supposed to be allowed to win) and Varzi. Alvis pilot Paul finished a creditable fourth ahead of Gunnar Poppe, while the first big car driver home after a gutsy performance was scratchman Malcolm Campbell who won his class and finished tenth overall in his 7¾ litre Mercedes.

With the bigger cars now handicapped out of contention, the 1931 race attracted a greater than ever number of smaller machinery, including MG who made their TT debut and supplied the largest entry of 13 cars. Among the newcomers were the promising 26 year old Ulster driver Hugh Hamilton from Omagh who was shortly to score the marque's first continental success and Stan Hailwood, father of the great Mike Hailwood who subsequently raced bikes and cars in Ireland. The withdrawal following a Le Mans accident of the Bugatti team of Chiron, Divo and Varzi meant that main interest would centre on the powerful Alfa Romeo challenge. With further exhortations from Il Duce, Nuvolari, Campari and Nuvolari's great friend Baconin Borzacchini represented the works in their supercharged 1750 cars, while Tim Birkin and Lord Howe spearheaded the British challenge in their privately-entered 1500 Alfas. The handicapping was further refined with subdivisions in some of the classes, while the 44 cars started in groups as they had the previous years.

Victor Gillow provided early drama when he misjudged Quarry Bend and overturned his Riley within yards of the start, but this was nothing to the excitement which followed once the Alfa group got under way. Having heard that the works drivers would go slowly for the opening laps to warm up their oil, the resourceful Tim Birkin had heated his engine oil before the start. Though he set off to the rear of the works team he immediately shot ahead of them with a



Bentley boy Tim Birkin at speed in 1931 TT.

standing start lap record of 77.3mph. This signalled the start of a great dice between the five Alfas, with drivers continually swapping places in the blazing sun.

Down Bradshaw's Bray on the second lap, Birkin and Howe led Campari, Nuvolari and Borzacchini, the whine of the superchargers adding extra drama to the exciting chase. By Newtownards, Campari had got by Howe, then Nuvolari's engine started sounding rough and he had to pit, leaving Borzacchini to take up the chase. Alfa's team manager was the famous Enzo Ferrari who quickly sent Nuvolari on his way again but the little Italian only did a few more miles before he retired with a broken piston. Ferrari then wanted to call in Borzacchini and give his car to Nuvolari but race officials said this was against the rules.

Meantime the battle continued between the leading Alfas, with Campari bettering Birkin's fastest 80.48mph lap with a speed of 80.74 and Borzacchini then pushing it up to 81.28mph. Earl Howe was driving his heart out but while attempting to pass Campari he vaulted the hedge and the startled spectators at Crees Cross to finish up in a potato field. Little daunted, the unflappable Peer calmly apologised to the plot owner then motored smartly back to the gate and into the race again, before being forced to retire soon afterwards with damaged brake mechanism. After two hours' racing, Tim Birkin was well clear of Campari but a two-minute pit stop to check his front axle meant that Campari with a 51-second stop caught up to briefly lead the Briton.

With Borzacchini also yapping at his heels, Birkin chased and repassed Campari to lead the combat-locked trio into Newtownards, all their cars going airborne at the levelcrossing. But carried away by the excitement, Birkin then

thought he would lead Campari up the garden path by braking early as they came into Comber. For all his Latin temperament, though, the wily Campari had his wits about him and it was the hapless Englishman who thumped the sandbags and vacated the race. Borzacchini then took the class lead until he in turn overshot Dundonald Hairpin and Campari went ahead again.

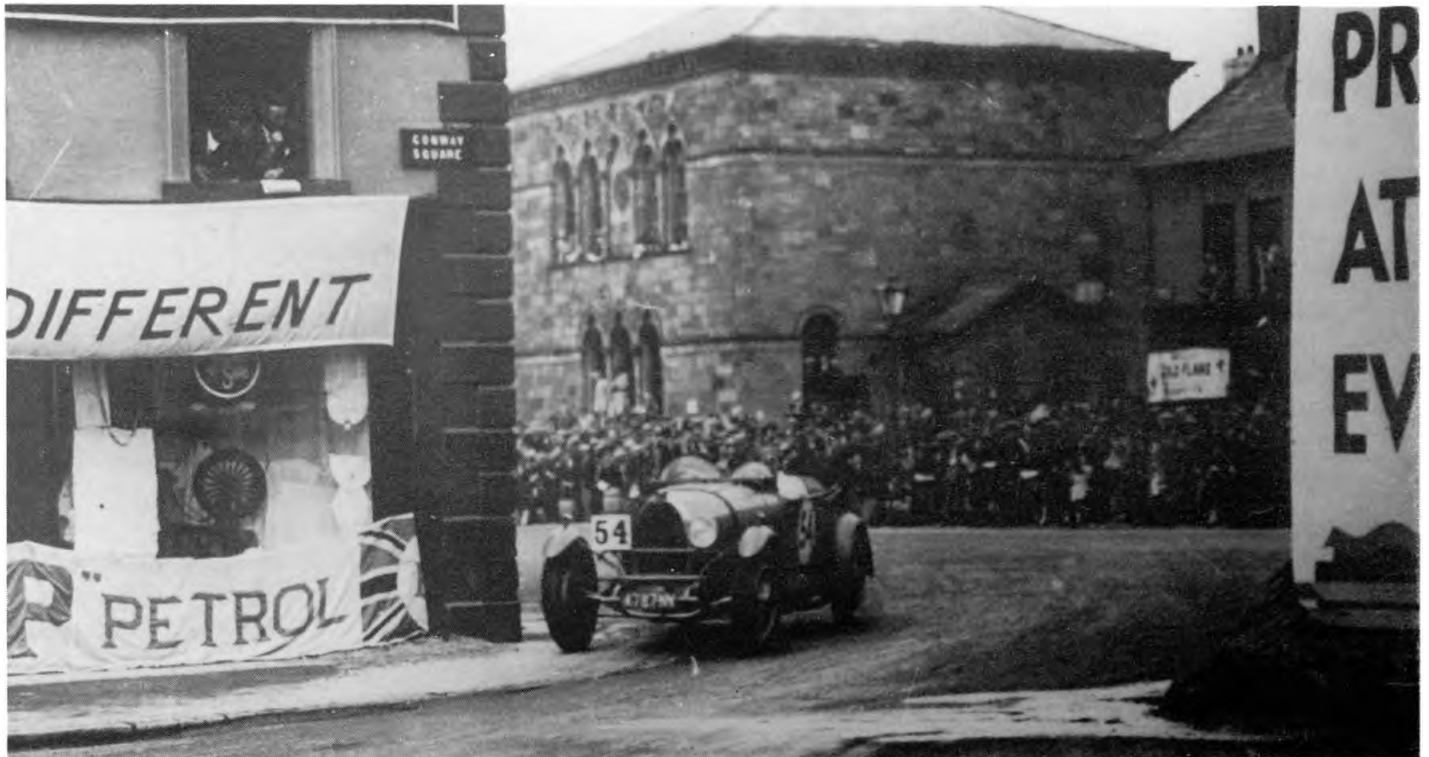
In spite of the speed of the Alfas, however, the race was still being led by the new MG Midgets of Crabtree, Hamilton and Norman Black. Campari was ahead on handicap but shadowed all the time by Borzacchini who was eventually signalled to start an all-out effort to catch the swift MGs. Then Hamilton's car broke a rocker arm forcing the rapid Ulsterman to retire while Crabtree smote the sandbags at Comber which forced him into the pits for quick mudguard repairs. Thus Black swept into the lead ahead of the hard chasing Borzacchini but as the little MG ran out of credit laps the race headed for what Tim Birkin described as one of the most exciting finishes he had ever seen.

"With two laps to go it was obvious that one of the MGs must win on handicap but the other was only 2 minutes and 59 seconds in front of the Alfa. In the Alfa pits pandemonium broke loose, blackboards were waved, screaming Italians crimson in the face leant over the pit counter, jumped on the track and shook their fists at the innocent little MG. On the last lap, Borzacchini

was a minute and a half behind. 'Avanti! Avanti!' yelled his supporters, and in the Alfa pits nothing was left standing, spare parts, petrol cans, blackboards were all overturned as the team waited for the cars to come down the straight for the last time. In the MG pits the mechanics were straining their eyes down the road and making determined calculations. The first MG won to applause, and then the two came up towards the stands together and almost on the post Borzacchini rushed past to be runner-up by five seconds."

Borzacchini broke the lap record at 81.25mph during his hectic chase and had he been signalled ahead earlier he would probably have beaten Black who won by a minute at 67.90mph. MG's first, third and seventh placings marked a resounding success for the team's TT debut. Among the race finishers was Billy Noble of Belfast who took third in his class to become the first Irish driver to win a TT award for his part in the Riley team success. Brian Lewis also did well in his unsupercharged Talbot to finish fourth just ahead of Chris Staniland and Campari, who had been slowed on the final laps with valve trouble. Neither Campari nor the shy Borzacchini would ever again entertain the Irish crowds, as they and Count Stanislas Czaykowski perished on the same oil-covered bend in the following year's Monza Grand Prix. ■

Precision cornering at Newtownards. by Bugatti's Albert Divo.



10. TO PHOENIX PARK (1924-1929)

From scorching to Grand Prix Racing



Phoenix Park at the turn of the century.

Following the success of the first 1926 Phoenix Park motorcycle race and the widespread appeal of the TT series, it was only a matter of time before the long-awaited international motor races went ahead at the unique Dublin city venue. With a circumference of seven miles enclosing 1,760 leafy acres, the Phoenix Park is the largest enclosed urban parkland in Europe. Originally the property of the Duke of Ormonde, it was opened to the public in 1747 by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Chesterfield. It quickly became a popular recreational area for the city inhabitants though never, it should be sanctimoniously nodded, acquiring quite the reputation of that other racier recreational centre, the Bois de Boulogne.

The gaelic games of hurling and football were soon indulged there and before the turn of the century “the Park” had become a popular venue for cycle racers. Oliver St. John Gogarty scored an early bike success in the 1899 Junior 20-miles Junior Irish Championship, before being banned by AAA officials from a subsequent event for bad language! Gogarty went on to use the Phoenix Park for impromptu speed trials of his latest cars including his magnificent Rolls Royce and even the later less speedy poet Patrick Kavanagh had driving lessons there.

From the arrival of the automobile in Ireland, the Park’s spacious well-surfaced roads proved ideal for answering the perennial schoolboy question “What will she do, Mister?” No sooner

local speed interest, while there was also a noteworthy Irish air achievement when Limerick feminist and former world high jump record holder, Mrs Elliot Lynn, set up a world altitude record before going on to become the first woman to fly solo from England to South Africa.

However, it wasn't until the 1928 TT launch year that the RIAC finalised plans to hold a major international motor race in Phoenix Park the following year. In seconding the adoption of the RIAC plan, Charles Segrave spoke of the tremendous crowds which attended the continental races and the crowd-pulling potential of an Irish series and he added modestly "My son is now something of a power in motor racing and he will do anything he can to help the Club and make the race a success."

As Motor News pointed out, the proposed 4.25 mile course was ideal from the spectators' point of view — "On its long straights the highest speeds can be attained with every variety of corner from hairpin to the much more tricky sinuous windings, and its comparative short length would ensure a constant succession of passing cars even with only a few competitors in a race. As well as this, practically every yard would provide vantage ground for spectators and it is probably more accessible to the mass of sightseers than any other course in the world."

The D-shaped course embraced the long main Park road on which the 1903 Speed Trials had been held. This led after three quarters of a mile to the first right-hand corner, Mountjoy, an ill-defined 90 degree turn which demanded very fine judgement as cars arrived at maximum speed. From Mountjoy the narrowest part of the course led to the so-called back straight, a long oddly cambered stretch which curved right, with trees and park benches waiting on the left for those who failed to make allowance for either the camber or the pull of the curve at speed. This testing stretch brought cars at top revs past the zoo and Garda depot to the double right-hand bends at Gough Corner. From here the gently rising two-mile straight led back to the grandstands situated on the left side of the track, before the slightly downhill flat-out sprint to the expectant crowds at Mountjoy.

Preparations went quickly ahead. Grandstands were erected, the Phoenix Monument was removed to a safer roadside position and a tunnel was built under the main straight for better access. The Grand Prix which was scheduled for Friday and Saturday, July 12 and 13, was divided into two sections, with cars under 1500cc competing in Friday's Saorstat Cup event and cars over

1500cc contesting Saturday's Eireann Cup race. The fastest car overall would win the Grand Prix, for which the prize was £1,000 and the Phoenix Trophy, a 20 inch solid silver replica of the monument. Each race was to be held over a distance of 300 miles and, unlike the Ulster TT, closed cars were not allowed to compete as the RIAC considered them to be dangerous owing to the restricted view of the driver. So there would be no wasteful hood-raising and the race would commence with a Le Mans-type start with the drivers lined up across the road from their cars.

As well as spending £7,000 on road and other improvements, the government also fulfilled its undertaking to keep Customs formalities to a minimum for visiting drivers. Cars entered for the races were allowed to use their own national number plates during their stay, while cars without road registration were supplied with special plates on their arrival. Free State driving licences were also issued free of charge to each competitor.

The Society of Irish Motor Traders provided generous support to the race organisers while volunteer workers combined with the Garda Siochana (the national police), firemen and ambulance crews to provide a well marshalled force for raceday. A giant scoreboard was erected opposite the grandstand which would record the progress of each competitor. Admission each day was two shillings per person; motorcycles with a sidecar were charged five shillings; private cars, taxi's and horsedrawn vehicles ten shillings; and charabancs and omnibuses £2. The 3,000 grandstand seats cost 25 shillings each. The races were also to be "on the ether" each day, with race commentaries on both the Dublin and Belfast radio stations.

Grand Prix entrant, Guilio Ramponi (left), former mechanic to Enzo Ferrari, with 1927 Le Mans winner, Sammy Davis.





Tim Birkin (left) and Lord Howe ▲

The famous Bentley marque makes its Phoenix Park debut: Harcourt Wood at the wheel.

The Grand Prix attracted most of the top British drivers, including record-breakers George Eyston and Malcolm Campbell, who had recently become the fastest man on earth by travelling at 206.96mph. “Bentley Boys” Glen Kidston and Tim Birkin, who had just headed a memorable Bentley 1-2-3-4 at Le Mans, also entered to give the legendary 4½-litre “Blower Bentleys” their race debut, as did 1927 Le Mans winners Sammy Davis and Dr. Benjafield. Other notable competitors were the Russian, Boris Ivanowski, winner of the Spa 24-hours race, and Guilio Ramponi, who with the legendary Campari had just won the 1,000-mile Italian Mille Miglia race. Dublin-born Kaye Don arrived fresh from breaking the world standing-start mile record at 100.77mph at Brooklands, while the most powerful car entered was the huge white supercharged 7.1-litre Mercedes being driven by “Scrap” Thistlethwaite, who had just competed in the King’s Cup air race. Though living in England, Thistlethwaite had spent his childhood at Ahanesk near Middleton in Cork, where he had first acquired the taste for driving.

The oldest competitor was Dr. Benjafield at 41, while the youngest was Irishman Billy Sullivan of Killyleagh, Co. Down, who was only 19 and had recently won the private car class in his local



Ballybannon hillclimb. There were seven Irish drivers entered altogether, including racing motorcyclist Jimmy Shaw from Lurgan, who had won the Ulster Grand Prix and other top international events, and Dubliner Gordon Burney, winner of the Leinster 100 bike race. TT winner Stanley Woods also entered but despite ambitious plans to commute by plane from Belgium, where he was practising for the motorcycle Grand Prix, he was forced to opt for the bike event to the disappointment of his many local fans.

But all this was forgotten when early on Tuesday morning, July 10, 1929 a new sound hit the Irish capital and Dubliners awoke to the high-pitched whine of superchargers as racing cars took to the Phoenix Park for the first time since 1903. The bigger cars were first to practice and soon Thistlethwaite was winding up his huge Mercedes to set fastest lap at 78.7mph, ahead of Glen Kidston in his Bentley.

Some of the less experienced drivers in the under-1500cc class over-wound themselves with less rewarding results. Local man Vic Cooper was lucky to escape without injury when he somersaulted twice on the deceptively ill-defined Mountjoy Corner at the end of the main straight (which has seen major shunts almost every year since that first practice morning). J.J. Field also charged the Mountjoy barriers, but continued only to lose a wheel as he spun at Gough Monument.

As drivers familiarised themselves with the circuit and made gear adjustments, Wednesday's speeds were appreciably faster, with Thistlethwaite again heading the field at 81.6mph with a time of 3 minutes and 8 seconds. Kidston was just three seconds behind while record-breaker Malcolm Campbell averaged 75.9mph. The Russian Ivanowski in his 2-litre Alfa lapped at 74.8mph, while the wilder Guilio Ramponi, one-time mechanic to former racer Enzo Ferrari, headed the 1500cc class at 75.2mph.

Basil Eyston, brother of the record-breaking George Eyston, did well in practice with a quick 74mph lap but as he left the Park he was involved in a tragic accident on Kingsbridge, which spans the river Liffey just outside the exit. A water cart had passed over the bridge, making the road very slippery and Eyston skidded and collided with a horse and cart. A 14-year old boy named Patrick Devine of Smithfield (a childhood friend of broadcaster Paddy Crosbie), who was sitting high on the laden cart, was thrown into the river and drowned. Eyston withdrew from the race and was later cleared of a manslaughter charge.

Although half of Dublin appeared to turn out on Thursday, July 11, to watch President Cosgrave re-open Clery's after a lapse of 13 years, the main topic of conversation in the city that week was the Phoenix Park motor race. Dail business was expedited so the House could rise by Friday July 12, while the national papers carried interviews with leading drivers. The Irish Times went one better and commissioned Malcolm Campbell to write an exclusive column. The enthusiastic Englishman obligingly noted "The first thing that struck me about the circuit is its beautiful setting. It is certainly one of the most wonderful courses I have seen and I am sure racing will be first class. In fact, the Irish international Grand Prix should prove a great success and should take place as an annual race and as an international event of note." ■

Pre-race meeting between President Cosgrave (second from left), 1903. Gordon Bennett starter, Lindsay Lloyd (with watch-chain) and Grand Prix entrant, Archie Frazer-Nash (right).



11. FIRST IRISH GRAND PRIX (1929)

Ivanowski's Grand Slam

Press publicity and the more tangible, early-morning evidence of the practising cars stimulated the maximum interest while Dubliners' speed appetites were further whetted by university student Tyrrell-Smith's big success in the Czechoslovak motorcycle Grand Prix. Thousands poured into the Park from early morning on Friday's opening race day, some travelling by special trams, many walking the two miles from the city centre. At 12.30, the course was closed and half an hour later the cars were pushed into position for the Le Mans-type start before a crowd estimated at 100,000.

Five minutes before the 1.30 off, 22 drivers and their 22 mechanics lined up across the road from their cars and all eyes focussed on President Cosgrave, who was to start the race with a white flag. There was a happy link with earlier Irish motoring history as the President's advisor was none other than Brooklands timekeeper, Ebby Ebblewhite, who had timed the 1909 Irish Reliability Trial speed events. As the flag fell, a maroon detonated to let everyone in Dublin know that the race had started. Eighty eight feet scrambled across the road and seconds later the engines roared into life and drivers dived and jockeyed for position as the wild mass screamed down to Mountjoy. The hapless Kaye Don was left on the line but his mechanic leaped out, soon located the electrical fault and was cheered to the echo as the pair left the line in their Riley before the pack roared up to complete the opening lap.

As was expected, the Italian Alfa-Romeos led at the end of the opening lap, with Guilio Ramponi's red car ahead of the green Lea-Francis entries of W.H. Green and Jimmy Shaw, and Ivanowski fourth in another Alfa just clear of Sammy Davis's Lea-Francis. On the next lap Ivanowski moved up to second place and as the five leading cars pulled away from the rest all eyes were on 1927 Le Mans winner Davis, who was leading the Lea-Francis challenge in third place. But try as he might, Sammy was unable to stay with the Alfas which gained a second lap and his only hope lay in overtaking the Italian cars when they stopped for fuel.

The Londoner later recalled "It was refreshing



The slow-starting Malcolm Campbell.

to be told at the start that I was to drive the car for all it was worth, as up to that race, team orders had always called for very disciplined and controlled driving. Normally, the Lea-Francis rev. limit was around 4,700, at which Ramponi and Ivanowski gained a bit on the straight, so we went up to around 4,800-4,900 and it must be admitted took the odd chance during our pursuit of the Alfas."

The battle between the Alfa and Lea-Francis cars was mirrored by the struggle between the brown-helmeted handicap leader, Archie Frazer Nash, and Gunnar Poppe in the orange-coloured works Austins. However, just after half distance the veteran Nash's luck ran out with a blown gasket and Poppe took over as Kaye Don's Riley slid down the field with gear-linkage problems.

Ramponi meantime headed the bigger class but so close was Ivanowski that the Russian went ahead when the Italian skidded. Dublin's Gordon Burney caused local hearts to sink when he was

forced into the pits with plug trouble while Goldie Gardner also dropped out with electrical problems. As the pace grew faster and the summer sun started to melt the tar, incidents came thick and fast, and the crowds at Mountjoy and Gough corners had their money's worth as car after car skidded and spun. Riley drivers Whitcroft and Jack Dunfee had narrow escapes when they collided at Mountjoy and although Dunfee's front wheels argued over which direction to take, the intrepid Englishman rejoined the fray when he heard that there were only 14 laps left.

The Alfa pair Ramponi and Ivanowski had been told to take it in turns to lead for the earlier laps and, after that, whoever was in the best position to win should be allowed to do so. When Ramponi pitted on lap 59 of the 70 lap race, he was just yards behind Ivanowski whose lead then increased to a minute. The Italian had made a good stop and when he came around he expected to see his teammate still in the pits. But the slick Russian had made the quickest halt, taking on oil and water and refuelling in just 30 seconds, and by the time Ramponi regained the pit area Ivanowski was nearing Mountjoy.

The Italian set off in hot pursuit, but after a big moment at Mountjoy his enthusiasm ran away with him at Gough Corner where, confronted with some slower cars already committed to their lines, he attempted to overtake them on the outside. He was travelling far too quickly and after skidding on to the grass he smashed into the railings, buckling both nearside wheels and breaking the axles of his Alfa. "It was a leetle exaggeration!" the Alfa driver admitted afterwards.

Ramponi's misfortune promoted Sammy Davis to second place and as Sammy came by the pits he tried to signal to the Alfa team that Ramponi was uninjured. Sammy later said "I had driven my little Lea-Francis flat-out from the beginning, but I went even harder as I saw the preparations for the Alfas' pit stops. I was driving non-stop and this was my big opportunity to make up ground. Just after Ivanowski's stop, I caught sight of a red car ahead and it was Ramponi going like the clappers. I had just escaped from an almighty slide at Gough but Ramponi wasn't so lucky. Over the last few laps with a bent front wheel and various bits and pieces flying off my car, I stood the engine on its head trying to gain on the Russian, but Ivanowski beat me across the line by exactly a minute, and just as I finished the last of my bulls-eyes!"

Boris Ivanowski had driven a faultless race and his 75mph success was a popular one for the 37



Former Russian Imperial Guardsman Ivanowski meets the President.

years old enigmatic former Russian Imperial Guardsman, who was reputed to have escaped death by 20 minutes during the 1917 Russian Revolution. Sammy Davis led the Lea-Francis team to an equally popular team success with W.H. Green taking third place, ahead of George Eyston in a Riley. First Irishman home to complete the Lea-Francis success was fifth-placed Jimmy Shaw, whose compatriot Gordon Burney did well to manage thirteenth after being dogged by plug trouble.

To the delight of the huge attendance, Saturday's main race provided another titanic struggle which overshadowed even that of the preceding day. The weather was also hotter, to the joy of the spectators but to the chagrin of the drivers, as the road surface on the corners was quickly reduced to liquid bitumen. Eighteen cars started, the most impressive being "Scrap" Thistlethwaite's huge white Mercedes, beside which were the Bentley challengers, Tim Birkin and Glen Kidston, Ivanowski and Le Mans winner Benjafield in Alfa-Romeos and Malcolm Campbell in his Sunbeam.

Campbell was temporarily stranded with a slow-starting engine, but the rest of the field made a perfect ear-splitting start to thunder down to Mountjoy in a great cloud of blue smoke. As the Irish Times correspondent noted “A subdued rumbling of distant exhausts then drifted across the Park from the back stretch. Then, to the watchers on the stand, there came down from the main road a high-pitched strident whine and, with a crescendo roar, the Mercedes swept up the straight and was gone again, with Birkin sitting on its tail, Kidston a few yards behind and surprisingly close was Ivanowski in fourth place, while some distance after these the rest of the field streamed through spread out in expected order.”

From the start it was evident that there was going to be a battle royal between Thistlethwaite and Birkin. The Bentley driver afterwards attested to the skill with which “Scrap” held his lead, lapping consistently at 83mph without putting a wheel wrong. Birkin was right on his tail and the crowd were rivetted to the spectacle, waiting for him to pass. The sheer power of the Mercedes told on the long straight, but what Birkin lost here his supercharged Bentley gained on the rear curving section. Thistlethwaite’s only indiscretion was to lock up his wheels once under braking for Mountjoy, but it was an understandable lapse on the melting tar which was giving spectators rich reward for their initiative in picking out corner vantage points. Kidston also skidded badly there, while Lewis spun his OM (which featured a special carburettor designed by Louth lady, Miss R.A. Garson, which had proved successful on racing motorcycles).

Incidents came thick and fast in the blazing sun and as the Irish Times reporter wrote, “A further thrill for the crowd came on the second lap when Wolfe’s Lagonda came around and, as he left

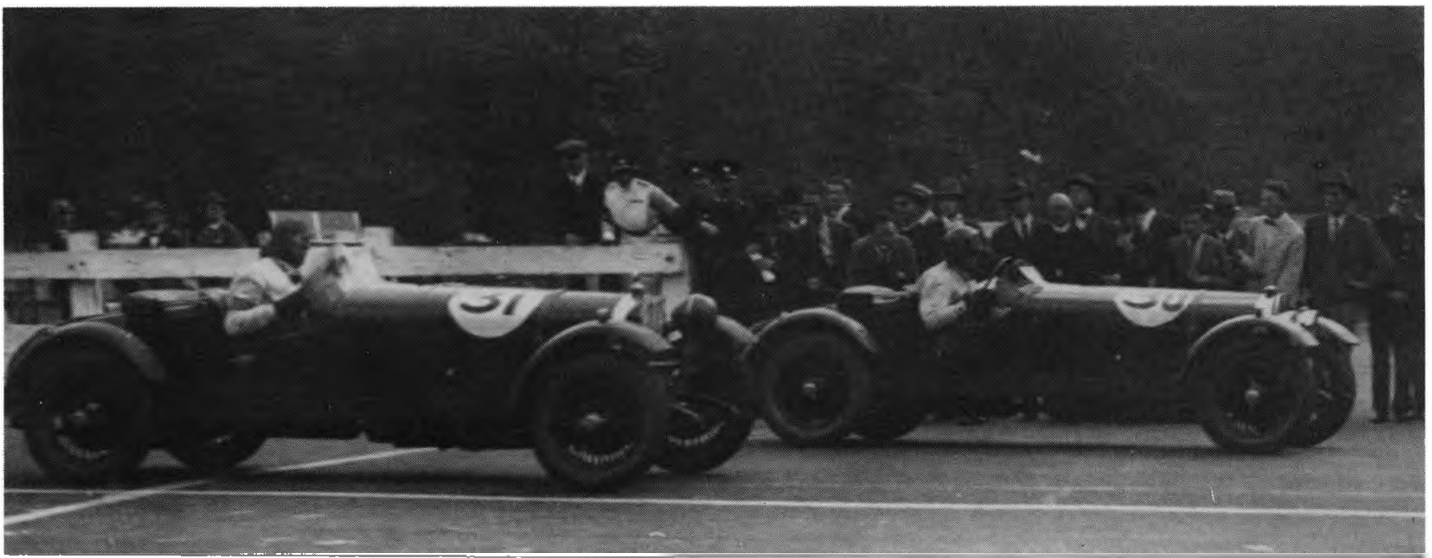
Mountjoy, his mechanic was seen to climb over the windscreen and on to the bonnet to adjust one of the straps which had come loose. It was a daring move as the car was travelling at more than 60mph and accelerating as he did it.

“Then, sensation, as Campbell’s Sunbeam came around in fine style but as he completed the corner his engine cut and left him in the middle of the track. For a few seconds, all held their breath as big cars shrieked by and swept on past the Sunbeam, missing it by inches. Marshals ran out and tried, without avail, to push the huge car off the track. At last a grappling hook was brought into action and thirty men pulled the car on to the grass.

“Just then, George Eyston’s Bugatti was seen coming down the straight with sheets of flame shooting from underneath. As the Bugatti reached the corner, the driver became aware of the problem and he stopped dead in the middle of the road, while fire helpers rushed in with extinguishers. For almost half a minute apparent chaos reigned, as oncoming cars braked and skidded to avoid the wrecked car and men while, as the grappling hook was again brought into action, a great cheer went up from around the crowd as Malcolm Campbell finally got away.”

Even the cool Ivanowski executed a half-spin, while Kidston’s Bentley disappeared behind the trees at Mountjoy to join the track further down the road, as the unlucky Campbell retired his Sunbeam with a faulty clutch to sympathetic applause. After an hour and a half a racing, Ivanowski led on handicap from Headlam in another Alfa, but all eyes were still on the Thistlethwaite-Birkin scrap. For two hours in the

Ivanowski leads Ramponi in opening Saorstát Cup race.



blazing sun there were only yards between these two fine drivers. But the fierce pace eventually proved too much for the Mercedes and after 27 laps Thistlethwaite retired with a blown gasket, leaving Birkin ahead on the road from Kidston, but with Ivanowski still leading handsomely thanks to his three credit laps.

Headlam's race ended abruptly when the steering failed and he rammed the banking and when Birkin pitted Kidston took up the chase of Ivanowski. As Birkin refuelled, the fired-up firemen reached for their extinguishers when water fell on the hot exhaust, sending up clouds of steam. Kidston now had a full head of steam up and with 50 miles left he had clawed back most of Ivanowski's three lap advantage. When the Russian stopped to refuel, Kidston passed him, which meant that he was now on the same lap. The Bentley driver then threw caution to the winds and cheers greeted each public address announcement of the dramatically reducing gap.

With five laps left, there were only 72 seconds between the two drivers. Then it was 59 and, with three circuits left, Kidston took another 15 seconds off. The Bentley team's "Faster" board remained out and spurred Kidston on to even riskier rates. With two laps to go he was only 27 seconds behind the Russian. But he was cornering too quickly for the incredibly slippery conditions and on the second last lap the race was decided when he had a big moment at Mountjoy from which he was lucky to escape without damage.

Thus, the cooler Ivanowski held on to win by 14 seconds at 76.4mph. The excitement had been so great that when Kidston passed Ivanowski on the obligatory slowing down lap, the Englishman was wildly applauded by some of the spectators who mistakenly thought he had won. Birkin took third place, ahead of Harcourt-Wood, H.W. Cook and Dr. Benjafield. Incidentally, Kidston's car was one of the most successful ever raced. As well as its close second place in Phoenix Park, it also won both the 1929 and 1931 Le Mans 24-hour races.

For his outstanding performances on both days, Ivanowski was declared a worthy winner of the first Irish Grand Prix. The car he drove to victory in Saturday's race was one which had just been sold by English dealer, F.W. Stiles, to an incredibly trusting customer. It still survives in England, registered under the number UU 79. Ivanowski carried away no fewer than six glittering trophies from the post-race reception at Dublin's Metropole Restaurant. And to top this triumph, he was also awarded third place in the Grand Prix for his speedy success in Friday's race.

The overall result was Ivanowski, Kidston, Ivanowski, Davis, Green and Birkin. Not many countries have hosted race meetings in which a driver could finish first and third in the same Grand Prix!

This event was one of the best things to happen in Ireland after the long unhappy years of political turmoil, and its success went some way towards establishing the Free State's status in the big wide world.

As with the Gordon Bennett race, the Irish received deserved praise from the international motoring press for their Grand Prix organisation.



▲ Jimmy Shaw, first Irish driver to finish Saorstát Cup race.

Glen Kidston almost caught Ivanowski in Eireann Cup.



But it was to the race's more serious implications that the congratulatory Irish Times leader referred — "Now that the tumult and the shouting have died, the Free State's citizens can survey last week's event with unmitigated satisfaction. These motor races, blessed with the year's finest weather, have been an important and far-reaching advertisement for the Free State. In the first part, they have advertised how attractive it is for pleasure-seekers. In the next place, they have advertised the Free State's efficiency and thus have struck a heavy blow at more than one old and damaging tradition. The arrangements of an international event of this class and magnitude demands labour, forethought and technical skill. It was a task in which the promoters had small, if any, practice; yet by the general verdict — including that of far-travelled competitors — it was completed without a hitch. When, as during the last few days, the government displays an economic energy and a generous spirit that exalts the Free State in the world's eyes, then Irishmen rejoice not merely for themselves, but for Ireland."

Ireland wouldn't be Ireland though without a dissenting opinion which came, oddly enough, from down the road in Kildare which had hosted the Gordon Bennett event. The Kildare Observer expressed itself little impressed with either fine races or what it considered flights of fancy of papers like the Irish Times. "Some of the Dublin papers surely exhaust themselves with superlatives in describing the 'thrills' that might be expected in witnessing a Grand Prix motor contest and so we went to be thrilled. We were not. A horse race is a thousand times more thrilling and more interesting. No doubt, motor enthusiasts may have felt a degree of interest in the averages of speed maniacs round and round the track, but to the average onlooker standing beside the road, the feeling could scarcely have been otherwise than boring. A motor race will never have the same attraction for a Kildare man as a horse race."

One would never guess from this objective stance that Kildare was even then the centre of the Irish bloodstock industry! ■

At the Irish Grand Prix presentation, in the Metropole Hotel: Tim Birkin (left); President Cosgrave (4th from left); Dan Higgin and burly Grand Prix winner Boris Ivanowski.



12. “RAIN-MASTER” WINS SECOND GRAND PRIX (1930)

Gillow shines — but Caracciola invincible



Caracciola (right) with Lord Howe (left) and Malcolm Campbell.

The unprecedented success of the 1929 Grand Prix led many optimists to assume that the future of the Dublin races was assured. The organisers, however, were left with a £3,000 deficit and the guarantors were contacted to make up this amount. After talks with the RIAC, the government introduced a Bill to cover the deficit but the supplementary estimate move by Finance Minister Ernest Blythe received a rough passage in the Dail. Among the opposition was the amiable future President Sean T. O’Kelly who describing the Phoenix Park event as a luxury race said “Members of the club should be able to pay for their own amusement.”

In the context of a mainly agricultural country struggling to establish itself after years of political turmoil the opposition was perhaps understandable but the Bill was eventually passed by 70 votes to 48. After a last-minute appeal, the target of £15,000 was guaranteed by members of the public and the Trade, and preparations went ahead for the 1930 Grand Prix to be held on Friday and Saturday July 18 and 19. Two significant changes from the first Grand Prix were

the elimination of the Le Mans-type start and the withdrawal of the ban on women in the pits.

A total of 50 entries were received, nine more than the previous year. Among those making a welcome return were 1929 winner Boris Ivanowski, Malcolm Campbell, Tim Birkin, Kaye Don, George Eyston, Archie Frazer Nash, and Giulio Ramponi, while prominent among the newcomers were the fast-rising 28-year old German, Rudolf Caracciola — destined to be one of the most successful sports car and Grand Prix drivers of the thirties —; British gentleman racer Earl Howe; the experienced Frenchman Jean Chassagne; Italian ace Guiseppe Campari and his chain-smoking ice-cool compatriot Achille Varzi. The latter has just scored one of his most dramatic successes in the Targa Florio road classic when in an effort to save valuable time on the last lap he and his mechanic grabbed petrol from a roadside depot and attempted to refuel the car while in motion. The petrol ignited when some fell on the exhaust but Varzi refused to stop, pushing himself to one side while his equally determined mechanic beat out the flames with a seat cushion.

The races received a great fillip on Tuesday's opening practice when Malcolm Campbell in a Mercedes beat the previous lap record with a speed of 87.7mph. Cheering him on was the intrepid Mrs. Dorothy Paget of Aintree Grand National fame who was responsible for the Bentley entries after the British factory's unexpected withdrawal from racing. Rudolf Caracciola in another Mercedes served early notice of his intentions by knocking two seconds off Campbell's time on Wednesday, while his wife Charly with a tray full of stopwatches kept a close eye on his rivals. In Thursday's final session Campbell got down to 2m 51s for the 4.25 mile circuit, an average of 89.7mph, while Bentley's Tim Birkin did 2m 54s. Campari headed the 2,000cc class three seconds ahead of fellow Alfa driver Ivanowski at 79mph, while Lea-Francis-mounted Clive Dunfee and Cyril Paul headed the 1,500 brigade and veterans Victor Gillow (Riley) and Archie Frazer Nash (Austin) the 1,000 and 750 classes.

Twenty-four cars lined up on Friday afternoon for the opening Saorstat Cup race with the Alfa Romeo and Lea-Francis cars having to cover 65 laps compared to the smallest unsupercharged machine, a little Austin, which started with an allowance of 18 credit laps. The weather was dull and cloudy with a speed-reducing wind blowing down the main straight as drivers received their final briefing from Bill Guinness, now retired from racing following his San Sebastian Grand Prix crash. At 2.30 the flag fell and the Liverpoolian Dan Higgin, Goldie Gardner and Clive Dunfee were the smartest away, as four drivers including Eyston and Whitcroft were momentarily left on the line. Higgin maintained his lead on the opening lap to flash across the start area ahead of Lea-Francis team-mates Dunfee, T.M.V. Sutton, and Cyril Paul who were closely followed by Ivanowski and Don.

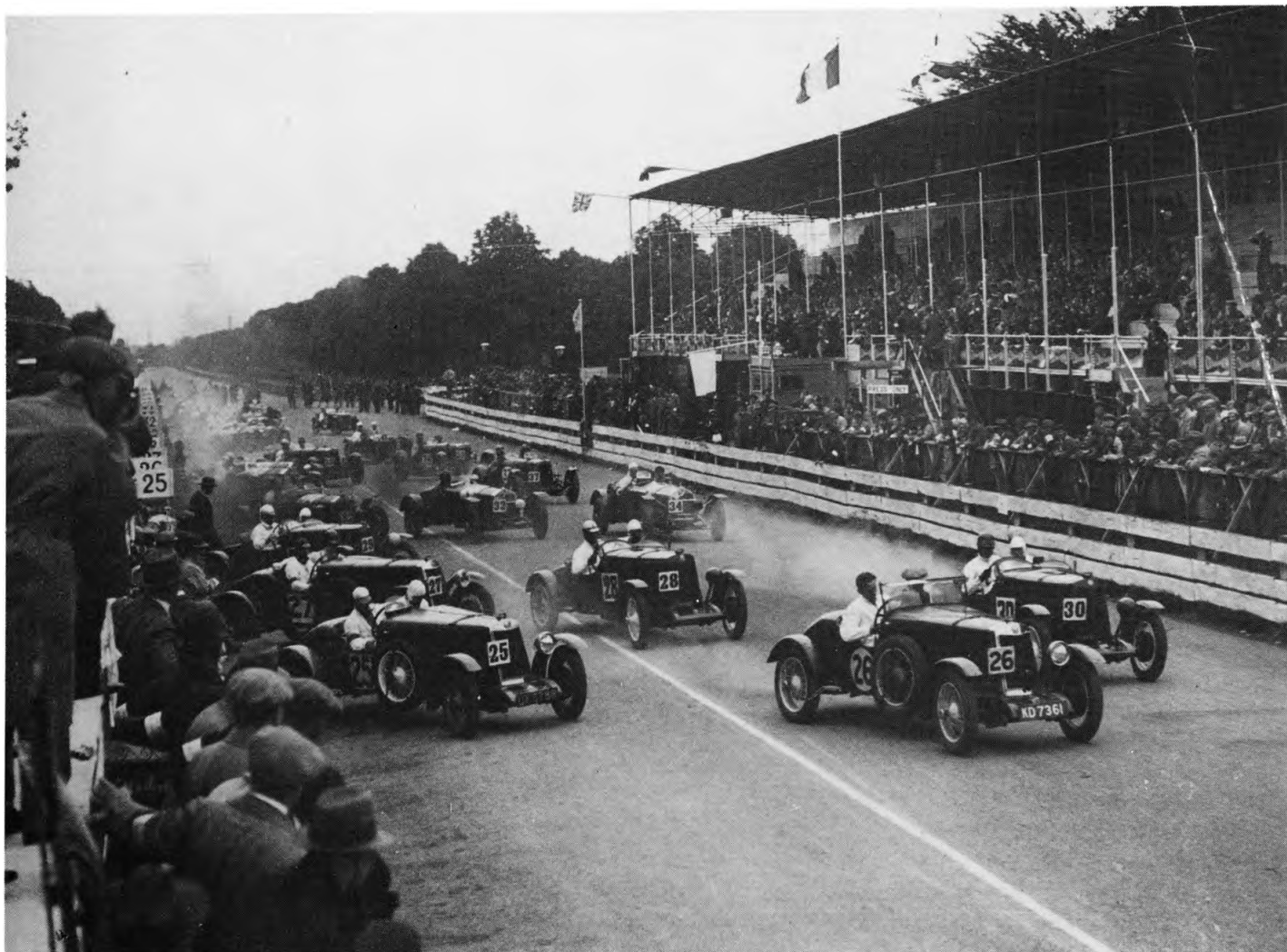
Paul took over the lead on the second lap while Ivanowski had a big moment at the Zoo when taking to the footpath to avoid his Alfa teammate Kaye Don. Two laps later Dunfee took over to close on the limit Austin. Despite the lack of a supercharger, the chirpy Sammy Davis (Aston-Martin) spent these opening laps in the thick of the Alfa-Lea-Francis battle, getting a smart slipstreaming tow along the fast straights. His lack of speed eventually dropped him back just as Sutton hit the grass bank at Gough and bounded high in the air before resuming at unabated pace. Clive Dunfee then made the first of many pit stops as word began to spread of the incredible driving of 46 year-old West London garage



The ice-cool Achille Varzi.

proprietor Victor Gillow in a privately entered but virtually works Riley. Driving consistently on the limit despite the intermittent drizzle, the little Londoner was holding the faster cars and from being equal fifth after 10 laps he went into the lead with 20 circuits covered.

On handicap the Lea-Francis cars were still in with a good chance with Cyril Paul a close second just ahead of the continuing dice between Ivanowski and Don. At 30 laps following Paul's pit stop, Gillow had extended his lead to over a minute from Sutton in a Lea-Francis, with Ivanowski and Don third and fourth ahead of the popular Frazer Nash in his supercharged Austin. Dunfee had dropped back with overheating before eventually retiring with a sheared magneto, while Dan Higgin's Lea-Francis charged the sandbags at Mountjoy to reverse and drive smartly away as Ivanowski indicated his bid for a repeat Grand Prix success by passing Sutton for second place. Alas for the Russian's hopes, his Alfa suddenly stopped at Mountjoy losing a precious six minutes with a defective switch wire, while team mate Don was also delayed with plug trouble, leaving Eyston to take up the chase for Alfa Romeo.



Dan Higgin first away in the 1930 Saorstát Cup race.

But despite a warning rainshower, Gillow was proving unbeatable and not one spectator doubted but that he had Outside assistance as he continually broadsided with the throttle wide open, missing trees by millimetres and frequently bounding along the high pavements. Once at Gough, he slid across the grass and hit the railings but as he drove on still had time for a cheery wave for his fellow-competitors. Then while overtaking an Austin he was travelling so quickly he skidded on to the pavement and cleared a foot-high bank before regaining the road. The heaviest shower did nothing to inhibit his driving and as Sammy Davis who dived with him for several laps noted "He drove with almost reckless abandon of the type which was first displayed by Jenatzy. By all the rules of the game such driving methods should have ended with the whole car upside down, but undoubtedly aware that even then Gillow would have kept the throttle wide open, the Riley decided to remain topside up until the finish!"

Three laps from the finish, though, the Londoner drove slowly past the pits, gazing apprehensively at his rear wheel. But next time round he dashed past as fast and cheerfully as ever to win handsomely at 72.2mph by six minutes from Eyston, with Frazer Nash a further two minutes away in third place, just ahead of Don, Waite in his little Austin, Ivanowski and Davis. The Australian Waite had had an eventful race, surviving a big moment at Gough where after hitting the bank he skidded across the road in front of other cars. Then when lying third at the finish he was signalled in a lap too soon by an official, completing his slowing down circuit at touring pace as he lit a cigarette after all his hard work. There was an almighty row when the error was discovered and Waite was eventually reinstated in third ahead of Don and Frazer Nash.

Gillow's cavalier success and the lengthy duels between the Alfa and Lea-Francis cars richly compensated spectators for the damp weather but it was Saturday's big-car race in even worse conditions which produced one of the most spectacular drives in the history of Irish motor racing. In theory the wet should have favoured the

smaller cars but there are exceptions to the best rules and in this case it was the sure-footed German Rudolf Caracciola who treated both spectators and fellow-competitors to a masterful display of the talents which had already earned him the title of "Rain-master".

As the cars lined up in front of the pits it was evident that the race would probably see a repeat of the recent Le Mans confrontation between Mercedes and Bentley. After the morning downpour the rain temporarily stopped leaving the road black and glistening as the white-overalled drivers climbed into their cars and waited for President Cosgrave to drop the starting flag. As distant city clocks could be heard chiming in the pre-race silence, the flag suddenly fell and in seconds the pits were empty as the pack raced off to Mountjoy, Mercedes-mounted Carracciola already leading from Birkin's Bentley, B.O. Davis in the supercharged Sunbeam and H.S. Eaton in his Talbot.

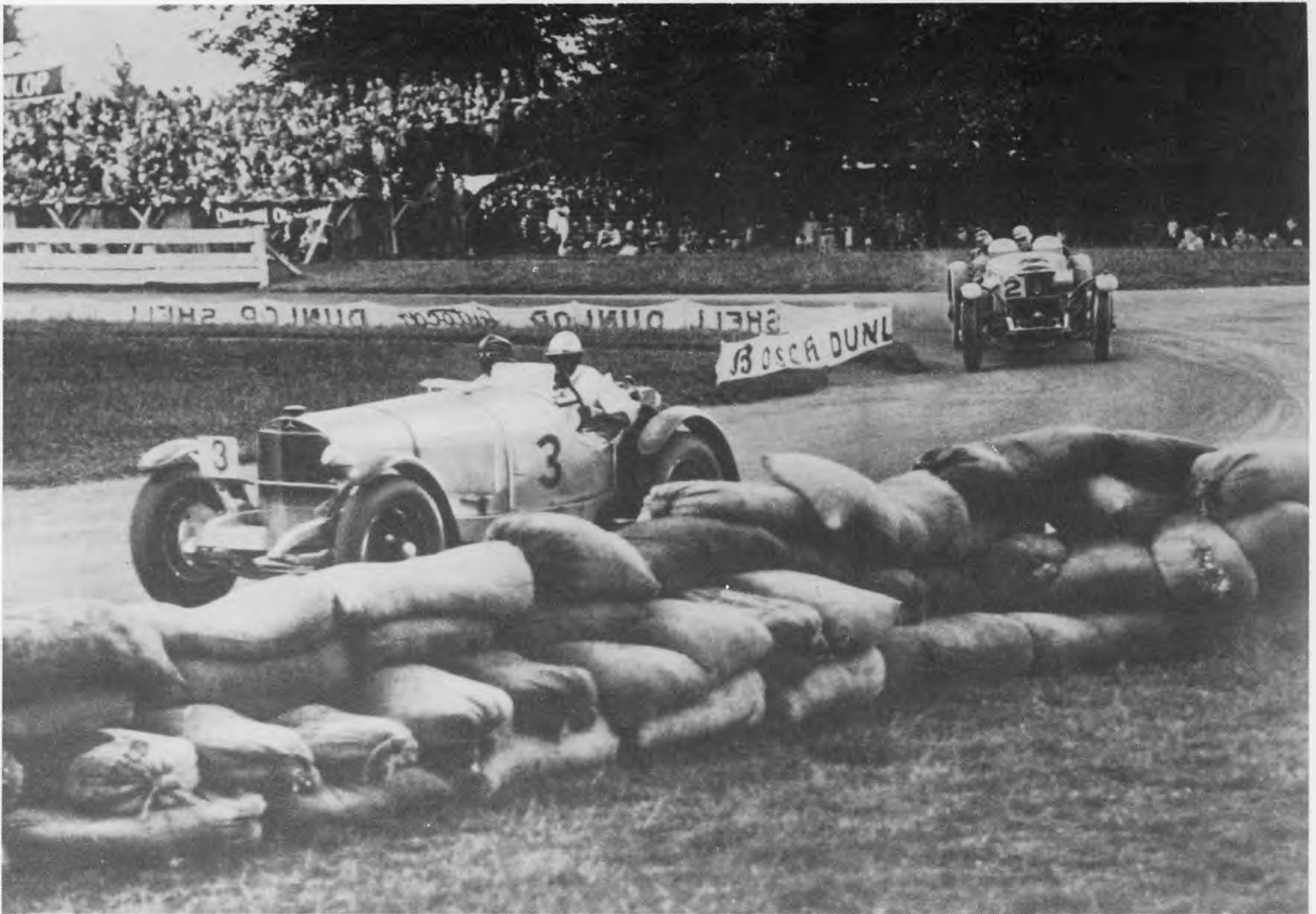
The grandstand crowds followed the audible progress of the cars along the swerving back straight, then turned their eyes down towards the Gough monument. Far down the broad road a white speck appeared, larger and larger it grew,

and then suddenly with a whine of its super-charger it tore past for Mountjoy. It was Caracciola, already five seconds clear of Birkin in his lone battle against the five Bentleys and having covered the first 4.24 mile lap from a standing start in 3 minutes 2 seconds. Malcolm Campbell in his light blue Mercedes was third just ahead of Earl Howe in a similar 38/250 then followed a gap to the howling pack which was led by Harcourt-Wood from B.O. Davis, Varzi, Ramponi and Chassagne.

The last car had hardly left than Caracciola arrived on the horizon again well clear of Birkin on whom he had to make up two handicap laps. As the German sped around the back of the circuit it was announced to the disbelieving crowd that he had broken the lap record at 90.8mph. No such kudos for the Bentley entries, though, and after six laps Harcourt Wood made the first of many stops and while he was in the pits Chassagne also drew up. On the third lap Caracciola lapped the sole Dublin entrant, Charlie Manders in an older Sunbeam just in front

Bertelli ahead of Ivanowski and Kaye Don.





Rain-master Caracciola heads for victory.

of the pits. Then the rain pelted down again, streaming across the car bonnets, blurring the road ahead and making the corners seem like ice to the powerful cars. The Italian Fronteras spun wildly, hit the banking and buckled a wheel of his OM, while Malcolm Campbell peered around his misted windscreen which his mechanic tried in vain to clear.

Conditions were so dreadful that even Caracciola was caught out at the deceptive Hole in the Wall left-hand curve where he executed two rapid 90mph spins before speeding on through the dark green avenue of dripping trees to Gough Corner. A broken oil pipe forced out B.O. Davis's Sunbeam, while a lap later Varzi stopped for three minutes and did only one further circuit before retiring. Bentley pilots Harcourt Wood and Chassagne pitted with depressing regularity as the rain continued to bucket down. With Varzi out, his Alfa team-mate Campari celebrated his promotion to fourth with a pirouette at Mountjoy, while the speeding Campbell was lucky to escape a huge moment at the Hole in the Wall when his car slid across the

track and the shock of its sudden change in direction flung the Englishman's visor high into the air.

But nothing slowed Caracciola, who on each lap increased his road lead from Birkin who was struggling manfully in his less powerful and heavier Bentley. Birkin had a fright when a dog ran in front of him near the grandstand, just before he heard the unmistakable sound of a supercharger behind him. "I put my foot down for all it was worth," he recalled later, "but it was to no avail. We raced towards the grandstand; I saw the white bonnet with its silver star, and then Caracciola himself, staring ahead in his white-peaked cap, so close in the Mercedes left-hand drive that I could almost have touched him. For a second or two, we were level and then he was past, heading for Mountjoy Corner, his spray flying up round my eyes."

With 24-laps left of the 60-lap race, Birkin reckoned he could still hold the German on handicap, just. The excitement further grew as the leading cars began to refuel, Campari getting away in a minute and a half with a great clashing of churns, while the cooler Caracciola took on fuel and oil in just 70 seconds. Birkin then raced in and rushed around to unclip the radiator cap to

check the water as the fuel and oil went in. No water was needed and to a burst of enthusiastic clapping he tore out again after only 65 seconds. But the Bentley ace's troubles were about to commence. He was hardly back on the track than a tell-tale wisp of smoke came floating through the car's bonnet to be followed by another from the opposite side. The burning oil began to play on Birkin's legs. He lost three valuable minutes while an oil pipe was changed and as he left the pits Caracciola approached. In a few seconds, the Mercedes driver was on the same lap as Birkin, who was then forced to stop again.

It was still raining but Caracciola was in his element and almost lost in his giant battleship-like car, he celebrated his unopposed progress with another lap record of 91.3mph. Fronteras came to grief once again when his goggles misted up and this time he overturned his OM at Mountjoy. He escaped without injury as the car came to rest upside down, its wheels spinning ineffectively in the pouring rain. Poor Birkin slid from second to third behind Campari before a further halt demoted him to fourth behind Lord Howe, who was driving magnificently in his Mercedes. But these drivers were now far behind the other white Mercedes, whose web-footed driver splashed across the line to win by eight minutes at a staggering average of 85.88mph. As Birkin toured into the pits he "heard the frantic cheering for Caracciola and came in at last to find him smiling and dirty and shy, hung with garlands of flowers, trying to escape from the crowds with his Frau who had timed him all the way and was in ecstasies."

Caracciola's Eireann Cup race success was

more than sufficient to give him the Irish Grand Prix from Gillow, while Campari was declared third overall, ahead of Earl Howe, Birkin and Malcolm Campbell. The German's 85.88mph success represented the fastest speed at which a road race had ever been run. Once again the Phoenix Park circuit proved itself one of the safest circuits, with neither driver nor spectator suffering any serious injury in the four races which had already been staged. An estimated 250,000 persons braved the rain to watch those 1930 races and with widespread national and international media coverage it seemed as if the Irish Grand Prix was firmly set to become a regular international fixture.

The race sadly marked the final Irish appearance of the cool accomplished Caracciola, and also of his wife. Charly perished shortly afterwards in an avalanche while skiing at Arosa and Caracciola, who was recovering from an accident, was so devastated that he didn't race for several months. Although many regard Tazio Nuvolari as the most exciting driver in the history of motorsport, the legendary Mercedes team manager Neubauer said "Looking back, I shall always regard Rudi Caracciola as the greatest driver of those pioneering days and probably of all time. He combined to an extraordinary degree single-mindedness, concentration, physical endurance and intelligence. Of all the drivers I have known — Nuvolari, Rosemeyer, Lang, Moss or Fangio — Rudi Caracciola was the greatest of them all," he concluded. ■

Caracciola with his wife Charly, who died soon afterwards, in an avalanche.



13. THE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING GRAND PRIX (1931)

Birkin, Black, Campari and Howe duel



Opera lover Giuseppe Campari, second in the 1931 Saorstát Cup.

Despite the huge success of the 1930 race and the excitement engendered by the dramatic driving of Caracciola and Gillow, the RIAC was left with a loss off £1,485 which led to further financial headaches before the July 18/19 1931 Grand Prix went ahead with prize money reduced from £3,200 to £2,000. At the last minute, Caracciola withdrew as Mercedes were unable to provide him with a suitable car but the arrival of the successful new MG team partly made up for this disappointment, while a strong Maserati entry led by the redoubtable Campari fresh from his win in the Italian Grand Prix marked the famous Italian marque's Irish Grand Prix debut. Among the familiar faces to return to Phoenix Park were the gallant Gillow, at 47 the oldest driver in the

races, Archie Frazer Nash, a comparative stripling of 41, Malcolm Campbell, Earl Howe, George Eyston, Liverpoolian stalwart Dan Higgin and "Boy's Own" hero Tim Birkin.

MG came to the opening day's Saorstát Cup race fresh from their big success in the Brooklands Double Twelve Hour event and their drivers included Goldie Gardner, Dan Higgin, Tommy Horton and Norman Black. Victor Gillow, Malcolm Campbell, C. R. Whitcroft and Belfast's Willie Noble drove Riley cars, while Frazer Nash again entered an Austin. Dan Higgin was destined for a busy weekend as he was also to drive an Austro-Daimler in Saturday's race in which Campari, Tim Birkin — unfamiliarly mounted in an Alfa Romeo — and Brian Lewis in his big Talbot were expected to be the principal protagonists. On the Wednesday preceding the

racers, Higgin's problems were compounded when he had to change pistons on the Austro-Daimler. Then while running them in he got lost in the dark and was eventually stranded 50 miles from Dublin with magneto trouble early on the final practice morning.

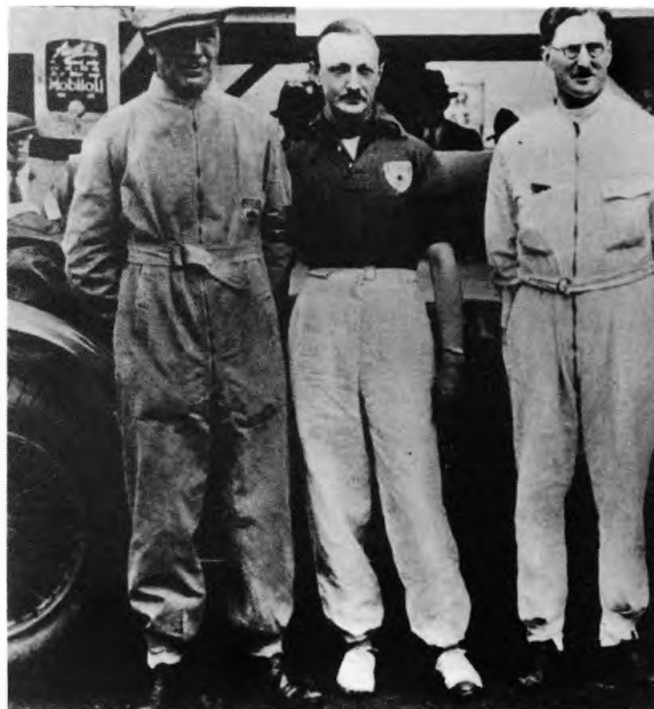
Newcomer Norman Black also had his troubles when his MG's gearbox seized during practice. His mechanic Frank Taylor cured the problem only for the box to go again on a test drive round the Dublin streets. After a hectic dash for the ferry, a new box arrived from the Abingdon factory on Friday morning with just sufficient time to fit it before the race. A foggy first practice had seen additional drama when Dublin Lincoln and Nolan employee C. Bradley was trapped under his Austin when it overturned at the now notorious Mountjoy. Heavy rain had also spoiled Wednesday's practice despite which B. O. Davis and Earl Howe each lapped at a creditable 87mph. Fortunately the rain stopped for Thursday's final session, the star of which was Campari who despite his unfamiliarity with the circuit lapped effortlessly at over 90mph.

Friday's race morning dawned damp and cheerless as cars and drivers took up their positions in forbidding rain which ran off the solid mass of umbrellas in the enclosures. But on the dot of three, a maroon flashed defiantly against the dark sky and the 26 cars surged away with Lea Francis driver Tom Delany first into Mountjoy in Kaye Don's 1928 TT-winning car, as the unlucky Malcolm Campbell was once again temporarily stranded on the line with carburettor trouble. It soon became evident that it was going to take much more than the Irish rain to dampen the enthusiasm of the irrepressible Gillow who went ahead on the run down to Gough Corner, taking the deceptive double bend in one long spectacular slide. He then raced on to entertain the crowds at Mountjoy, arriving with all four wheels locked and taking off across the grass as he was going too quickly to turn in. Little abashed, he rejoined in fourth place and two fiery laps later he was back in the lead again!

Despite the poor visibility, Gillow's Riley was lapping at 78mph while behind him the MG pair Tommy Horton and Norman Black were battling for second with Dan Higgin and De Ferranti, who was driving his supercharged Austin with considerable verve. That was until the car's nearside front wheel took off at Mountjoy, sailing through a hoarding as the surprised driver wrestled to control his three-wheeler. Once De Ferranti came to a stop he set off to find the wheel which he smartly proceeded to refit. The damage inflicted

on the brake drum however proved too much and he was forced to retire, to the audible disappointment of the Mountjoy aficionados.

While Gillow led at his normal impossible pace, it became increasingly clear that the little supercharged MG's were making much more rapid progress than the handicappers had allowed for. They were lapping at almost 10mph faster than the equivalent cars the year before and at the end of 30 laps, three of the impressive Abingdon machines were breathing down Gillow's neck, with Horton second, ahead of Black and H.D. Parker, who was followed by Whitcroft's Riley and Noble's MG. A tremendous dogfight which had been going on all this time between Delany and Taylor in an Alfa was terminated when the former had to pit with supercharger trouble. As the hapless Malcolm Campbell in his Riley continued to make up ground after his startline delay, he had to contend with a steady stream of water which spouted up through a loose floor-board.



Eireann Cup winner Birkin (centre), with Lord Howe (left) and George Eyston.

Gillow's spectacular driving maintained his lead until half-distance when rocker trouble forced him to pit and the MG's surged triumphantly into the lead. At the end of 40 laps, Horton headed Black, Parker, Whitcroft and Higgin and then as the rain grew even heavier the MG's started to battle among themselves. Once again on the loose, Gillow asserted himself with his usual vigour with yet another spiral at Gough, in which

he hit the barrier. Sadly, his efforts came to nought as shortly afterwards he was forced out by clutch problems.

The rain was now so heavy that the little cars almost vanished under sheets of spray each time they hit waterlogged Mountjoy Corner. Parker relieved Horton of his lead but the latter quickly regained the position. Although both men drove MG's, Horton and the fast-pursuing Norman Black represented different teams and at two third's distance the latter edged ahead of Horton's red machine. Horton however had the legs of Black on the straights and by the time the pair reached Mountjoy each lap he had nosed ahead again. But after seven hard laps of place-swapping, the persistent Black headed Horton into Mountjoy and from then on he maintained his lead.

Afraid that Black would blow his engine, his team manager ordered a "Slow" signal to be held out to him. However, a friend of Black's displayed the 'OK' sign instead and the 30-year old London car salesman extended his lead until he was two minutes clear. But near-disaster struck a few laps from home when Black was overtaking fellow-Midget driver R. Watney at Gough. The latter drove into a sheet of water which drenched Black's cockpit, engine and electrics and the car began to splutter and misfire.

For an anxious lap and a half it looked as if the MG might even stop, but suddenly the engine burst into full song again and it took the former motorcyclist to his first car success by almost three minutes from Horton, who had just 10 seconds to spare over Goldie Gardner. Behind the three MG's came Whitcroft and Noble in their Riley's while H. D. Parker finished sixth ahead of Higgin. Black's time was 3 hrs 21 mins 20 secs which represented an average of 64.76mph. With rain again forecast for the following day, it looked as if his new MG was well on course to an overall Grand Prix victory as the big cars would have to average almost 90mph to beat him.

It rained heavily all Saturday morning but just before lunchtime the clouds cleared away to give Birkin, Campari and company at least a hope of overtaking Black. Only 10 drivers faced the starter but no fewer than 60,000 spectators had turned out in expectation of some exciting racing and they were not to be disappointed. Birkin made the best start, his red Alfa skimming the grass verge as the cars thundered down to Mountjoy. However, it was the urbane Lord Howe who turned up the boost on his big blue Mercedes to lead around the back of the circuit and commence a courageous effort to reduce the

four-lap advantage enjoyed by the Alfa and Maserati machines.

Using his supercharger to good advantage, Howe soon broke Caracciola's lap record as he lapped in 2m 48s at 91.8mph. B.O. Davis gamely tried to match his pace while Campari and Eyston in their Maserati's also kept up the pressure, forcing the Mercedes driver to use his supercharge for longer than was good for the engine. After 10 laps, Campari led the English peer on handicap by just one second, with Eyston a close third ahead of Birkin and Davis.

Handling his new car with beautiful precision, Tim Birkin then started to harry Eyston, eventually overtaking him as the skies opened and a deluge drowned the Park, forked lightning combining with great peals of thunder for additional dramatic effect. Birkin pressed on through the flood to catch Campari, whom he passed after a tense wheel-to-wheel battle in which both cars were hidden in one great sheet of spray. But as the rain eased, Campari clawed his way back to overhaul the Englishman. The determined Birkin immediately repassed him and then as Campari fought back the Italian was hit in the eye by a stone thrown up by the Alfa.

Campari peeled off to the pits where he leaped out of his car obviously in great pain. Giulio Ramponi immediately took over the driver's seat and set off in pursuit of Birkin. The Maserati pit-crew was stretched to the limit as George Eyston also stopped to change plugs. A spectating eye specialist rushed to the pits where he found that though Campari's right eyeball had been badly bruised it had not been actually cut. He had no sooner dressed the injured eye than the Italian was urging his team manager to call in Ramponi so he could rejoin the fray.

As the rain stopped, Lord Howe renewed his rapid progress and he maintained his close second place on handicap to Birkin before his supercharger began to fail, depriving him of the power to overcome his handicap disadvantage. As Howe flagged, Ramponi was called into the pits and spectators rose to cheer Campari, as the Maserati driver shot back into the race like a man possessed. Despite his bandaged eye, the Italian began to drive faster than ever, charging down to Mountjoy at 115mph, his scarlet machine snaking violently as he braked at the last possible minute before splashing off in pursuit of Birkin.

After 40 laps of the 70-lap 300-miles race, Campari was second on handicap to Birkin, who was just clear of Davis, Brian Lewis (Talbot) and Eyston (Maserati). But when it seemed as if Birkin was also on target to win the overall Grand Prix,

the rain came down again and the plaque representing Black's MG edged ahead on the scoreboard. Despite the atrocious conditions, the leading five drivers were still racing on the limit to the delight of the damp crowd which included Bill Guinness. As Eyston progressed to fourth and then third as Davis pitted, Campari steadily reduced Birkin's lead, driving as if inspired, as he peered over his car's windscreen and continually adjusted the bandage which threatened to slip over his good eye.

The weather see-saw continued and as the rain eased off Birkin increased speed once again until he was lapping at 90mph, with a fighting chance of taking both the Eireann Cup and the Grand Prix. With 10 laps left, he led Campari on handicap by three minutes, the Italian lucky to be still on the road after skidding for 50 yards when he locked wheels at Mountjoy. Eyston in turn was pushing Campari until he ran out of fuel five laps from the finish and was lucky to make the pits for replenishment.

Hardly had the Maserati driver pitted than disaster also struck Birkin when his engine gave a tired cough as he accelerated out of Mountjoy — he too was almost out of petrol. With only two laps left to overhaul Black, he struggled to the pits where his mechanic quickly flung in a churn of fuel. Birkin rushed out again, still safely ahead of

Campari but now just behind Black's ghost MG for Grand Prix honours. The startline crowds willed him on as he commenced his last lap and three long minutes later he roared up the road, a worthy race winner at 83.73mph, but 11 seconds too late to deprive Black of Grand Prix success. An ironic footnote to the MG driver's win is that as his car was being driven from the Liverpool boat two days later, the gearbox seized just half a mile outside the town.

Sadly, it was to be the last time that many of these great drivers would race at Phoenix Park. The dashing Birkin, the epitome of the Bentley Boys, died the following year after burns received from his Maserati's exhaust at Tripoli had turned septic. Campari perished during the 1933 Italian Grand Prix meeting when in one of racing's blackest days, Borzacchini, Count Czaykowski and himself all crashed to death at Monza. Campari's wife was the well known singer Lina Cavalleri and, a fine singer himself, the Italian driver had intended to retire at the end of that season to devote his life to grand opera. ■

The irrepressible Victor Gillow (in blazer), with Archie Frazer-Nash.



14. TOURIST TROPHY RACES (1932-1936)

Hamilton and Nuvolari Capture Imagination



George Eyston leads team-mate Cyril Whitcroft (eventual winner) of 1932 TT at Ards — Riley cars had a field day!

Though a Dublin government change may have checked the Irish Grand Prix momentum, there was no stopping the flood tide of Tourist Trophy success. Local support was as strong as ever from the Northern Irish government, the trade and the general public who had come to accept the annual TT as Ulster's most outstanding sporting event. While Malcolm Campbell raised the world land speed record to 253mph in distant Daytona and Tazio Nuvolari dominated the European single-seater Grand Prix scene, the customary 200,000 plus crowd thronged the Ards circuit for the August 1932 TT for which 35 entries had been received, including the redoubtable Tim Birkin, Lord Howe, future record-breaker George Eyston and local hero Hugh Hamilton, fresh from his class win in the German Grand Prix.

Hamilton's practice progress on the newly re-surfaced circuit was electrifying and he smashed the 750cc lap record with a speed of 74.5mph before hospitalizing himself after overturning his MG Midget near Ballystockart. The other fire-brand of practice was the spectacular former motorcycle ace, Freddie Dixon, who broke the 1100cc record despite his unfamiliarity with the demanding circuit.

The Riley cars were among the first away on the sunny August race day and at the end of the first lap it was Cyril Whitcroft's blue machine which led from George Eyston with Dixon a close third ahead of the equally enthusiastic Victor Gillow. On the second lap Eyston edged ahead of Whitcroft to be followed by Dixon who soon overhauled the pair of them. With three laps to make up on the Rileys, Birkin and Howe worked

determinedly in their 2.3 litre supercharged straight eight Alfa Romeo's to reduce the deficit, with Birkin averaging over 81mph in his typical all-out efforts. The little MGs were also going well, with Cyril Paul ahead of Eddie Hall and Norman Black. The latter was being pushed by fellow-Midget driver Stan Barnes who suddenly lost it at Ballybarnes and was rammed into retirement by Brian Lewis, whose Talbot car was fortunate to come out of the incident with no more than a bent shock absorber arm. Eleven laps later the popular Goldie Gardner also went off off in a big way at Ballybarnes. His MG someraulted twice to finish the Englishman's racing career by fracturing his good leg (the other one had been damaged in the war).

Lapping at over 82mph Tim Birkin was now up to sixth place, while Riley's Victor Gillow was also working hard to make up lost ground after a lengthy pit-stop. But after setting Comber alight with his sideways style, Gillow overdid it at Moate corner to vacate the race through the hole in the hedge conveniently left by Hamilton (who incidentally was spectating from his hospital bed which had been wheeled out to Newtownards Square!). Following Gillow's departure there was further excitement when Birkin suddenly pitted, to lose three minutes fitting an oil pressure relief valve.

Thanks to a much faster stop, Eddie Hall went into fourth place to lead the MG chase, while George Eyston's slick pit work gained him a valuable 30 seconds on race-leader Dixon. Just after half-distance, Whitcroft also began to speed up and suddenly the three Riley were racing nose to tail for the race lead. Whitcroft then went ahead of both Eyston and Dixon — who was exceedingly miffed at losing the lead he had held for four hours. Never one for half-measures, Freddie took off in hot pursuit, but attacking Quarry Corner at impossible speed he hit the kerb and launched his car high over the hedge into retirement (a spectacular incident which a sharp photographer recorded for posterity).

Tim Birkin's pit-stop had promoted Lord Howe to fifth place, but neither Alfa driver could make any headway on the leading Riley duo of Whitcroft and Eyston. The latter made a final attempt to overhaul Whitcroft but his car's engine had lost its edge after harrying Dixon for five hours and Eyston had to settle for second place ahead of the consistent Eddie Hall. Whitcroft's 74.23mph average was the fastest at which the TT had been won while Tim Birkin also broke the overall lap record at 83.21mph. It was an appropriate finale to the Englishman's love-affair

with Irish road racing. As already related, the Boy's Own hero, whose vivid writing and courageous driving had made him a firm favourite with schoolboys and adults alike, died the following year of blood poisoning.

The sixth Ards TT in September 1933 produced another epic battle to add to the action-packed reputation of the Irish road classic. Despite the reduced number of 25 starters, over half a million spectators were treated to a great dice between the legendary Mille Miglia winner Tazio Nuvolari and local hero Hugh Hamilton (second in his class in the same event) in which the result was in doubt right to the flag. Hamilton arrived from Donington where he had handsomely beaten the lap record and both drivers quickly distinguished themselves with some fast practice lappery, Nuvolari's 78mph average being considered nothing short of miraculous as he had never sat in his MG before. Alfa Romeo drivers Earl Howe, Brian Lewis and Tim Rose-Richards also went well in the eventful practice, which was marred by the death of Balmain's mechanic W. E. Dunkley in an accident at Ballystockart.

Although TT morning dawned damp and forbidding, the roads dried out in time for the start of the race which had been lengthened by five laps to 478 miles. The Riley cars were first away with local novice Bobby Baird chasing Victor Gillow and Freddie Dixon. Then it was the turn of the 750cc class which Hamilton in his J4 MG Midget led off in style, determined to make the most of his one lap credit over Nuvolari in the larger MG Magnette. The Riley pilots drove the opening lap as if it were the final one, passing and

George Eyston negotiates corner in 1933 TT.





Hugh Hamilton at Dundonald hairpin 1933 TT. He gave his all to stay ahead of Nuvolari.

repassing and occasionally diving down the escape roads. Brian Lewis and Earl Howe were also nose to tail in their larger Alfas but gradually the attention began to shift to Hamilton and Nuvolari who were driving on the limit all around the circuit.

After one hour's racing, Hamilton was leading from Freddie Dixon, with the erratic Gillow third ahead of T. Simister and Nuvolari, who was making rapid headway in his unaccustomed mount. Lewis was also going well in his Alfa until his race ended with a broken axle at Comber following which he and his mechanic took the train back to spectate at Dundonald. Simister made a more dramatic exit at Moate, standing his MG on its radiator before flying through the hedge, while the consistent Victor Gillow once more came to grief when he wrapped his Riley around a telegraph pole at Quarry while rashly trying to match the pace of Howe's much bigger Alfa!

As Nuvolari shot into the pits for a three-minute stop, Hamilton again broke his class record with 75.77mph lap before making his stop. This turned out to be the turning point of the race as almost everything went wrong for the Irishman. His lift jack wouldn't work, excess petrol overflowed, a bonnet strap wouldn't close and the car's starter refused to turn! The fiery Hamilton shouted at his mechanic which made the man even more flustered and an undone filler-cap meant that fuel splashed everywhere. As the mechanic used a spanner to circumvent the starter, a spark set his gloves and overalls alight. By the time this had been put out and the MG got going again seven precious minutes had been lost — and the race.

Hamilton was now properly fired up and he went like the wind to defend his reduced lead from Dixon who in turn lost a silencer to let the equally determined Nuvolari take up the chase in second place. The little Mantuan increased the 1100cc lap record to 80.22mph, then 80.35mph, then 80.48, but the Omagh man countered with an equally impressive new 750

class record of 77.20mph. Eddie Hall was also going well before he hit the bank at Moate. His sliding MG Magnette was missed by inches by the flying Nuvolari. Hamilton then had an anxious moment at Dundonald when he had to take to the escape road while in Comber he broadsided across the road, but with an hour remaining, he was still ahead.

The fast pace had played havoc with the fuel calculations of both drivers and as the race entered its closing stages Hamilton and Nuvolari found themselves rapidly running out of petrol. On the very last lap, with his lead now reduced to a mere 20 seconds, Hamilton was forced to stop for fuel and he had hardly got going again before Nuvolari swept past. The Italian stayed ahead to win by 40 seconds but only just. As he crossed the line his Magnette coughed and spluttered as it extracted the final drop from its reserve tank. Rose-Richards finished third in his Alfa ahead of Eddie Hall and Lord Howe after Freddie Dixon was disqualified for having a defective silencer. Belfast's Bobby Baird did a great job to take his Riley to sixth place overall in his first international race.

While Hamilton was unlucky not to win, his rival Nuvolari's 78.6mph success was a typical *tour-de-force* by the man whom many regard as the finest driver of all time. He saw both his car

Tazio Nuvolari and Alec Hounslow, after winning the 1933 TT.



Hugh Hamilton and mechanic, after the race.

and mechanic Alec Hounslow for the first time on the opening day of practice. As Nuvolari spoke no English, he and his mechanic communicated by sign language. Hounslow subsequently recalled that the Italian got the hang of the car immediately and once on the road he had hardly left one corner before he had pre-selected a gear for the next one. "He seemed to be around a corner before he got to it. In fact, it was almost monotonous, so perfectly did he corner lap after lap," said Hounslow.

Tazio Nuvolari, a former racing cyclist and motorcyclist, whom his arch-rival Achille Varzi described as "*Il Maestro* — the boldest, most skilful madman of us all," is generally regarded as the greatest racing driver of all time. He invariably drove with his heart rather than his head and in 200 races over three decades he won over 60 times, was second in 26 events and scored few lower places as he either finished on top, blew up or crashed. He is credited with inventing the four-wheel drift whereby a driver corners not by braking but by throwing the car into a controlled skid, the friction between the tyre and road providing deceleration, the steering being provided between a fine balance of the steering wheel and the throttle pedal, before placing the car for the straightest and fastest exit line. Among Tazio's admirers was the poet Gabriel d'Annunzio who presenting him with a silver charm wrote "To Tazio Nuvolari of good Mantuan blood, who true to his race has joined courage with poetry, the most desperate risk to the most obedient

mechanical power, and lastly life unto death on the path to victory.”

That 1933 TT was to be Hugh Hamilton's last Irish event, as shortly before the following year's race he died at the wheel of his Maserati in the Swiss Grand Prix at Berne. The 1934 TT saw important regulation changes with superchargers being banned and riding mechanics no longer required. The press felt that the absence of superchargers would deprive the race of both atmosphere and speed. However, the TT once again provided some splendid racing in front of record crowds. As usual, MGs turned out in force while Riley, Frazer Nash, Lagonda and Aston Martin were also well represented. Eddie Hall, Norman Black, Brian Lewis and George Eyston were among the old favourites taking part while newcomers included TT motorcycle aces Charlie Dodson and Wally Handley.

The fastest MG Magnettes were the first of the 40 starters away and as cars flashed past at the end of the opening lap, Eyston led from Dodson, Handley and Black. The latter's race lasted only two laps before he retired with engine trouble, while scratchman Eddie Hall had a lucky escape after a big moment at Moate Corner. It was to be the Bentley driver's only mistake of the race and settling down to a steady 77mph average he made rapid progress through the field. Motorcycle racer Wally Handley was also going well and he led the MG thresh before being forced to stop with gear trouble. Riley driver Bryce Prestwich went out in more spectacular style at Quarry Corner where he overturned after vaulting the bank. Singer exponent John Hodge also had a narrow escape when his steering failed and he crashed at Ballystockart, while local man Bobby Baird briskly evacuated his Riley when it caught fire at Dundonald.

While Hall continued to make progress with a new class record of 79mph, the Aston Martin cars were challenging the MGs which had started with a two-mile advantage in the same class. Pat Driscoll and T. Fotheringham continued to reduce the 1500cc record but MG's Charlie Dodson was only fractionally slower and after 15 laps he led the race from Brian Lewis who was also going great guns in his Lagonda. Up to fourth place before his pit stop, Eddie Hall rejoined the race just ahead of Lewis who passed him in front of the main grandstand on the next lap. For the following five circuits, the two fastest cars on the course staged a neck-and-neck duel in the best TT traditions before Lewis was slowed with tyre trouble. Hall then got by to begin a vigorous pursuit of Dodson and he set fastest lap

of the race at 81.15mph before a thunder storm slowed his progress.

With just over half an hour left, Dodson and his Magnette led by half a lap. But Hall was flying in the big Bentley and displaying superb car control he relentlessly reduced Dodson's margin. With three laps left, the gap was 1 minute 42 seconds, then it was 1 minute 18 seconds and at the start of the final lap there were just 52 seconds between the leading pair. By Moate Corner this was down to 35 seconds as Hall tried all he knew, and at Ballystockart he had gained a further nine seconds.

Race officials held the numbers of both men ready at the finish line but the ever-second Hall had run out of time and Charlie Dodson held on to win at 74.65mph by 17 seconds in one of the closest-ever TT finishes which saw the third MG success in four years. The race was also somewhat of a triumph for the handicappers who had estimated the winner's time for the 478-mile race at 6 hours 13 minutes and 26 seconds. Dodson's time was exactly two seconds less! Fotheringham in an Aston Martin finished third just ahead of Lewis in his Lagonda. John Hindmarsh took fifth place in another Lagonda while Pat Driscoll finished sixth to help sew up the team prize for Aston Martin.

Dick Seaman (M.G. Magnette), in Ards TT 1935.



“I made it myself in my own back garden!” said Freddie Dixon about the home-tuned Riley which he entered for the 1935 TT. Garden mechanic or not, the race resulted in a resounding success for the rip-roaring former motorcycle ace whose extrovert manner concealed a rare dedication to the exact science of engine tuning. Freddie and his 1286cc Riley were up against 34 entrants including Johnny Hindmarsh who had just scored Britain’s first Le Mans success since 1930 in his Lagonda. Sammy Davis, Earl Howe, Eddie Hall, 1931 winner Norman Black, fast-rising English star Dick Seaman (tutored by Giulio Ramponi of Phoenix Park fame) and the popular Prince Bira of Siam were also taking part, as was the most successful Isle of Man TT motorcycle ace, Dubiner Stanley Woods.

Once again an estimated 300,000 crowd thronged the Ards circuit. The opening laps provided all the expected TT excitement as drivers squabbled for the lead in their classes. Dick Seaman was first past the stands at the end of the opening lap, inches ahead of fellow-MG Magnette driver Kenneth Evans. Freddie Dixon led the 1.5 litre group while Brian Lewis in his blue Bugatti led Bentley-mounted Eddie Hall in the up to 5-litre class. Right from the start it was apparent that Dixon was going at a great rate in his squat blue Riley. After only three laps he had wiped out his 68-second handicap deficit on the leading MGs. The bigger cars were also eating up space, and loud applause greeted the news that Earl Howe had set up a new class record at 81.55mph in his Bugatti. Eddie Hall still led the big class but he was being pushed hard by Johnny Hindmarsh who thrust his Lagonda ahead briefly before the Bentley man regained the position. Meantime, the Singer cars of Sammy Davis, Norman Black and A. H. Langley and Fiat man French Davis were constantly swapping places in an exciting four-car battle.

Prince Bira was an early casualty when a broken oil pipe forced his Aston Martin’s retirement after only seven laps while both Seaman and Evans were lucky to survive alarming skids, the latter having to stop to repair a damaged mudguard. Dixon and Howe meantime continued to reduce their respective class records, while Percy Maclure in turn went even faster than Dixon to lap at 79.18mph. But after an hour and a half’s racing, Dixon’s Riley led on handicap

from Brian Lewis (Bugatti), with Earl Howe (Bugatti) third just ahead of Hindmarsh’s Lagonda. Lewis was then slowed with a slipping clutch while Adler driver Stanley Woods was forced out with a lack of lubrication. Local man Hugh McFerran retired more forcibly after a dramatic confrontation with the sandbags outside Newtownards Town Hall. Maclure also went out with oil trouble, just as Dixon came past the main grandstand to overtake the Singer-Fiat quartet in a terrific cloud of dust. Sammy Davis then got the better of this battle, just before the first of three strange mishaps for the Singer team when



“Abruptly there was a nasty snap, the steering wheel came free . . . and we shot off the curve. . . .”
Sammy Davis comes a cropper, Ards 1935 TT. ▶

steering failure sent Langley crashing out of the race at Bradshaws Brae.

The half-distance pit stops gave the appreciative spectators an opportunity to greet their various heroes and a great cheer went up when Powys-Lybbe brought in his privately entered Alvis. Eddie Hall continued to make up ground on Dixon on handicap and as he pulled the Bentley out of the pits he almost hit his rival as the fleet Freddie himself pitted. With untypical coolness, Freddie gained no less than 45 seconds by virtue of a much smoother pit stop before resuming business at his normal frantic pace. Shortly after Freddie rejoined, Norman Black found himself without steering at Bradshaws Brae to crash into retirement only yards away from his Singer teammate Langley. That left only Sammy Davis and Donald Barnes to represent the marque. A few laps later Davis also crashed out at exactly the same place.

He said afterwards "I started down Bradshaws Brae in fine style, began the penultimate right curve holding nicely to the grass edge while I watched the bumping front wheel. Abruptly there was a nasty snap, the steering wheel came free, the front wheel straightened out and we shot off the curve." Davis was lucky to escape without injury when his car crashed into Black's stranded machine and overturned just missing an artist who was sketching the wreckage of the other two cars!. As Sammy regained his wits (and his pipe from the wreckage) his remaining teammate Donald Barnes was sensibly advised to retire.

Meantime, Eddie Hall was going all out to catch Dixon but a spin at Moate cost him valuable time, while Hindmarsh in turn also overshot Dundonald Hairpin in his efforts to catch Hall. The popular Powys-Lybbe was forced out with piston trouble while Bobby Baird had a big spin at Newtownards. To add to the excitement a horse got on to the circuit at Dundonald and several cars had to be flagged off before it was secured! A blocked petrol pipe allowed Earl Howe to displace Hindmarsh from third place in the closing stages, but there were no such flaws in Freddie Dixon's "Garden Special" and with four laps left he led by four minutes. He slowed down over the final laps to win comfortably at 76.9mph by 1 minute 13 seconds from — second once again — Eddie Hall, while Earl Howe was third ahead of the Aston pair Charles Brackenbury and C. Penn-Hughes, who finished nose to tail after six hours' racing. Cyril Paul was sixth in his Riley.

If the 1935 race had been blessed with one of the finest days in TT history, the 1936 September 5 event went into the record books as one of the



1935 TT winner Freddie Dixon.

wettest. The gloom, alas, was not confined to the weather. A fatal accident involving spectators meant that the TT was never held again on the Ards circuit. Despite the rain, though, the usual quarter of a million crowd thronged the circuit for the revised midday start. Race distance reverted to the normal 30 lap 410 miles length and the 36 car entry comprised 10 different makes, including seven of the new sports Delahaye cars. Women were also allowed to compete for the first time and Mrs Elsie Wisdom, Mrs R. Eccles and Miss J. Richmond took the opportunity to take on the men. Among the male stalwarts were Eddie Hall, Earl Howe, the Hon. Brian Lewis, former winners Charlie Dodson and Freddie Dixon, and local men Bobby Baird and Jack Chambers.

The dreadful conditions played havoc with the start, Bira's Frazer Nash and the early-starting Fiats having difficulty in leaving the line where Baird and Delahaye driver Lebeque were also temporarily stranded. Singer man Donald Barnes led around the circuit for most of the opening lap before local Fiat hero Billie Sullivan splashed past in sheets of spray, while Riley driver Percy Maclure and Seaman in an Aston Martin were already setting a fast pace in their respective 1500 and 2000cc classes. Cars were sliding all over the road and the second lap saw the exits over different hedges of Bugatti driver Embiricos and Delahaye exponent Mongin after an all-French coming-together at Moate corner. A.R. Phipps also retired his Aston against the bank at Ballystockart but these accidents did little to curb

the enthusiasm of Frazer Nash driver A.F.P. Fane in his first TT who was staging a great dice with Seaman for class honours. Each driver repeatedly broke the 2-litre record and Seaman was making great progress on handicap until a seized engine terminated his race after 12 laps.

Bentley pilot Eddie Hall — still chasing that elusive win — and Lagonda-mounted Brian Lewis were also engaged in another neck-and-neck confrontation in the big car class, but the driver who was most at home in the rain was the irrepressible Freddie Dixon, who was carving his way through the field in his Riley. After two hours racing, Freddie had averaged an incredible 76.78mph to lead from Lewis, Hall and T.G. Clarke in a Delahaye. Lewis then dropped back after an indiscretion at Newtownards, where Jack Chambers and Bira had earlier had anxious moments, the latter having to stop to straighten a mudguard.

Dixon continued to increase his advantage in the wet before handing over to Charlie Dodson and after three hours the pair led from Hall, with Lewis third ahead of Clarke. As the roads began to dry, Lewis started to close on Hall and the speeds increased dramatically with Fane again breaking the 2-litre record, taking it over the 80mph to 80.61mph. Then at 3.30 there occurred the most serious accident in TT history, when Jack Chambers lost control entering Newtownards and his Riley crashed into the crowd killing eight spectators.

The race continued though, with Charlie Dodson setting a new 1500 record of 80.35mph while Brian Lewis lapped his Lagonda at over 83mph, a speed which was almost immediately equalled by Eddie Hall. T. G. Clarke then whirled his Delahaye around at 84.06mph only to retire with ignition trouble. But all eyes were on Hall whose pit counter was very obviously prepared

1936 winner, Charlie Dodson, in his Riley.



The crash that ended the Ards TT races. Chambers' Riley after the accident (1936 TT).

for a final refuelling stop. Dodson however was taking no chances and he maintained his speed to lead by two minutes with three laps to go. Hall had a 40-gallon tank in his car and he stayed out to complete the only non-stop run of the race, reducing Dodson's Riley lead to only one minute and 25 seconds as the pair started the final lap. But Dodson held on to win by a minute and to complete the excitement of the closing stage, Lebeque in his Delahaye set the fastest ever TT lap of 9 minutes 33 seconds, an average of 85.52mph. A.F.P. Fane finished third ahead of South Africa's Pat Fairfield, while Earl Howe in another Lagonda was fifth ahead of Percy Maclure (Riley).

The race ended with most of the spectators unaware of the Newtownards tragedy which brought to an end nine years of glorious racing over the unique Ards road circuit. From now until after the war, Irish motorsport attention would centre mainly on events in the south of the island, although the TT was destined to return in post-war years to Dundrod, where such notable drivers as World Champions Alberto Ascari and Juan Manuel Fangio would compete against such talented English newcomers as Stirling Moss and Mike Hawthorn. ■

15. POST-GRAND PRIX RACES AT PHOENIX PARK (1932-1935)

Opportunities for local talent

The lack of government and trade support may have led to the end of the great international races in Dublin's Phoenix Park, but the events had established the Park as a popular road circuit where racing between the daunting trees and atmospheric Victorian gas lamp standards continues to the present day. The city circuit where the world's land speed record had been beaten in 1903 was also to achieve another prestigious record, that of Europe's fastest road racing circuit. But, for the first time, the four years between 1932 and 1935 the Park allowed local drivers — and British competitors — the opportunity to extend themselves without being swamped by the top continental professionals.

When the Irish Grand Prix races were first planned it had been hoped to precede the big international events with a smaller one for Irish-born drivers. The idea of this curtain-raising race was to provide the opportunity for the development of local talent, just as the national motorcycle events had produced such world-beaters as Stanley Woods, Jimmy Shaw and H.G. Tyrrell Smith. However, it wasn't until the 1932 Phoenix Park meeting, thanks ironically to lack of government support, that the first virtually all-Irish motor race was held. As Motor News noted "It is a daring experiment as we believe it marks the first time in these islands when facilities have been given for so many car owners to run their vehicles with a fair chance of success in a properly organized motor race."

The September 17 meeting comprised two 50-mile handicap races, the first for cars up to 1100cc, the second for over 1100cc, with three motorcycle events also included to enliven the proceedings. Lord Wakefield of Castrol fame put up a handsome 50-guinea cup for the winner of either the Junior or Senior event who beat his handicap by the biggest margin. No fewer than 37 entries were received — more than for the recently run TT races — and with the cars numbered in their starting order the handicap system was by the traditional means of credit laps and time allowances.

Over 80,000 spectators turned out in Indian Summer conditions and there was pre-race



Ivan Waller from Derby. Wakefield Trophy winner 1932.

drama when Southport Bugatti entrant J. J. Field found that all cars had to carry a mechanic. As his was a pukka single-seater he was unable to comply with the regulations but eventually the other drivers Solomon-like agreed that having come so far he should be allowed to race — though without being eligible for an award! As Field prepared for the Senior event, there was keen competition in the under-1100cc race as Sydney Sheane in his MG Midget extracted the most from his handicap allowance before being overhauled by Amilcar driver F.W. Earney. However, the latter's lead was short-lived as Alan Potterton from Athboy soon thrust his MG ahead to win at 58.55mph by 13 seconds from scratchman D.C. McLachlan, who would have reversed the positions had he not been delayed for a minute by magneto trouble. Wicklow's Sheane held on to third place until overtaken near the finish by the redoubtable Billy Sullivan in his Sullivan Special.

Lapping at 82mph, J.J. Field disappeared into the blue as expected immediately the Senior race started, but there was plenty of excitement behind him as his slower rivals flung their cars around Mountjoy and Gough sometimes three abreast as in the Grand Prix days. Peugeot driver F. Peares led for the early stages but his handicap advantage was soon eroded by Cobh man T.F.

Dowling who put on an impressive display in his old Morris Cowley before an argument with the Mountjoy sandbags. By the ninth lap, the Belfast MG Magnette pair Hugh McFerran and George Beattie were disputing the lead with Derby visitor Ivan Waller in hot pursuit in his Alvis.

Frank Gannon's fine efforts brought his Lea-Francis through to third place before it caught fire at Mountjoy, but there was no such misfortune for Waller who carved his way through to win at 77.87mph from McFerran, Beattie and Billy Sullivan. Waller's fine efforts earned him the Wakefield Trophy while Sullivan took two prizes for setting fastest laps in both the 850 and 1500cc classes and the fastest overall lap was set by Field at 82.48mph. Though it was felt that the races should have been held over longer distances, both competitors and spectators considered the meeting a great success while for the organizers it sustained their hopes of once again staging an international Grand Prix in Phoenix Park.

The RIAC were in fact allocated the dates of August 4 and 5 for an international 1933 event but reeling under the effects of the prohibitive import duties the motor traders were unable to assist financially and the club settled for a repeat of the previous year's formula, but with race

Billy Sullivan set fastest lap times in two classes, 1932.



distances increased to 100 miles. A total of 38 entries was received including one from Isle of Man millionaire T.G. Moore who had recently distinguished himself by exiting the TT at a great rate of knots through Ballystockart hedge. Additional public interest was generated by the impending marriage between the Park's first woman driver Miss Norrie Comerford from Wexford and fellow-competitor H.F. McCullough, while another entrant was the son of a Bishop.

The meeting once again attracted a capacity crowd which was treated to some fine early fast lappery in the Junior race by Bobby Baird who was making his Park debut in his low-slung blue Riley. Baird was driving from scratch position and smarting under the additional handicap of precious time lost with oiled-up plugs he twice overshot Mountjoy. Billy Sullivan however made more consistent progress and looked all set to win before a fan blade came adrift, and once again it was Alan Potterton who sailed by in his little 847cc MG, having unknown to the handicappers found an extra four mph since his 1932 success. Potterton won by three minutes at 63.4mph from Billy Kavanagh who was just seconds clear of D.C. MacLachlan, while Baird was an equally close fourth just ahead of fellow-Ulsterman Frank O'Boyle.

Newly-married Norrie Comerford was the first to reach Mountjoy in her maroon Hillman Aero Minx in the Senior race in which limit man Frank Pearson grimly kept his Peugeot well clear of the opposition until it shed a tyre. Frank O'Boyle then took over the lead in his Riley as Billy Sullivan and P. M. Berkery staged a great dice for second place. But once again it was Baird who set the pace as he lapped at 80mph in pursuit of the limit men. He was in turn being chased by Gordon Neill who kept his Bugatti glued to the Riley's tail for most of the race.

Baird set quickest lap at 82mph but his handicap disadvantage beat him back to fifth place as O'Boyle won at 67.9mph by a minute from Billy Sullivan, with Berkery third ahead of Alan Corry, Baird and Gordon Neill. O'Boyle's elegant efforts also earned him the Wakefield Trophy while Miss Comerford who had become Mrs. McCullough that morning won her first matrimonial contest by taking ninth place at 60mph despite gearbox trouble, while her husband was a non-finisher in the Junior event. Once again the racing had been accident-free apart from an errant spare wheel which hit two spectators from Inchicore, who suffered nothing worse than bruises for which they were amply

compensated with the promise of VIP attention for the following year's races.

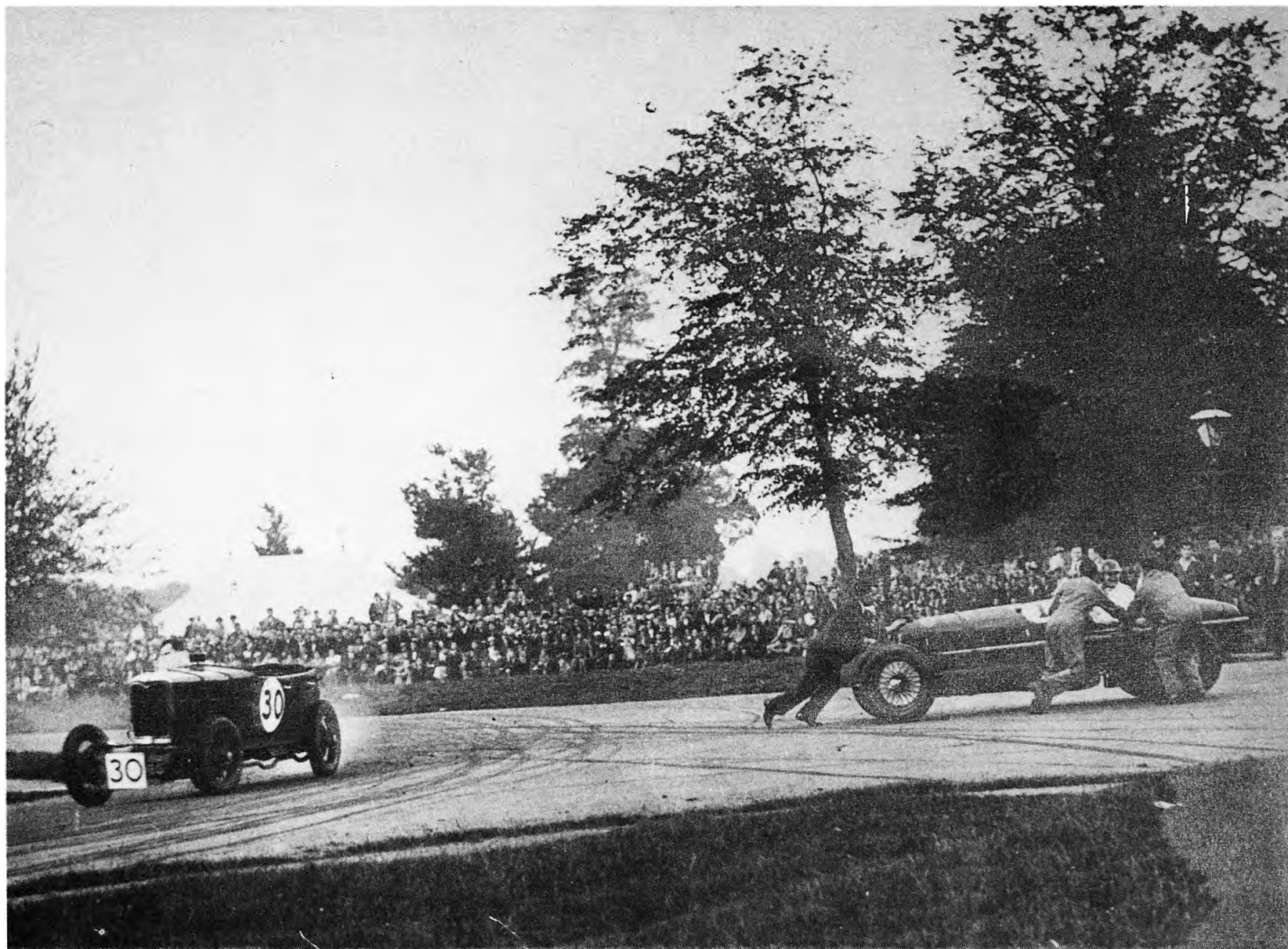
The IMRC's unabated enthusiasm for the Phoenix Park series against overwhelming financial constraints was richly rewarded with a record entry of 55 drivers for the September 1934 meeting, compared to 37 in 1932 and 38 in 1933. Once again there were two races, the Junior event for under-1100cc cars over a distance of 75 miles (18 laps) and the Senior for over-1100 machines over 100 miles (24 laps). Many drivers such as Billy Sullivan and Trevor McCalla came straight to the Park from Tourist Trophy participation but they found the Dublin timekeeping far short of TT standards and controversy surrounded the results of the opening event. Not so the marshalling. An alert official saved Austin Dobson from a nasty accident when he lifted the rope which stretched across the Mountjoy escape road as the Englishman arrived at well over the ton unable to take the corner.

Limit driver F.W. Earney led from the start of the Junior race in his trusty Amilicar but behind

him there was a close struggle for several laps between four drivers who were on the same three-lap handicap, A.P. Huet (MG Midget), David Yule (747 s/c Austin), Charlie Taylor and J. Wasson each in a Singer. Though Huet eventually dropped back after several alarming gyrations due to brake-fade, Yule and Wasson were never more than inches apart for most of the race. However they were overwhelmed with four laps left by the faster C.G. Manby-Colegrave whose MG Magnette then set off in hot pursuit of Earney. But just as the Englishman was poised to pass Earney, the race leader was given the chequered flag two laps too soon — a consequence of the timekeeper ruling his sheets for 16 instead of 18 laps!

Fortunately a Stewards' meeting was quickly convened before physical damage followed moral outrage and the results were wisely projected to give Manby-Colegrave a deserved first place at 88.5mph from Earney, with Wasson third just ahead of Yule. Less fortunate in terms of injuries were the six spectators who were hospitalized

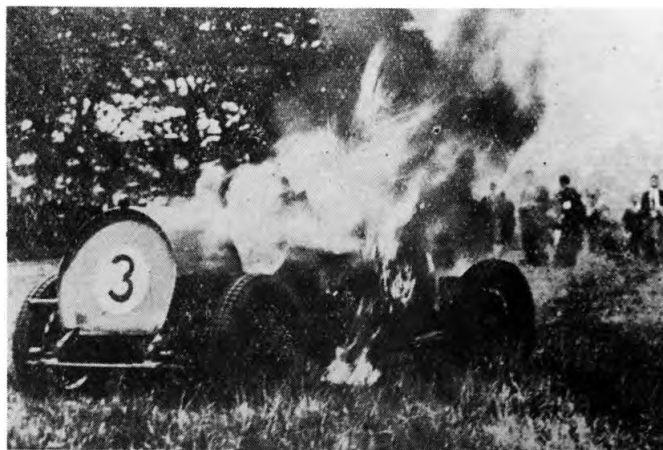
Dobson is pushing clear just in time after spinning at Mountjoy Corner. H. H. Delap is seen passing in front.



when A. Finlay crashed into the Garda depot railings when being overtaken by Alan Corry at the half-way stage of the race.

Twenty nine drivers started the Senior event but five of these had fallen by the wayside by the end of the fifth lap including Manby-Colgrave and Bobby Baird. T.F. Dowling made the most of his eight-lap start to keep his faithful Morris Cowley ahead for the early laps before being reeled in by Chrysler pair W.G.E Bailey and J.M. Smith and Dermot O'Clery who swapped the lead for several circuits. Smith however lost his second place when his engine expired while Charlie Manders went out in more fiery fashion as his Delage went alight on the back straight. But it was Austin Dobson in his scarlet Monza Alfa who was making the most smoke without fire with some lurid cornering at Gough and Mountjoy as, lapping in the 90's, he worked his way through from scratch position.

At three-quarter's distance, W.G. Bailey had a commanding lead while F. O'Connor (Singer), Alan Corry (MG Magna) and M.J. Hynes duelled for second place. Hynes eventually left the other two and set off in pursuit of Bailey, but when it looked as if he would have to settle for second place Bailey's engine gave up the ghost and the Kilkenny man went on to win at 80.2mph in his Statham-Ford Special, a veteran of many Irish road races. Alan Corry finished 19 seconds



Charlie Manders went out in more fiery fashion as his Delage went alight. . . .

behind to take second place ahead of Reggie Tongue (Aston Martin) and J. Wasson (Singer) while Austin Dobson could only manage fifth despite setting fastest lap of 94.7mph. The handicappers may have been severe on the Englishman who had lapped the Park faster than it had ever been done before but they judged it finely overall, with just three minutes separating the first six finishers.

The September 1935 Park meeting took place as Dublin was a cauldron of Celtic controversy following the removal of Sean O'Casey's "Silver Tassie" after a week's run in the Abbey Theatre. The four-wheeled dramatists were fortunately



M.J. Hynes is congratulated by George Statham on winning the Senior Race, 1934.

allowed fuller freedom of expression in what proved to be a sensationally fast meeting which saw the introduction of a 200-mile race rather than two separate events and a near-100mph lap by the returned Austin Dobson. The entries included Stanley Woods and Charles Goodacre in Austins, Charlie Manders and Paddy Le Fanu in their white Adlers and three beautiful R-type MG Midgets driven by Bobby Baird, Reggie Tongue and Ian Connell.

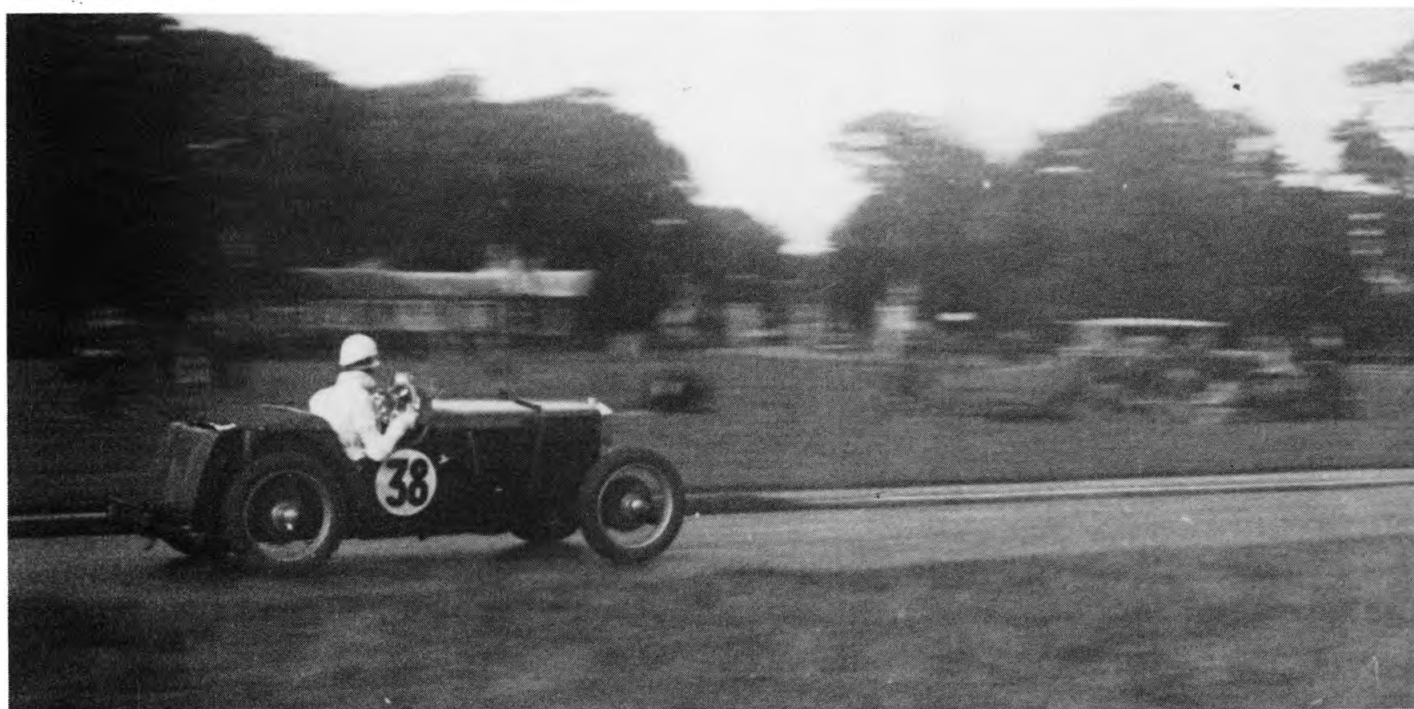
With practice once again taking place on the preceding Thursday, County Down Trophy winner Hugh Fleming (MG Midget) and 1934 Junior victor Manby-Colegrave (s/c MG Magnette) were the only two drivers to better their handicap estimates. The latter was lucky to make official practice as after missing the train from London he chartered a plane but then had to return to Liverpool after flying for a sightless hour over fogbound Dublin. Equally impressive in practice was Park newcomer Luis Fontes (s/c Alfa) from Reading who had recently scored Lagonda's only success in the Le Mans 24-hours classic. Austin Dobson's Maserati provided a poignant reminder of earlier Park days, as it was the car on whose exhaust Tim Birkin had two years earlier received his fatal burns in Tripoli.

The three fastest of the 32 starters were first to leave the line and it was Dobson who took an immediate lead on the road from E. K. Reyson (Bugatti) and Fontes in his Alfa Romeo. As Dobson's 3-litre Maserati disappeared at speed, the latter pair swapped places for several laps but

at half-distance the race leader was Charles Goodacre in his supercharged Austin who with his handicap start of seven laps was well clear of Dobson and company. Billy Kavanagh's Alfa Romeo caught fire early on but it was Dobson who provided the real fireworks as he repeatedly broke the lap record before eventually pushing it up to 99.6mph, just one second short of the magic 100mph lap. Sadly a misfire then ensued and he had to retire, leaving Reyson to take up the chase of the limit men, before his Bugatti's engine also expired, despite its specially enlarged super-cooling radiator.

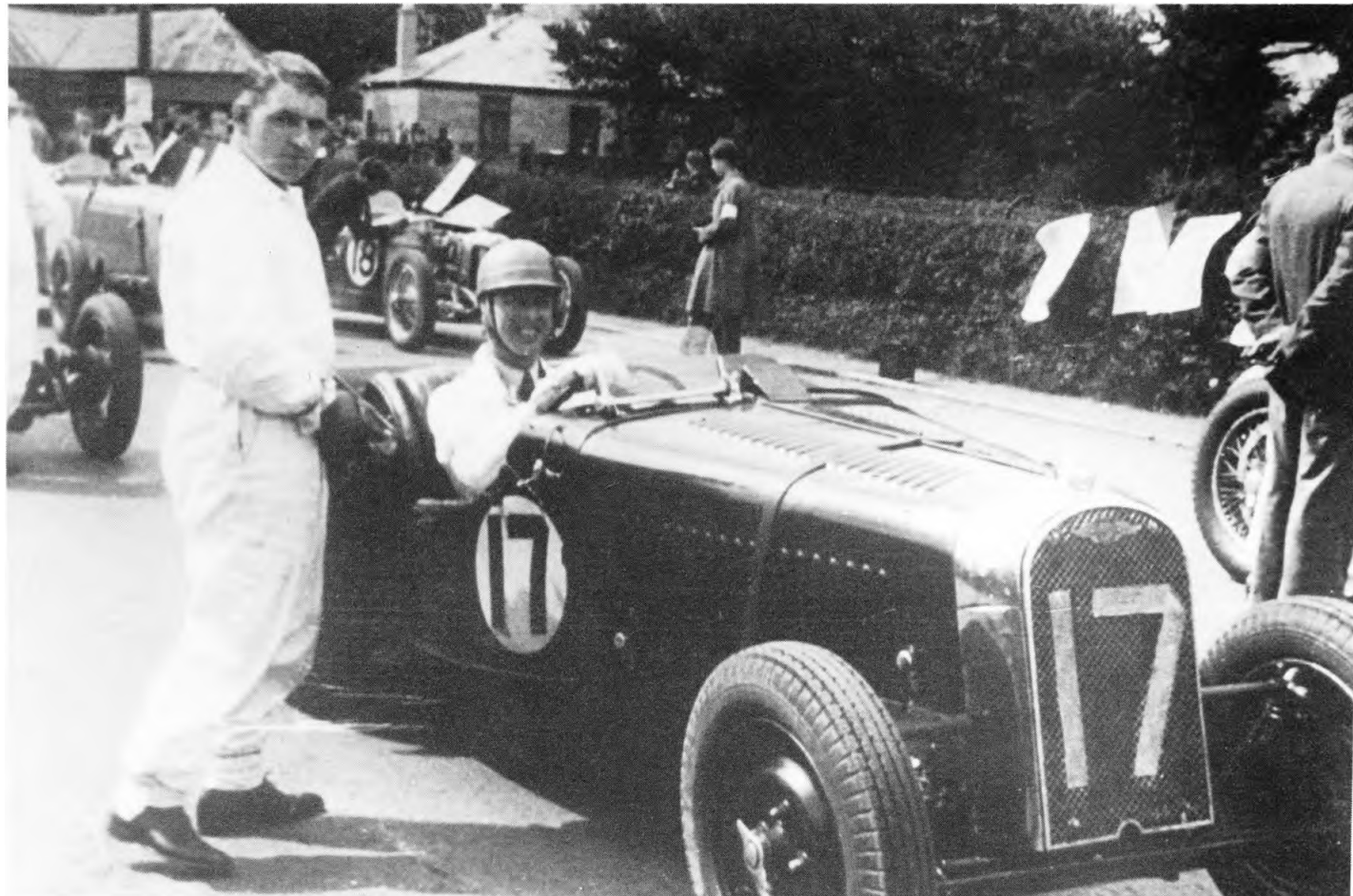
David Yule in his hotted-up Morris Eight led for many laps after overhauling Goodacre, but he in turn was passed by R.D. Marsh whose MG Midget came under strong attack by Bangor man Walter Furey, driving like his name in only his third race. Furey eventually went ahead to take his MG Magnette to a well deserved 69.94mph win by one minute from Fontes who averaged 90.96mph in his Limerick GP-winning Alfa. L.R. Briggs (MG Midget) took third place while Fleming finished fourth ahead of local drivers George Mangan, also Midget-mounted, and Paddy Le Fanu in his little Adler. With so many new drivers and a much longer race the event was again a success for the handicappers, five minutes covering the first six drivers after 200 miles of racing. The success of these post-Irish Grand Prix Phoenix Park events also paved the way for international status for the 1936 event which was to see the first 100mph Park lap. ■

George Mangan at speed, Phoenix Park 1935, in Sydney Sheane's MG.



16. ROAD RACING SPREADS (1934-1937)

Round-the-Houses from Bray to Bangor



Desmond McCracken, winner 1935 Cuairt Bhre race.

Although the Phoenix Park races were to continue until interrupted by the war, Dublin and Ards no longer enjoyed a monopoly of Irish road racing and the Cuairt Bhre and County Down Trophy races which commenced life in 1934 were soon followed by the Leinster Trophy series and the Limerick and Cork Grand Prix events. The earliest of these was the Cuairt Bhre series which was first held in May 1934, a month before the inaugural County Down Trophy race. It is worth remembering that there were only two racing circuits in England at this time, Brooklands and the newly-opened Donington Park.

The Cuairt Bhre races gave the honour of staging the first Irish round-the-houses race to Bray, the seaside resort 14 miles south of Dublin whose enterprising hoteliers and traders were quick to appreciate the crowd-pulling potential of

such an event which was already proving successful in the Isle of Man. Before indignant Ulster folk rush to remind us that cars had roared through the streets of Comber and Newtownards five years previous to the Bray competition, it must be pointed out that these represented TT through-traffic whereas in Bray it was real urban racing unmitigated by any rural excursions.

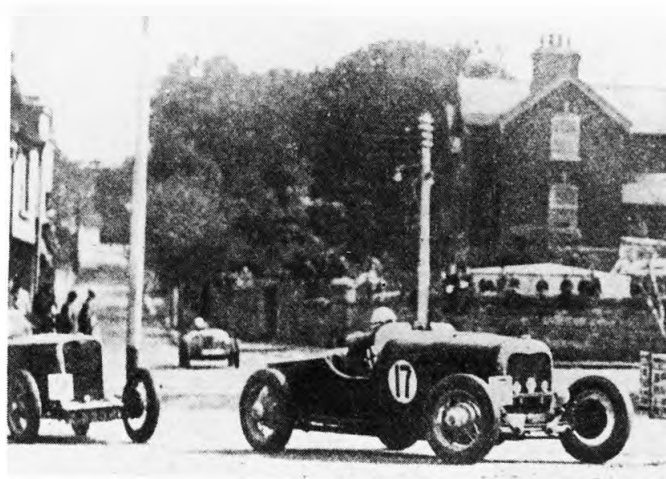
The Cuairt Bhre events were organized by the IMRC and the opening 102-mile handicap race was held over 32 laps of a 3.2-mile circuit which ran from Strand Road to the Town Hall, via Bridge Corner and Vevey Road and back through a series of fast sweeps through Montnora Bend, Herbert Road and Quinnsborough Road. The 1934 event attracted 20 starters among whom were Trevor McCalla in his ex-Grange Sunbeam and Charlie Manders in the Type 37 Straight Eight Bugatti, which had won many

European hillclimbs in the hands of brave Frenchman Robert Benoist and compatriot Albert Divo. The car still bore Divo's name on its red bonnet.

Thursday's early-morning practice went down less well than had been expected with the locals and one old lady complained "If they want to practice why don't they go away and do it somewhere else?" But on the bright August raceday thousands turned out and the IMRC marshals had a job controlling the hardier spectators who insisted on crowding the pavements. The start proved a thrilling spectacle, as the cars dashed through the tight streets, their engine noises reverberating from the houses and shop buildings.

From the start, it was apparent that limit man Paddy Le Fanu was in with a great chance of success with Fay Taylour's Leinster Trophy-winning Adler whose front-wheel drive and good handling made for nimble driving around the many-cornered circuit. The Dubliner led after eight laps from Singer driver J.F. Sutherland, but Trevor McCalla's Sunbeam was easily the quickest car on the course and lapping consistently at 54mph the County Down man picked his way surely through the field.

As brakes wore down and enthusiasm increased, many drivers made liberal use of the convenient escape roads, particularly at the Boathouse and Town Hall corners. Hugh McFerran had a lucky escape when he crashed at Martello Bend, while Gordon Neill was knocked

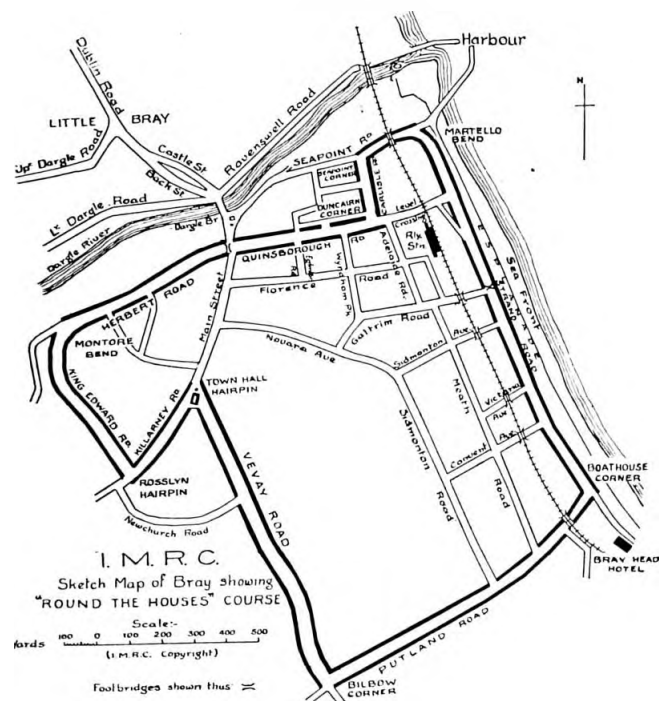


Hynes leads Sutherland, Bray 1934.

unconscious when his Bugatti ran out of brakes and overturned at the fast Montnore Bend just as he had taken over third place. Charlie Manders bit the dust after an unwise assault on the Town Hall steps, while McCalla also contributed to the excitement and lost precious seconds as he overshot the hairpin bend at the same place.

With four laps left, McCalla in the Sunbeam was two minutes and 23 seconds behind Le Fanu and gaining fast. A lap later he had almost halved the gap but in his eagerness to catch the race-leader he began to squander time in speed-sapping slides. At the start of the second last lap, McCalla was 57 seconds behind the imperturbable Le Fanu who had never put a wheel wrong throughout the race and with one lap left there were only 37 seconds between the two drivers. McCalla put on a mighty spurt but Le Fanu responded to win by just two seconds at 49mph. MG driver G White took third place ahead of Charlie Taylor (Singer), D.C. McLachlan (Riley) and J.F. Sutherland (Singer).

Bray business folk pronounced themselves well pleased with their first race but sensibly sought a change from the Bank Holiday Whit Weekend and the 1935 event was planned for May 18. Race distance was increased to 120 miles and for the first time in Ireland, Free State volunteer soldiers were brought in to marshal the race. Twenty two drivers started the event and there was action right from the start as Trevor McCalla and newcomer C.G. Manby-Colegrave dived to break the 55mph lap record. On the second lap, Manby-Colegrave in his supercharged MG Magnette pushed the speed up to 56.12mph. McCalla in his Sunbeam responded with a lap at 56.4mph which the Englishman increased to 56.95mph before McCalla circulated at 57.24mph.



As the pair made their way through the early starters, local limit driver Bill McQuillan (Salmson) was displaced by F. Pearson (Lea-Francis) who led until lap 10 when Austin driver David Yule took over. Cahir man Philip Dwyer was also looking good at this stage but like 1934 winner Paddy Le Fanu he was unable to make sufficient inroads on his handicap and on lap 25 of the 40-lap event Frank Gannon took over in his Lea-Francis. Shortly afterwards, MG driver G.E. White progressed to second, while making even faster progress was law student Desmond McCracken who had worked his Frazer Nash up to fourth place.

The progress of the scratch drivers and the battle for the lap record were rudely interrupted by a sudden squall half way through the race which, as well as drenching competitors and spectators, also ripped away most of the advertising banners — which race officials rashly tried to retrieve by dashing through the passing cars! Luckily no one was hit and the wind and rain subsided as suddenly as they had arrived. The dampness of the roads however gave the advantage to the smaller cars and as Manby-Colegrave retired with valve problems, Desmond McCracken slid into second spot behind race-leader Gannon.

He steadily reeled in the Lea-Francis driver until with five laps left he was only 18 seconds in arrears. A lap later the gap was down to 10 seconds and after shadowing the race leader for a lap and a half, McCracken calmly went ahead on the penultimate circuit to win his first-ever road race by eight seconds at 51.24mph from Gannon. Trevor McCalla looked certain to take third place but a misfire in the closing laps demoted him to sixth behind Le Fanu, M.J. Hynes (Statham-Ford), and MG Magna driver D. Squires. Manby-Colegrave had the consolation of

fastest lap at 57.82mph while the support of the northern contingent was suitably rewarded with the Ulster Automobile Club's success in the inter-team competition.

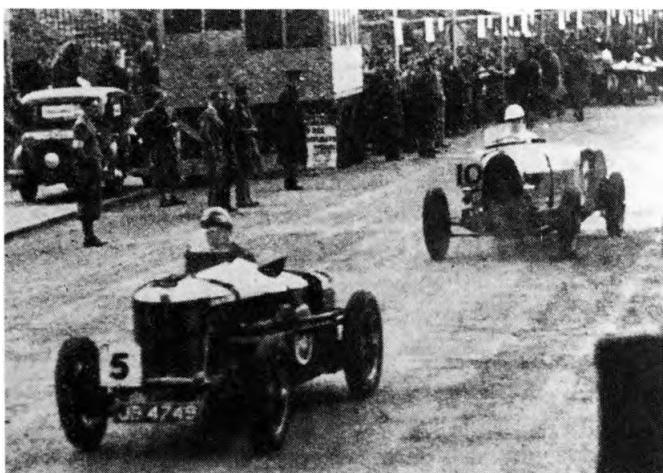
Although a minority of residents objected to the noise and the road closures, the Cuairt Bhre events foundered prematurely because of lack of finance to resurface the roads, particularly along the one-mile Strand Road straight which featured some very dangerous bumps. It was a pity the series came to an end as while Bray did not provide quite the exotic atmosphere of cliff-hanging Monte Carlo, the Cuairt Bhre races combined the best in Irish club racing with that special excitement which is unique to street events, whether it be marathon running, cycle racing or spectacular car competition. Perhaps the burghers of Bray might one day see again the tourist potential of street racing — and what an appropriate setting the seaside town would provide for the annual Leinster Trophy races now caged in the tamer plains of Kildare's Mondello Park?

It may be remembered that as far back as 1924, 10 years before the first Bray race, the Ulster Automobile Club had planned a road race on the Clady circuit. The event was cancelled when local man Stanley Pyper was killed during practice and the club then concentrated its energies on the prestigious TT series, the Ulster Rally and the annual Craigtantlet hillclimb. All this time, however, the hope of running a road race remained undiminished and the success of the TT events and the proliferation of road races in the south eventually expedited the necessary permission from Down Council to stage a new 1934 event for the County Down Trophy.

The opening handicap 114-mile race was planned for June 30 on a triangular 3.82 mile circuit which ran from Donaghadee on the Ards peninsula along the Newtownards road before returning along the Bangor road. In view of the shortness of the circuit, the RAC stipulated a maximum of 20 cars and on the inaugural sunny raceday 17 drivers turned out for the 30-lap race including London entrant John Hodge in his super-streamlined Singer Nine. Handicaps were allotted by even laps and spectators were treated to the glorious sight and sound of a massed start as drivers jostled for position on the way out of Donaghadee.

Determined to make up for his narrow defeat in the recent Bray race, Trevor McCalla was in a determined mood from the start and on a circuit so close to home he made no mistakes as his Sunbeam streaked away from the pack. How-

Baird leads Dwyer, Bray 1935.



ever, he had his work cut out to catch the limit men and it was L.H. Briggs on maximum handicap allowance of five laps who led easily until sidelined with lubrication trouble, leaving fellow-MG men W.F. Ayrton and A.R. Finlay to dispute the lead. John Hodge also flew for many laps until after several near-misses he went hedge-hopping to land in the front garden of a startled local.

Bobby Baird in his Riley and Bugatti driver Hugh McFerran did their best to remain in touch with McCalla until each was forced out with engine problems and with five laps to run the local man was only seconds behind race-leader Finlay. Setting fastest lap at 70.35 the Crossgar driver took the lead two laps later and swept on to give the ex-Grave car its first Irish success at 67.14mph by 36 seconds from Finlay and Ayrton, with A.H. Wilkinson fourth in his Sunbeam ahead of the redoubtable Billy Sullivan.

The Down meeting attracted a huge crowd and as Autocar pointed out many felt they had witnessed the beginning of a series with great potential. For the June 1935 event however the venue was switched to a six-mile circuit based on

Bangor-Crawfordsburn with the start and finish in Bangor's broad main street. Race distance was increased to 150 miles, 25 laps, and 25 drivers started, a much regretted absentee being Bobby Baird whose MG had been crashed just before the event.

Alfa Romeo drivers Austin Dobson and Luis Fontes dominated Thursday's practice and it was they who led the massed start to commence the daunting task of overhauling the limit men who enjoyed six credit laps. Trevor McCalla's hopes of a repeat success fizzled out with faulty ignition on the fifth lap while Pat Driscoll's fast-moving new Austin was also put out by electrical problems after speeding into fourth place.

Dobson and Fontes kept close company for the early laps until the Le Mans winner went ahead with fastest lap at 82.87mph. However, he then retired with valve trouble and though Dobson maintained his pace he was unable to make any impression on the limit drivers. Local man J.A. Scott who had led from the start was three minutes clear of fellow-limit driver Malcolm Fleming with only four laps left when his exhaust pipe came adrift. His MG Midget rival then went ahead to win at 61.83mph by 42 seconds from Dubliner J. French-Davis (Fiat), with Billy Sullivan, this time in a Bugatti, third ahead of

The dust flies in 1934 Down Trophy race.





Whoa there! . . . Malcolm Fleming's MG does an Irish Jig, en route to 1935 Down Trophy success.

L.H. Briggs (MG Midget), Austin Dobson and MG Magnette pilot S.C. Collier.

Interest in the County Down Trophy quickened for the 1936 event which attracted 30 starters of which the 10 English participants included a last-minute entry of the new works supercharged ohc Austin cars. One breathless entrant was Dubliner Charlie Manders, who arrived for practice an hour after finishing fifth in the Isle of Man Lightweight TT.

English privateer Anthony Powys-Lybbe in his Monza 2.3 litre Alfa Romeo shared the front row of the grid with Austin's Charles Dodson and it was obvious right from the spectacular massed start that the little white Austins were in with a great chance of success. At the end of the opening lap, Powys-Lybbe led the screaming Austins of Dodson, Pat Driscoll and Charles Goodacre, but lapping at 84mph Dodson was steadily closing the gap. Powys-Lybbe increased speed to set up a new lap record of 85.15mph and then 86mph to draw away again. At this stage the shrill superchargers of the little Austins began to dim as Goodacre's car succumbed to a faulty throttle control and Driscoll went out with a broken oil pipe.

The factory's promised challenge collapsed completely with the demise of Dodson's car on the twelfth lap, at which stage 1935 winner Malcolm Fleming was leading before he skidded and damaged a wheel of his MG. Billy Sullivan was also going well until ignition trouble intervened which allowed L.R. Briggs a comfortable lead in his MG. Powys-Lybbe was fairly scything through the field, however, and his Alfa never missed a beat as it raced from sixth on lap 15 to third place four laps later. He soon had Briggs in his sights and after passing him on the following lap he went on to win by three minutes from the slowing MG driver, with Bugatti driver Derek Taylor third ahead of Charlie Manders in his faithful Adler, George Mangan (MG Midget) and Alec MacAuthur (MG Magnette). Powys-Lybbe's winning average of 84.36mph was over five miles per hour faster than Austin Dobson's 1935 speed and he also took the honour of fastest lap at 86.56mph.

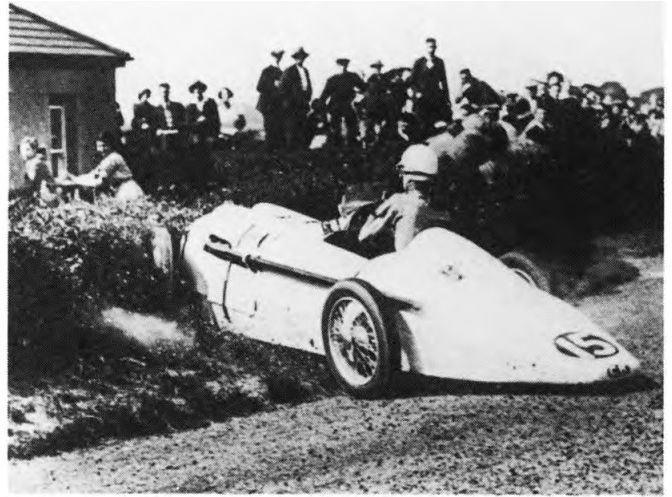
With promised works entries and a full grid for the 1936 event it looked as if the series was set for a secure and successful future. but the Ards TT tragedy led to an immediate ban by Down County Council on motor racing through built-up areas. Having staged the Ulster Grand Prix motorcycle races since their inception the nearby Antrim Council were in a less discouraging mood,

however, and they allowed the Ulster Automobile Club to run their annual race for what would now be called the Ulster Trophy. The chosen circuit was near Ballyclare and its 4.14 miles included a downhill straight of one mile, a slow section of similar length and a fast two-mile climbing return.

Twenty three drivers started the June 1937 inaugural Ulster Trophy event and the usual massed start saw a flying get-away by Maserati driver Robin Hanson who swept into the lead from the second row of the grid ahead of front men Powys-Lybbe and Ivo Peters. Hanson's lead was as short-lived as it was spectacular, and he crashed into retirement on the Sandymount Bends two short miles from the start, leaving Peters in his new 2.6 Alfa clear of Powys-Lybbe in his 1936-winning car and Adrian Conan-Doyle (Bugatti). These drivers had a long way to make up on the limit men who had eight laps in hand but the main threat was quickly seen to come from Bryce Prestwich, whose single-seater MG Magnette was running well ahead of expectations. Ironically the car which seemed likely to offer the Cork winner any challenge at this stage was his own MG Midget which was being driven by R. Scott.

After an hour's racing, Prestwich led from Scott with Belfast's G. Best third in his P-type MG, but Scott's challenge expired when he collided with Freddy Smyth's Ford Special allowing newcomer R. Campbell in a Morgan to progress to third. Many of the MG's were misfiring badly and when victory seemed likely for Prestwich his car was also hit by the same malady and the consequent long pit-stop handed a comfortable lead to Campbell from MG Magnette driver J.R. Weir.

Ivo Peters and Powys-Lybbe meanwhile had been staging a merry dice, with Peters taking an early lead before spinning at Ballyrobert Corner. Then Powys-Lybbe made an uncharacteristic

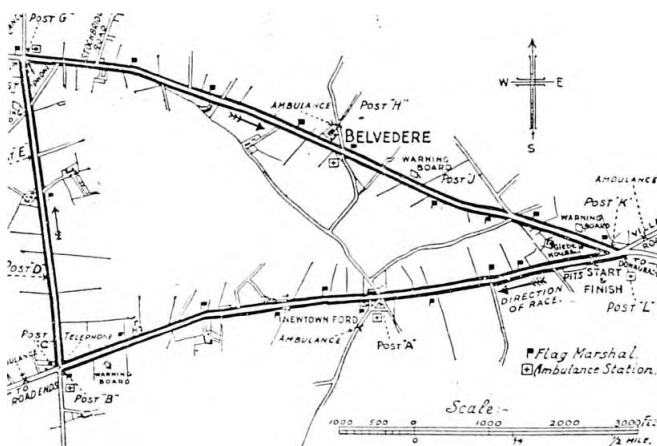


Put the kettle on! Hodge makes surprise visit in 1934 Down Trophy event.

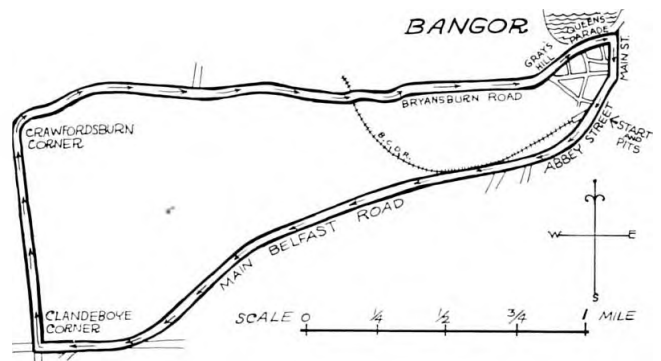
excursion into the undergrowth but after a stop to remove the vegetation he resumed the chase lapping at 70mph. Peters then punctured as his Alfa rival was forced to make another pit-stop from which he restarted with difficulty. As Powys-Lybbe regained the circuit he found himself right behind Peters who promptly pushed the lap record up to 71mph. The Monza Alfa driver responded with a lap at 72mph which Peters equalled before setting a new record of 72.73mph. However, his search for further speed came to an abrupt halt when he crashed just a mile from the finish. Peters was shot clean out of his car but luckily escaped without injury as Powys-Lybbe equalled his lap record on his final circuit.

The misfortunes of these two drivers allowed Conan-Doyle to move up to third place but on the last lap he was retaken by the recovered Prestwich who vainly tried to overhaul the first two drivers Campbell and Weir. Campbell held on to win his debut race by two minutes from Weir at 53.73mph while behind Prestwich and Conan-Doyle came J. Wilson (Lagonda) and

Down Trophy Circuit, Donaghadee.



Ulster Trophy Circuit, Bangor.



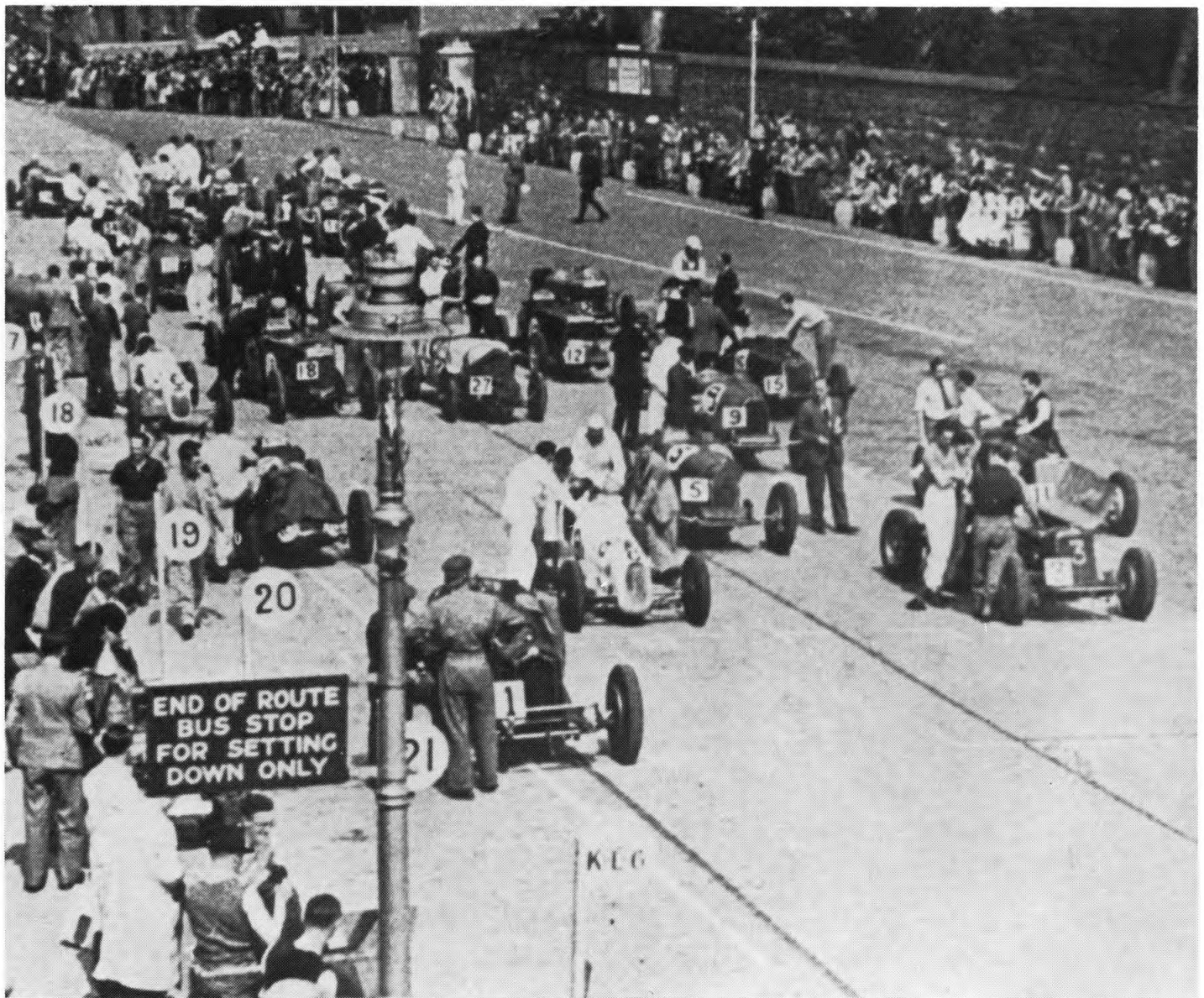
Riley driver T. Graham. Peters and Powys-Lybbe shared best lap at 72.73mph.

These records were to remain unbroken for nine years as the Ulster Trophy race was not held again until 1946 when Prince Bira won. Shortly afterwards the series moved to Dundrod, where subsequent winners included the ageless Powys-Lybbe and such top international drivers as the lately-deceased Piero Taruffi and World Champions Giuseppe Farina and Mike Hawthorn. Other notable contestants for the races which had started life in Donaghadee were to be Juan Manuel Fangio, Stirling Moss, Dubliner Joe Kelly and Belfast garage proprietor Marshal Watson,

whose son John so nearly became the first Irish World Champion.

Anthony Powys-Lybbe's successes in both the 1950 Ulster and Leinster Trophy events were fitting reward for the enthusiastic Welsh privateer who was a consistent supporter of the Irish road races of the Thirties and who always raced wearing goggles and with his cap back to front like Algy Guinness. One of his last races with his faithful Monoposto Alfa was at Silverstone in 1953, which he said he entered because the starting money would cover the price of the new ladder he needed for his orchard! ■

Powys-Lybbe (No. 1), in pole position for 1936 Down Trophy race.



17. IRELAND'S LONGEST-RUNNING RACE SERIES (1934-1939)

Fay Tylour wins first Leinster Trophy

Although the Cork and Limerick Grand Prix events which commenced in 1935 and 1936 attracted such international stars as Rene Dreyfus, Jean Pierre Wimille, and Prince Bira, the racing was every bit as keen in the other Irish race series, the most popular and durable of which proved to be the Leinster Trophy competition which was initiated in 1934. The Leinster Trophy is now Ireland's longest-running series and is currently contested on the country's first purpose-built circuit at Mondello Park, 20 miles south west of Dublin and just off the Gordon Bennett Cup route. The races have also been held at a greater number of venues than any other series since the inaugural event was staged at Skerries on Saturday, August 4, 1934.

The original 104-mile handicap event attracted 29 starters and it was held on a 13-mile Skerries-Rush-Lusk circuit which though ideal for motorcycles proved to be too narrow in places for cars, with the result that several no-passing zones were instituted. Open to any type of car except saloon and fixed-head coupés, the first meeting drew thousands of spectators including the Dublin Lord Mayor and government ministers, who watched a great variety of ingenious home-built Specials do battle with more racy Alfa-Romeo, Mercedes, Riley and Sunbeam machinery. Among the race favourites were Austin Dobson in his supercharged Alfa, Adrian Conan-Doyle, nephew of the writer Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle, in the supercharged Mercedes which Caracciola had driven at Ards and Phoenix Park, and Crossgar man Trevor McCalla in a Sunbeam which had originally been owned by the late Henry Segrave.

But it was the only lady driver in the race who proved to be the sensation of the event. She was London-domiciled Dubliner Fay Tylour who after a number of speedway successes in Belfast was making her car racing debut in a front-wheel drive Adler entered by Dublin politician Robert Briscoe. Driving a fast consistent race which belied her lack of road experience, Fay survived a huge skid at Milverton and made the most of her one-lap credit and two minutes start to trounce the men and make history by becoming the first woman to win a major Irish motor event.



Fay Tylour, first Leinster Trophy winner.

The race was held in perfect weather conditions and limit driver A. Davidson led for the first five laps in his little Baby Austin before succumbing to engine failure as he was being overtaken by former Dublin motorcyclist Dermot O'Clery. Fay Tylour passed Carrick-on-Suir driver J. Burke to take third place on the same lap and one circuit later she moved into second. She then closed on race-leader O'Clery whom she picked off a lap later and though the Dubliner fought back, Fay held him off determinedly while all the time checking her mirrors for the fast-moving Austin Dobson.

The Englishman was easily the quickest driver on the course and he wound up his Alfa on the final circuit to lap the narrow roads at an incredible 75.5mph. However it wasn't sufficient to catch the cool Fay who won by a minute at 61.2mph. Behind second-placed Dobson, O'Clery held on to third ahead of Frank O'Boyle who did well to finish at all after a cross-country expedition in his Riley. Hugh McFerran was fifth

in his Bugatti just in front of Riley driver D. McKenzie after Charlie Manders had forfeited a likely fifth place when he lost a tyre.

While Fay Taylour was racing her way into the history books, her near-namesake former motorcyclist Charlie Taylor was less fortunate. Half way through the race he rounded a bend at speed to find the road blocked with the wreckage of P.M. Berkery's Sunbeam. He escaped the ensuing somersault without injury and gratefully accepted Vauxhall racer Cyril Wilson's offer of a lift back to the pits. But a few miles further on, Wilson in turn crashed and the hapless Taylor — who was equally accident-prone on two wheels! — described a second loop which sent him to hospital with cuts and bruises.

More people attended the opening Leinster Trophy race at Skerries than had gone to see any of the popular motorcycle events, but the lap length was considered excessive and it was obvious that the roads were too narrow for cars. The Leinster Motor Club found a new circuit for the July 1935 race, which was held at Tallaght in the foothills of the Dublin mountains about ten miles from the city centre. The six-mile course ran from Tallaght down to Templeogue on the Blessington-Dublin road, then via Firhouse and Old Bawn back to the start, combining equal amounts of straight and winding sections. Practice for the 103-mile event was overshadowed by the death of Frank Gannon, second in the May Bray race, who on his way home from inspecting the circuit was killed while avoiding a cyclist at Terenure.

There was further pre-race drama when the scratchman of the 23 starters, brave Brooklands Bimotore conqueror Austin Dobson, complained bitterly that his Alfa Romeo was too severely

handicapped by being expected to average 77mph when the best he could manage in practice was 70mph. The Englishman was eventually persuaded to stay for the race but limit man Jack Toohey who lapped in excess of his expected speed was docked two minutes of his handicap allowance.

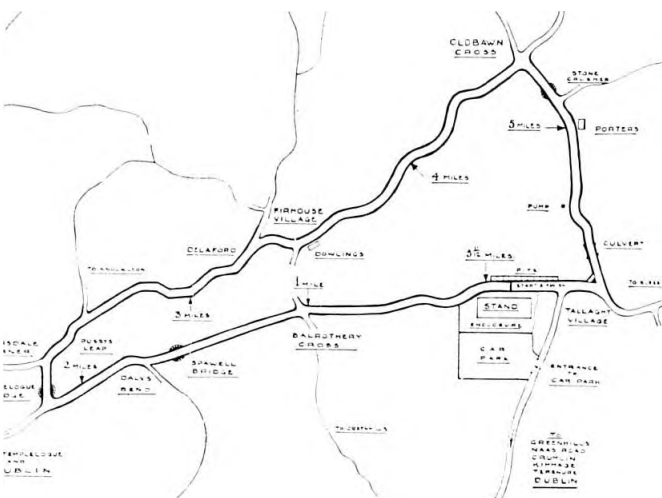
Despite this loss and lowering the compression of his Baby Ford, Toohey proved to be the man of the fine-weather event. He led from the start, making the most of his five-lap allowance and local knowledge — he was after all treasurer of the organizing club! MG driver Sydney Sheane held second for several laps until slowed by engine trouble and his position was inherited by the fastest of the MG Midget drivers A.P. Huet, son of famous Dublin motor dealer Arthur Huet. The twisty part of the circuit caught out many drivers and F.H. French-Davis had to retire after clouting a hedge while Tallaght man Willie O'Riordan disgraced himself on home territory by overturning his Riley near Old Bawn.

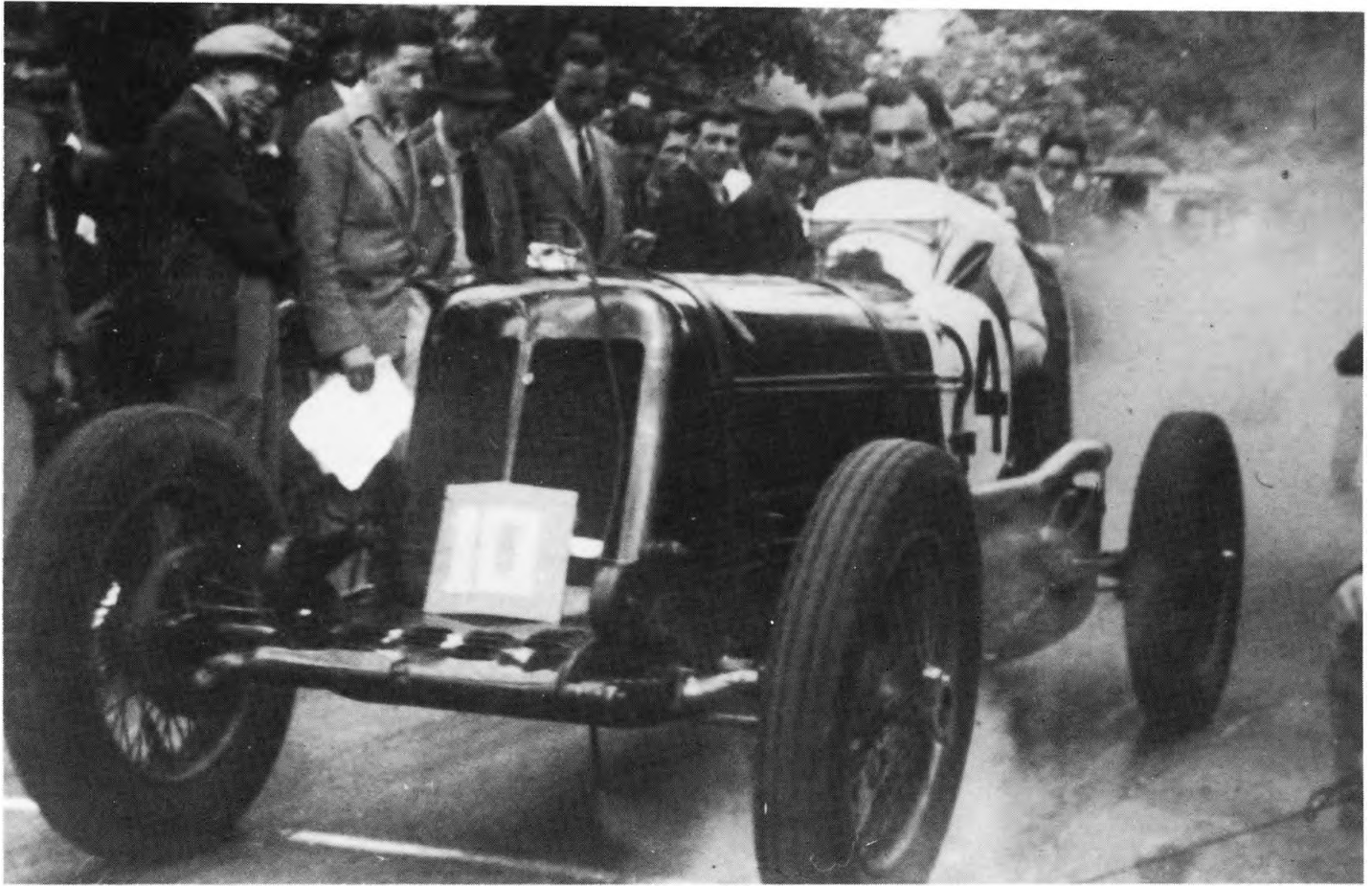
The section near Firhouse was most demanding and Toohey's passenger, racing motorcyclist J. Coady, caused great excitement as he leaned out at sidecar angles to assist cornering. The race stewards were less impressed, however, and the pair were flagged in for a chat which cost them a valuable half minute. Toohey resumed at unabated pace to win by a minute and a half at 59.33mph, while Huet did well to take second after hitting a kerb and bursting a tyre at Templeogue Bridge on the final lap. Third and fastest finisher at 66.49mph was Belfast's Gordon Neill in his Bugatti, ahead of R. Jay (MG), Manders (Adler) and Billy Kavanagh (MG). Austin Dobson set fastest lap at 70.50mph before retiring with engine trouble.

The most disgruntled men of the meeting however, were the press folk who arrived slightly behind schedule to find that keener spectators had pressed their table into service as a convenient stand. Pleas for its return were met by colourful advice to turn up earlier in future — and these were the days before scribes dallied to sponge in sponsors' hospitality units!

Two evenings of practice preceded the 1936 Leinster Trophy race for which 1935 winner Jack Toohey returned in his red Baby Ford which had so far finished every race for which it had been entered. Stars of practice were the brothers Adrian and Denis Conan-Doyle, the former in a soul-stirring 1492 Bugatti and the latter in the equally impressive and larger 7-litre Mercedes which eventually proved to be too much of a handful.

Leinster Trophy Circuit, Tallaght.





Redmond Gallagher's USR, which smote Templeogue Bridge, 1936 race.

Unlike the previous two Leinster races, the July 1936 event which was extended to 153 miles was held in a continuous downpour, not that this diminished the enthusiasm of the huge crowd which watched Toohey's Ford splash happily to an early race lead. But it was scratchman Adrian Conan-Doyle and Dublin motorcyclist Manliffe Barrington who provided the opening excitement as the latter hung on to the gold Bugatti in his less powerful Frazer Nash. Lapping faster than anyone else on the circuit, the pair gradually reeled in Denis Conan-Doyle, whose huge white Merc they vainly tried to pass for two laps. Denis's wide-road race however was running to a close and he crashed heavily on a fast bend approaching Tallaght. He was trapped for several minutes before being released by marshals and his brother who also stopped to help.

The rain forced many drivers to pit with electrical trouble including Toohey but it made little difference to his race progress and at half-distance he was lapping faster than he had in the previous year's dry event. After 20 laps he moved into the lead but victory was far from assured as D.M. Campbell was making rapid progress in his

Aston Martin while another to exceed his handicap was Redmond Gallagher in his USR Special, which comprised a Ford V-8 engine neatly fitted into the ex-Manders 1925 GP Bugatti chassis. The USR's braking department, alas, was not up to its speed and agility, and after repeated warning confrontations with Templeogue Bridge, Gallagher smote the sturdy parapet at speed with sad results for the hapless (and now priceless) chassis. USR incidentally stood for Urney Special Racer. It's driver subsequently became managing director of the Urney Chocolate Company!

Another driver who was going great guns at this stage was 1935 Bray hero, Paddy Le Fanu, who was up to third and within striking distance of the leader. But pushing on through the gloom and the rain, he failed to spot his pit's "Steady" sign and he had a big spin at Templeogue Bridge. Little daunted, he resumed the pursuit only to crash a mile down the road while trying to overtake not one but three cars on a fast right-hand bend.

D.M. Campbell, however, survived his Aston Martin's gyration to close rapidly on Toohey. But then a pit stop for oil cost him a precious two minutes, and his race chances were blown with the escaping oil which cost him a second stop to replace the filler cap. Toohey took the flag to

score a second consecutive success at 60.20mph by two and a half minutes from Campbell. Despite losing third gear, Manliffe Barrington came home a popular third, ahead of David Yule (CMY), Alec MacArthur (MG) and Ian Connell. The latter drove the 2.5 litre Alfa Romeo which had been originally campaigned by Le Mans winner Dr. Benjafield and he shared fastest lap at 68.05mph with Campbell in the Aston-Martin. The only lady in the race was Miss L. Rich, who was forced to bale out when the Lea-Francis in which she was passenger to W.F. Peares caught fire half way through the race.

The good weather returned for the 1937 race which provided the new Morgan 4.4 with its second road racing success and almost a 1-2-3 grand slam after a spectacular accident had eliminated local Riley man O'Riordan (again!). Despite clashing with a Crystal Palace race the meeting attracted a record 30 starters including six from England. Ace engine tuner and racer Freddie Dixon came to spectate at his first Dublin event, in which scratchman Tony Rolt was expected to go well in the Triumph which had originally seen Monte Carlo Rally action with Donald Healey.

Limit driver B.F. Mason led for the opening three laps before being overtaken by 1935 Bray winner Desmond McCracken. The young Dubliner was lapping steadily at 62mph and it quickly became apparent that only one other driver had a chance of overtaking him. That was Willie O'Riordan whose Riley at half-distance was keeping close station with the more powerful MG and Adler cars of R.D. Cox and Charlie Manders, who had been passing and repassing each other for several laps. O'Riordan had a handicap lap in

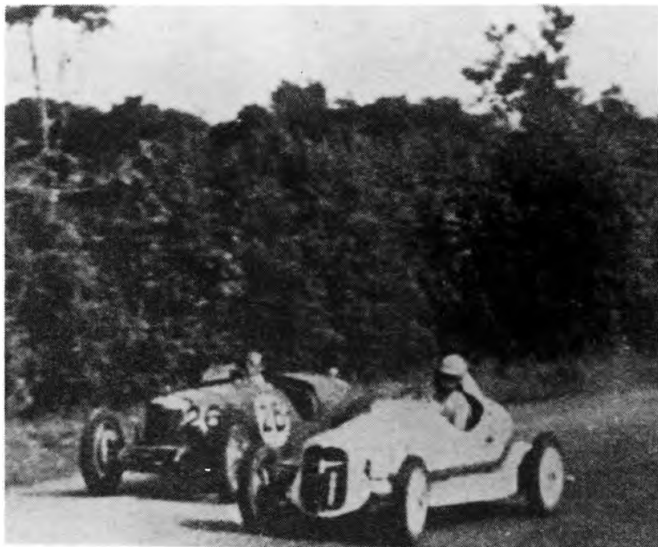
hand over the duelling duo but he was determined to pass them and after a lap at 67.5mph he overtook Cox. He then moved alongside Manders whom he tried to pass in a fast adverse-cambered left-hand bend but the two cars touched and the Riley struck the bank and rebounded off the tail of Manders' car before somersaulting twice. Both O'Riordan and Manders were thrown out of their cars but luckily neither driver was hurt.

Leinster Trophy veteran Adrian Conan-Doyle in his Bugatti and Tony Rolt also added to the excitement with a nose-to-tail 70mph dice before the latter was forced to change plugs. On rejoining the race he broke the lap record at 73.45mph before speeding up to 75.53mph to take no less than 20 second off Dobson's 1935 record. Another pit stop however ruined Rolt's race chances and he eventually retired with engine trouble. Adrian Conan-Doyle also had his share of drama, narrowly avoiding Templeogue Bridge after locking up his brakes, while Billy McDowell hit the sand bags at Firhouse and H. Weir retired after clouting a wall.

As the finish approached, race-leader McCracken headed fellow-Morgan men Freddy Smyth and R.E. Campbell, winner of the recent Ulster Trophy race. However, with two laps remaining, Campbell's engine suddenly slowed dropping him to fifth while, with just four miles left, the hapless Smith completely misjudged Templeogue Bridge and became another sorry casualty of its solid stone parapet. McCracken survived to win at 61.95mph by three minutes from R.D. Cox, with David Yule (CMY) third ahead of E.N. Avant (MG Midget), Campbell (Morgan) and Andy Hutchinson (MG Midget).

As America's Howard Hughes halved the round-the-world flying record with a new time of three days and 19 hours, the August 1938

O'Reilly (left) and Manders, just before the 1937 accident.



Future President, Sean T. O'Kelly congratulates 1937 winner McCracken.



Leinster Trophy meeting saw equally impressive Tallaght records. Newcomer St. John Horsfall and Tony Rolt continually swapped new times until the latter pushed the record up to 83.53mph in his ex-Bira ERA, a spectacular rate considering the demanding nature of the winding road circuit. St. John Horsfall came to the race with a fine Brooklands win to his credit and the young London Aston Martin driver quickly made himself at home at Tallaght to record the first British success in the Leinster Trophy series (a win which was to be repeated in post-war years by Britain's first World Champion, Mike Hawthorn).

Still smarting from his 1937 Templeogue confrontation, Freddy Smyth took an early lead in his Ford from Aubrey Thompson who grimly held on to second for many laps until he in turn fell victim to the unforgiving bridge. MG driver R.J. Adams lay second until half-distance when he was overtaken by Charlie Manders (Adler) who, none the worse for his previous year's acrobatics, was lapping at an impressive 69mph. By lap 19 of the 26-lap race, St. John Horsfall had progressed through the field to fifth while Manders closed steadily on Smith whom he passed to lead with three laps to run. Smith was then overtaken by Triumph driver J. Elliott but with two laps left Horsfall passed the pair of them and closed rapidly on Manders who apparently had not been informed of the Englishman's progress. Even had Manders known of the Londoner's speed it's doubtful if he could have held off the rapid Aston Martin which swept past him on the final lap to give Horsfall victory by a minute at 73.79mph. Welshman J. Elliott made it two British drivers in the top three by taking third place ahead of Smith, Ernie Robb (MG) and Tony Rolt, who despite his fast lappery had lost valuable time with a bungled fuel stop.

It was appropriately overcast and wet for the final pre-war Leinster Trophy race but the July 1939 event was enlivened by a nail-biting tussle between Belfast's Ernie Robb and Rhyl visitor, B.H. Talbot, with the result in doubt right up to the chequered flag. Talbot drove a 2-litre Aston Martin while Robb campaigned an Alvis-Special, whose 1927 engine was housed in a chassis which had started life as a Morris Minor before being incorporated in the Sullivan Special which ran in the 1933 TT. However, the neat single-seater Alvis proved to be one of the most agile cars in the race, whose 22-driver entry included the popular Stanley Woods.

The race got off to a lively start when Donald Maclure's SS100 someraulted over a hedge on the fast right-hander outside Old Bawn, its

unfortunate driver being knocked unconscious and breaking several ribs. He was lucky to escape being flung out and run over, as his car careered in circles around the field until a daredevil spectator sprang aboard and switched off the ignition. D. O'Kane was also hospitalized after smacking Templeogue Bridge, while another casualty of the slippery roads was the gallant Dudley Colley whose Frazer Nash buckled a wheel after he misjudged the exit from the bridge. Aubrey Thompson's TRS caught fire at Templeogue but the Mallow man quickly got it under control to resume racing as if nothing had happened.

From the start it was obvious that Robb was making best progress in his Alvis Special (christened the Himmelwagen) and by lap nine as Stanley Woods retired with engine trouble the Belfast man was up to fourth place. Six laps later he took the lead from Bunty Leechman who was in turn passed by B.H. Talbot who was also motoring rapidly. Aston Martin driver Talbot then had to pit with throttle trouble and his minute and half delay seemed to assure success for Robb who was now three minutes clear. However, a few laps later Robb's engine started to misfire and Talbot began to gain at the rate of half a minute a lap.

With two laps to run, Talbot was only 39 seconds in arrears and entering the final circuit the gap was down to 13 seconds. As Talbot approached the pits he prepared to stop but his pit crew frantically waved him on, certain that he would gobble up the little blue Alvis Special. Alas, for the visiting driver, his Aston's engine was too cooked to continue and he retired a mile down the road, leaving Robb to score a four-minute win at 64.16mph from A.J. Welch (MG). Paddy Le Fanu took third place in his LERA, ahead of David Yule (CMY), Alec MacArthur (MG) and Bunty Leechman (Ford). Talbot had the satisfaction of setting fastest lap at 75.53mph and with the forthcoming war about to cast people back on their own resources it was appropriate that three of the first four cars were home-built Specials.

The 1939 race was the last Leinster Trophy event to be held at Tallaght until 1948 when Dublin's post-war housing expansion finally signalled the demise of the convenient suburban circuit. The battle-scarred Templeogue Bridge survived intact until 1984. Then — no doubt to the ghostly ironic cheers of its many pre-war victims — it fell victim itself to the automobile, as its stone parapet was unceremoniously despatched in a road widening scheme necessitated by increased traffic. ■

18. LIMERICK ROUND-THE-HOUSES

(1935-1938)

Le Mans Winner triumphs



Opening Limerick Grand Prix 1935; winner Fontes (2) passes Ayrtton (22) and O'Boyle.

The first 1900 Motor Tour to Killaloe attracted hundreds of spectators from Limerick but apart from such events as the 1909 hillclimb won by the Rev. Archdall, the historic western city had seen little motoring competition. The success of the first 1934 Bray round-the-houses changed all that, however, and local enthusiasts were quick to exploit the new interest in town racing, which had proved very popular on the continent since the inauguration of the Monaco Grand Prix in 1929. With the evidence of strong local support for the event, the Irish Motor Racing Club announced that the first Limerick Grand Prix or Cuairt Luimnighe race would take place on Bank Holiday Monday, August 5, 1935.

The twisting 2.76 mile circuit which incorporated the main thoroughfare, O'Connell Street,

ran from William Street to Roxborough Road, Carey's Road, Rosbrien Road, Punch's Cross and back via O'Connell Avenue and its two O'Connell Street chicanes to the sharp right hand turn into William Street. A special grandstand was erected at the O'Connell-William Streets junction (entitled "Sarsfield Corner" for the race) with capacity for 200 spectators at five shillings a head, compared to three shillings and sixpence paid by the 600 who filled the sideline seats at the start area.

A footbridge was constructed across the circuit at the junction of O'Connell Street and Cecil Street and a special Sweep was launched based on the race results. Local hotels and restaurants embraced the opportunity for new business with special "racing breakfasts" while one hotel advised patrons to "See the race in comfort — verandah seats 5/-" and the proprietor of the billiard parlour over Burton's invited offers for the

unrivalled view from his saloon's windows. Visitors poured into Limerick and according to the Limerick Leader, the race attracted the largest gathering of cars and spectators ever seen in the western city. Many were in a buoyant mood as they celebrated Limerick's victory the preceding day over Cork in the semi-final of the Munster Hurling Championship.

The 151-mile race over 55 laps attracted 25 starters who were flagged off in groups of five by the formally-robed Lord Mayor James Casey. The South African Pat Fairfield amazed the packed pavement audience with the acceleration of his white ERA, which had already won at Dieppe and Donington, as he led away the fastest group which included 21-year old Englishman of Spanish extraction, Luis Fontes, fresh from his victory in the Le Mans 24-Hour race, and Buddy Featherstonhaugh in the Maserati with which he had won the 1934 Albi Grand Prix. Fairfield's sleeved-down 1100cc machine was the smallest-engined ERA to race in Ireland.

Featherstonhaugh had been the Whitney Straight teammate of Irishman Hugh Hamilton and he quickly made himself at home on the Irish streets to trounce the scratchmen until a blown gasket made him a spectator. Gasket trouble also saw the early demise of the works Austin of Stanley Woods, and limit MG driver R. Marsh led easily until lap 32 when he was overtaken by David Yule (Austin). The Dubliner's lead lasted but one short lap before he in turn was passed by Tallaght winner Jack Toohey in his Ford.

All this time Pat Fairfield had been flying through the field and he set fastest lap at 67.35mph as he climbed from fourth on lap 32 to first three laps later. However, the ERA flier then dissipated his advantage with a pit-stop and some less-than-fast lappery after being assured that he had the race in his pocket. Flushed with his French success, young Alfa-mounted Fontes had other ideas and from sixth on lap 40 he progressed rapidly to second place, 72 seconds behind Fairfield, with only 10 laps left. Four circuits later he had halved the gap and with one lap remaining he swept past the surprised South African to win by 200 yards at 64.91mph.

Near the finish, former leader Toohey and Charlie Manders were baulked at the chicane and the latter badly damaged his Adler when forced into the railings. Behind Fairfield, Peter Whitehead took third place in his Alta ahead of French Davis (Fiat) while Toohey eventually finished fifth just ahead of David Yule. The weather had been excellent and the carnival atmosphere and the excitement of cars racing

through their streets made the round-the-houses event an instant hit with most Limerick folk.

Another hit was racewinner Fontes, whose rapid driving was well matched by his ability to celebrate. Sammy Davis recalled that with his studious appearance few people would take him seriously as a racing driver — "And they were utterly confounded when he drove as one pursued by devils and continued to do so until the race ended. When the excitement of the race was over, the South American section of Luis would take charge, transforming the bespectacled 'student' into the wildest man ever contemplated in Hollywood's western — and the art of making whoopee gained a new height record!"

So successful was that opening race that the event was awarded international status for 1936. The Grand Prix took place on August Bank Holiday Monday and attracted such well known cross-channel drivers as Arthur Dobson and Peter Whitehead in ERA's; the irrepressible Anthony Powys-Lybbe (Alfa Romeo), lady driver Eileen Ellison (Maserati) and Prince Bira in his ERA "Remus". The latter described the city circuit as the most difficult course on which he had ever raced but despite his misgivings he returned fastest time of 2 minutes 27 seconds around the 2.76 mile circuit in Saturday's early 5.30 a.m. practice. However, the driver who best exceeded his handicap expectations was Belfast's A. Hutchinson who was lucky to get an entry for what was only his second race.

The race was overshadowed by a fatal accident to one of the cross-channel entrants, the 22-year old Duke of Grafton. He was a comparative

Stanley Woods, 1935 entrant.





Fontes makes "whopee" with Fairfield (left)

newcomer to racing and though he had experience of speed trials this was his first outing in the fast 3.3-litre Bugatti which he had just bought from Charles Martin. Like 1935 winner Fontes, the Duke was a popular figure and a great practical joker but his lack of preparation of a car as powerful as the Bugatti worried Prince Bira, who just before the race started drew his attention to the stiffness of the Bugatti's shock absorbers and the almost flat tyres. "Dont worry, I like them flat" said Grafton.

The 24 cars were started in two groups with a one-minute interval which counted as part of the handicap, and among the first group was Bira who took an immediate lead from Dobson. Eileen Ellison in her Maserati led the second pack but a short distance from the start the Duke of Grafton overtook the Cambridge lady as she slowed for Roxborough Road corner. This was a deceptive corner as, though it looked as if it could be taken very quickly, it concealed a sharp bump which tended to fling cars to one side. Grafton's blue Bugatti hit the bump at speed and jumped into the air before crashing across the road where the fuel tank hit a post and exploded, enveloping the machine in flames and trapping the unfortunate Duke.

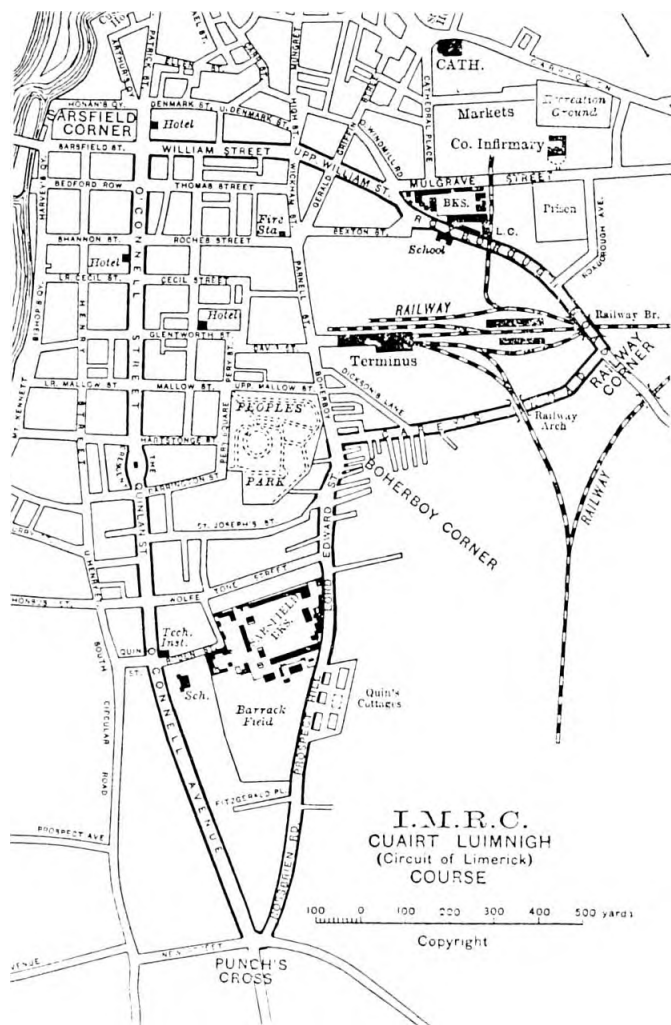
With his clothes ablaze he was dragged from his car by a brave marshal just as the leaders sped up the street, and for the next two laps drivers had to race through a wall of flame as blazing petrol poured across the track. The hazards of racing in those days before the courageous Jackie Stewart helped introduce fireproof overalls and safer fuel

tanks were eloquently recalled by Bira afterwards – "My first reaction was to brake hard in order not to run into the bonfire, as with a full petrol tank two inches off my back I would not have much of a chance to come out of it whole. On the other hand, if I stopped altogether, my race would have come to an end. I had to think fast and second by second the flame was licking higher and higher. The only way was to risk taking to the pavement again like at Monaco, so holding my breath and closing my eyes, I felt as if I had made myself small as I shot by. I distinctly felt something warm licking the back of my silk overalls and when I opened my eyes again I realised that I had made it. Looking back, I saw Arthur Dobson coming through the great cloud of black smoke."

Despite his preoccupation with the accident, Bira soon had his right foot hard down again. He needed to, as Dobson clung tenaciously to the blue ERA and lapping at 70mph the pair raced nose-to-tail for many laps. Twice Dobson forced his white machine ahead but Bira retook him each time and eventually began to pull out a narrow lead. At half-distance the little Siamese led by three precarious seconds but having misinterpreted a "Steady" signal, he pressed on as

Hutchinson wins 1936 race.





hard as he could, and harder, alas. On lap 36 he braked too late for the sharp Punch's Cross hairpin and he swept into a wall, terminally damaging the front of his car.

Limit Dubliner George Mangan (MG) was meantime making the most of his 11-lap allowance but he was gradually reeled in by Belfast MG rival Alan Hutchinson, who had originally been a reserve driver and only got into the race when another entrant withdrew. Hutchinson in turn was threatened towards the end of the race by Dobson but alerted by some sensible pit signalling he increased speed to maintain his lead, as Dobson dawdled for a few laps in response to sadly misleading messages from his pit.

Charlie Manders and Ivo Peters were also going well in second and third places at this stage but with only a few laps left the latter went out with clutch trouble while Percy Maclure overtook Manders. New Zealander T.P. Cholmondelay Tapper who had taken over Eileen Ellison's Maserati (which had previously seen action at Avus and Monaco with Lord Howe) was also motoring briskly, using the pavements as he strove to make up ground and narrowly missing a Civic Guard at William Street corner where

Jack Toohey had earlier pirouetted in his Ford Special.

With two laps left, Dobson's pit crew realised their error and frantically waved him on but though he speeded up, the ERA driver was unable to catch Hutchinson, who escaped to win by 16 seconds at 57.14mph. Bira and Dobson shared fastest lap of 73.34 mph, and behind the latter who averaged 69.69mph were Maclure (Riley), Manders (Adler), Sir A. MacRobert (MG), Ellison and Cholmondelay Tapper (who, like postwar racer Divina Galica, later represented Britain in the equally exciting sport of ski racing). The unfortunate Duke of Grafton was rushed to hospital but despite his brave protestations that he was alright, he quickly succumbed to his burns. Motor racing lost a promising driver who would have survived had he not acquired such a powerful car so soon in his career.

A financial disagreement between the race committee and the Irish Motor Racing Club led to the cancellation of the 1937 race and the Grand Prix wasn't held again until August 1938. The lapse resulted in a reduced entry but the 17 starters for the 151-mile race included such cross-channel drivers as Tony Rolt in his ERA and Peter Monkhouse with a supercharged MG Midget.

A chicane had been installed on the bend where the Duke of Grafton had crashed but the tragedy was quickly forgotten as Ernie Robb (MG) and Hal Bradley (SS100) diced furiously for the opening seven laps. There was little daylight between the pair as the stylish Robb led his more exuberant rival until the MG's engine bade a

Congratulations for 1935 winner, Donald Maclure.



sudden farewell to its innards leaving Bradley with a clear run at the limit men.

Tony Rolt and his ERA were also on course to catch the slower drivers and he set fastest lap at 68.74 mph before a broken rear axle signalled company for Robb. Despite Robb's demise, Bradley still circulated at hair-raising pace until the inevitable happened and he crashed into a wall and wrecked his pristine Jaguar.

Peter Monkhouse and J. Weir in their super-charged Midgets then squabbled for the honour of fastest man on the course but neither could make any impression on race-leader Donald Maclure whose own Midget had been ahead from an early stage. Ford Special driver Aubrey Thompson threatened the leader briefly until engine trouble intervened, leaving his rival a healthy five-minute win from fellow-Belfast driver R.E. Campbell (Morgan). Bray's Bill McQuillan (McQ-Special) was third ahead of Monkhouse who held off fellow MG driver Weir, while Thompson was credited with sixth place. Maclure's winning speed was 54.21mph and Monkhouse was fastest finisher at 58.74mph.

In December 1938 it was announced that the Limerick races were to be abandoned due to financial reasons, so the 1938 Limerick Grand Prix

passed into history as the last round-the-houses race to be held in Ireland before the war. This was sad news for overseas as well as Irish competitors and as Prince Bira had so often pointed out, English-based drivers were delighted with the opportunity to sample in Ireland the road racing opportunities which were denied to them at home. Wars and rumours of wars — this time not Irish ones — also played a role in the sudden decline of the town races and only the Phoenix Park series kept road racing alive in Ireland in 1939.

The post-war years were to see a revival in street racing which was also used to good effect by the shrewd TV-conscious moguls of Grand Prix racing, with new events at such venues as Long Beach. Pioneer motorist, artist and lyricist Percy French would have been amused to hear of the 1985 inauguration of a street race in his beloved Ballyjamesduff. The reposing Cavan town is a long remove from Long Beach but its first race winner was young James Roe from Naas, whose brother Michael scored a notable success at the 1984 Long Beach Grand Prix meeting, while on his way to become the first Irish driver to win the North American Can-Am Sportscar Championship. ■

Limerick hosts Ireland's last pre-war street race in 1938. Weir (2) leads the pack, ahead of Rolt, who set fastest lap at 68.74 mph.



19. CORK GRAND PRIX (1936-38)

Dreyfus wins first Formula Race



Spurred on by the success of the Bray and Limerick races, motoring enthusiasts in the southern city of Cork decided that it was time that they too staged a major racing event. Cork had stronger motoring associations than its rivals, having welcomed the horseless carriage before one was seen on the streets of Dublin and then in 1903 hosting a Gordon Bennett Cup Speed Trial, in which Charles Rolls in his Mors beat Mercedes driver Ernest Hutton on the Carrigrohane Straight close to the city. Cork's favourite son was of course Henry Ford himself whose car assembly plant and the attendant Dunlop factory contributed significantly to local business.

In 1936 the Cork District Motor Club in association with the Irish Motor Racing Club announced that the first Cork Grand Prix would take place on May 16 on a 6.1 mile circuit based on the concrete-surfaced Carrigrohane Straight, where the world motorcycle speed record had been broken at 150.73mph in 1930 by English rider Joe Wright (and on which many Irish records were subsequently set up including Vivian Candy's all-time national speed record of 168.38mph in 1979). So successful did the new Cork series prove that it was given international status and in 1938 Cork hosted the only event for Formula Grand Prix cars to be held in Ireland.



▲ Martin (left) and Bira duel in opening 1936 Grand Prix.

◀ Off to the Races! Cork Grand Prix series attracts unprecedented crowds.

Twenty four drivers arrived in Cork for the inaugural 1936 race, 16 cross-channel entrants disembarking at Cobh as the giant Hindenburg airship droned overhead at 2,000 feet on its triumphant return to Germany after a record Atlantic crossing. The Grand Prix was preceded by practice on Thursday and Friday mornings and drivers quickly got to grips with the fast D-shaped circuit which started on the Carrigrohane Road and went citywards to the sharp right hand Victoria Cross, the equally acute Dennehy's Cross and Model Farm Road before descending along the back section to Poulavone Hairpin from whence a series of fast bends led back to the 2.7 mile straight. Despite the early start, thousands thronged the circuit for the 7 a.m. practice sessions which Alfa Romeo driver Charles Martin led from Prince Bira, Austin Dobson and Anthony Powys-Lybbe.

The Grand Prix attracted an unprecedented number of visitors who came by special trains and buses while the influx was further swollen by a large number of cross channel enthusiasts. Local restaurants and businesses contributed to the carnival atmosphere by decorating their premises with flags and bunting. The weather was also glorious as the drivers were flagged away in four separate groups. Bira made a tremendous start in his blue Maserati but it was Charles Martin who soon led the fastest drivers who included Austin

Dobson in the Alfa Romeo in which Nuvolari had beaten the mighty Mercedes and Auto Union teams in the preceding year's German Grand Prix. Martin's opening speed was 88mph and lapping at 90mph he soon crept away from his rivals. However, Bira and Reggie Tongue (ERA) were also motoring rapidly and with handicap time in hand over Martin and Dobson they posed a powerful threat to the Londoner.

With an allowance of 10 credit laps, W. Montgomery (Austin) led for many laps until overtaken by Jack Toohey in his red Ford Special. But their lack of straightline speed handicapped the slower drivers and on the long Carrigrohane section the bigger cars gained precious time. Martin and Dobson swapped lap records until they pushed the speed up to 91.31mph, passing the start-area stand at 130mph, but Martin eventually paid for his speed as from under the bonnet came tell-tale wisps of smoke which grew lap by lap. Bira and Tongue meantime maintained their two credit laps advantage and they staged a mighty battle for many laps until at two-third's distance the former's supercharger seized. Bira was left with a long walk to the pits on which he was applauded all the way, the locals having taken a great shine to the daring diminutive genuine Siamese Prince.

There was similar acclaim for Mervyn White, once spectators had recovered their composure after his extraordinary accident near Gravel Pit Bend. As the Londoner approached Inchigaggin Bridge he suddenly lost control and hitting the fence at speed his Bugatti was launched into a frightening double somersault. White's helmet and goggles were knocked off and after landing on its four wheels his car charged into the wall again. Miraculously White managed to remain aboard his wayward mount and to the crowd's astonishment he lurched off without stopping to the pits, where a severely damaged axle and a cut head suggested that for this year at least discretion should be the better part of valour.

With Bira out, Reggie Tongue soon thrust his ERA ahead of early race-leader Toohey. With three laps remaining a hard-charging Powys-Lybbe (2.3 Alfa Romeo) further demoted the Ford driver to third spot, following which he was also picked off by Dobson who was now the fastest driver on the course. Charles Martin continued to drive at diminishing speed, making repeated stops for oil until near the end he parked his Alfa by the finish for a final push across the line, as Tongue won by three minutes at an average speed of 85.53 mph. Powys-Lybbe maintained his second place, half a minute clear

of Dobson, the fastest finisher at 86.95mph, while Toohey was fourth ahead of Ivo Peters (Frazer-Nash) and Sir Alec MacRobert (MG).

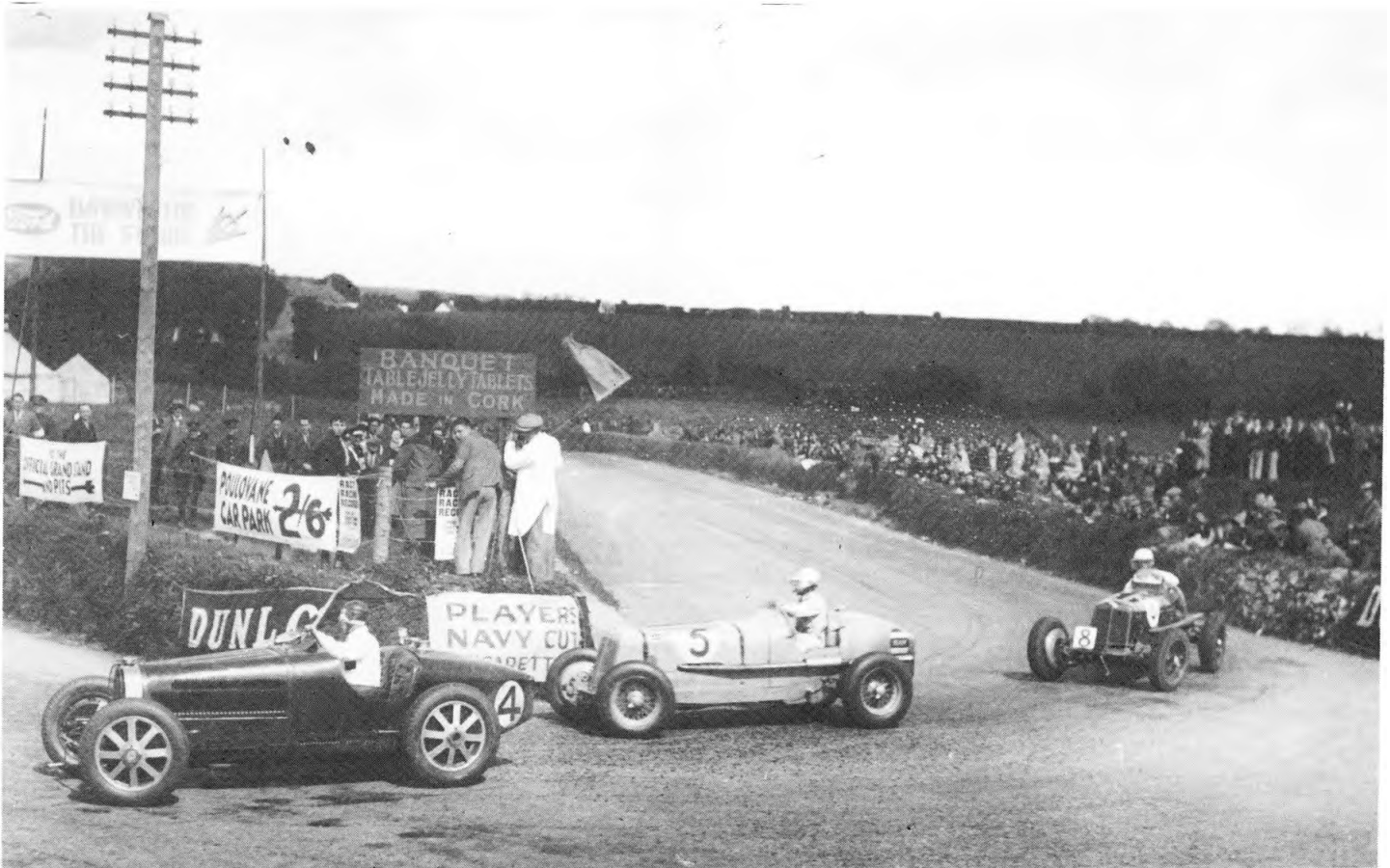
Flushed with the success of its race which had been attended by the greatest gathering of people ever to watch any southern sporting event, the Cork club planned a second Grand Prix for May 22 1937 for which it received international status. Once again Prince Bira, Charles Martin, Anthony Powys-Lybbe and Mervyn White were among the cross channel visitors and, as they disembarked this time, they shared the Cobh harbour with the liner S.S. Hamburg. The German ship was carrying the bodies of those who had died in the Lakehurst, New Jersey, fire which had overwhelmed the Hindenburg airship which exactly one year before had so confidently flown over Cork.

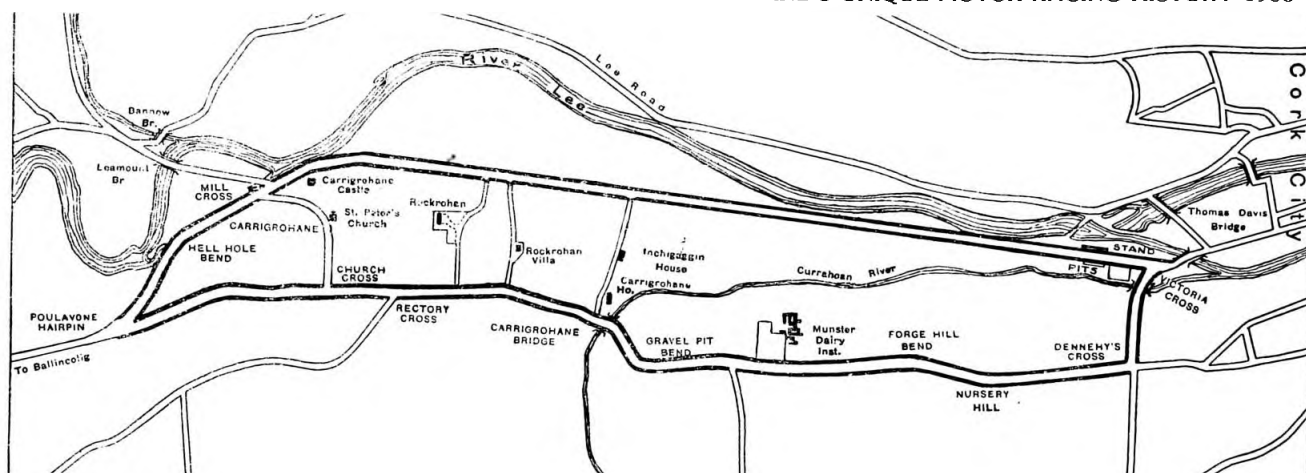
The 1936 winner Reggie Tongue celebrated his return with fastest speed of 86mph in the first day's practice, ahead of Bira (Maserati) and Martin (Alfa Romeo). But the session was overshadowed by a second extraordinary accident to Mervyn White who crashed only yards away from the scene of his 1936 *contretemps*. White approached Inchigaggin Bridge far too quickly and his Bugatti skidded violently before charging the pavement and throwing him out. The hapless Londoner suffered severe head injuries and this



Prestwich wins 1937 race. ▲

Cork 1936. Prince Bira (5) and winner, Reggie Tongue (8) being led by Mervyn White, who was killed in the 1938 race. ▼





Cork Grand Prix Circuit.

time it was a subdued crowd of spectators who saw who saw him being removed at speed to hospital.

Charles Martin led Bira in the final day's practice but it was Cork's most popular Prince who on raceday streaked away from the start to head Martin and the faster drivers by 50 yards at the end of the opening lap. Despite suffering mild food poisoning Bira thrust his blue Maserati further ahead of Martin's pursuing red Alfa and after three laps he was seven seconds clear. However, Martin then speeded up and a lap later he passed the Prince at the end of the main straight, the roar of the two cars echoing and re-echoing among the exhibition buildings which served as race offices.

Bira was now feeling decidedly unwell and though he knew that he was losing concentration and was wandering onto the grass verges, he still took up the chase. As he approached the Gravel Pit section he tried to take a left-hand bend at excessive speed and in a second he was airborne as he went across a narrow pavement. He smashed into a telegraph pole which snapped in half and then spun down the road at speed, a rear tyre narrowly missing his head before he stopped, fortunately without overturning.

While the chastened Bira hobbled back to the pits pursued by hordes of autograph hunters, Charles Martin consolidated his advantage and looked likely to win as he lapped courageously at 91mph, his Alfa snaking violently as it was hit by gusts of wind on the long straight. Alas for the Londoner, the wind presaged a downpour and the advantage passed to the smaller cars. Cheshire's Bryce Prestwich in his MG Magnette steadily reeled in race-leader Percy Maclure and lapping at 74mph he reduced the Riley driver's advantage. With 26 laps of the 33 laps run, he was 41 seconds behind, next lap it was 14 and with five laps left he passed Maclure just as the latter's engine expired.

When it seemed that Prestwich had the race sewn up, he had a big fright as he rounded Gravel Pit Bend to find his way blocked by Alec MacArthur who had just spun and stalled his car. After some exciting moments the Cheshire driver managed to find a way through and he came home to win at 76.33 mph by three minutes from Anthony Powys-Lybbe who had speeded up as the rain subsided. Charles Martin was a popular third and fastest finisher at 79.42mph and he also became the first driver to better four minutes for the 6.1 mile circuit when he lapped in 3 minutes 58 seconds to set up a new lap record of 92.08mph. J.H.T. Smith shared an MG Magnette with S. Somers to take fourth place ahead of Reggie Tongue (ERA) and E.W.J. Dobson (Riley). A sad postscript to the meeting was that it suffered its first fatality as the unlucky Mervyn White succumbed to his injuries on race night.

Impressed with the wide public appeal of the Cork races, the Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes Trust made a big financial contribution towards the running of the 1938 meeting which was expanded to include three races. These were a 50-mile handicap event on the Friday afternoon with the 200-mile Grand Prix taking place on Saturday afternoon following a 75-mile Light Car race for cars of up to 1.5 litres.

The feature race was for Grand Prix cars corresponding to the new international Formula of 3 litres for supercharged cars and 4.5 litres unsupercharged, and it was hoped that many of the major European teams would use the Cork race as a valuable early-season test for their new cars prior to the Tripoli and other Grand Prix events. The new Formula was introduced because of the Grand Prix dominance of the 500bhp German Mercedes and Auto Union cars, whose development was heavily subsidised in order to boost the prestige of the Third Reich. By 1937, Bugatti had virtually abandoned Grand

Prix racing while with much less resources than their German rivals, Alfa Romeo and Maserati were also hopelessly outclassed.

April 22/23 was chosen by the Irish Hospital's Sweepstake Trust as it was the month of the Irish horse race Derby. This early date was unsuitable for many of the works teams, particularly Mercedes and Auto Union who vainly asked for a postponement — which would have resulted in the loss of the much needed sponsorship. The surprise defeat of the Mercedes cars in the season-opening Pau Grand Prix finally eliminated any possibility of German participation while the official ERA team was withdrawn due to the unavailability of special steel as a result of British rearmament requirements. The Alfa Romeo team was also unable to come and Cork spectators were deprived of an opportunity of seeing the great Nuvolari in action, as the Italian had been badly burned at Pau.

But despite the absence of such key competitors and cars, the two-day three-event Cork meeting turned out to be a big success with record crowds to see such old favourites as Prince Bira and Charles Martin and the debut of the new Bugatti car to be driven by up-and-coming Frenchman Jean-Pierre Wimille. The Cork racegoers also gave a special welcome to the dapper Rene Dreyfus, who had just vanquished Mercedes drivers Caracciola and Lang at Pau.

The opening 50-mile handicap race for the Frank O'Boyle Trophy provided an exciting curtain-raiser to Saturday's bigger proceedings with the result being in doubt right up to the chequered flag, when 67 seconds covered the first five finishers. Twelve drivers started the event including Cork's first woman competitor Dorothy Stanley-Turner (Mrs. Dobson having failed to qualify the preceding year) and Dudley Colley in his 1934 chain-drive Frazer Nash which quickly turned out to possess a sharp turn of speed.

Overwhelmed by the importance of the occasion, limit man W.T. Doherty from Adare crashed his DRA on the opening lap, at the end of which Alvis driver A. McVicker led from the closely-following pack. There were groans of disappointment when local hero Aubrey Thompson retired on the second lap with a blown gasket but spectators were soon distracted by the battle for the lead which was developing between Colley, David Yule (CMY) and Charlie Manders in his black Adler. Colley started the race with a hastily-borrowed magneto but lapping at over 70mph he quickly moved up to third place on the second lap and after five laps' hard work he closed on David Yule to take second place.

On the second last lap, the Frazer Nash driver overhauled Manders, whose car wasn't living up to its handicap expectations, but before he could have a celebratory breath he came under strong attack from Yule whose car had found a new lease of life. The CMY driver closed dramatically until on the last lap the two cars were racing side by side. But Colley fought back, crouching down in the bodywork of the Frazer Nash, where, as he subsequently recalled, "The noise of the engine was magnified a hundredfold and it seemed impossible that it would not fly to bits at any moment!" Gradually the Dubliner inched ahead and he swept triumphantly across the line to win by three seconds at 71.03mph. Manders took third 23 seconds behind Yule, while Belfast's Ernie Robb (MG) was fastest finisher at 72.87 mph and fourth just ahead of McVicker (Alvis) and J. Elliott (Triumph). Miss Stanley-Turner finished eighth.

A cousin of the novelist Elizabeth Bowen and without doubt the Laurie Lee of Irish motor racing reporting, Colley's lyrical book "Wheel Patter" includes a delightful description of the race and his hilarious lap of honour when, after accepting the laurel wreath — "I was handed an enormous glass of some yellow liquid which in the excitement of the moment and rather to the surprise of the donor, I drained to the last drop without tasting it. A hearty slap on the back and I was sent off on the the lap of honour, with Davy Yule and Charlie Manders close behind. I don't know whether it was the effect of the drink, or just that my head was reeling with excitement, but that

1938 entrant. Dorothy Stanley-Turner.





Dudley Colley before his merry lap of honour.

extra lap was the most dangerous piece of motoring I have ever done. I could hardly control the car and we zig-zagged round the course ricocheting from curb to curb, I recognized many of my friends and I wanted to get out and dance and sing. Behind me I heard many squeals of brakes as Davy tried to keep clear of my erratic progress...”

The Garda Síochána had been overwhelmed by the volume of traffic and spectators for Friday's race, and Saturday's double-bill under another cloudless sky also attracted a record-breaking attendance. To the locals' delight, Prince Bira was among the entrants for the 75-mile Voiturette race and he got a great reception before the start, with all Cork wishing him a win to make up for his unfortunate 1937 accident. But the Prince was going to have his work cut out if he were to beat fellow-ERA man Arthur Dobson and the up-and-coming Italian Luigi Villorosi who was driving for Maserati.

Dobson blasted away from the centre of the front row to take an immediate lead as Bira slowed with a recalcitrant gearbox. But at the end of the opening lap, the Prince was right on Dobson's tail and he passed him on the second

lap. Dobson fought back to retake the lead but with a slight speed advantage Bira flew down the Carrigrohane Straight at 140mph to go ahead and open up a lead which he increased to 15 seconds at half-distance.

Behind the duelling duo, Swiss driver Armand Hug held off a swarm of Maserati's until plug trouble sent his four-cylinder car pitwards, promoting Villorosi and Johnny Wakefield in their six-cylinder models. This pair then waged an exciting scrap for third place and though Villorosi usually led past the pits Wakefield never allowed any daylight to develop between the cars and on the ninth lap he went ahead. Villorosi fought back to regain the position just as Wakefield's engine started to miss. A short time later both car and driver were also missing. Wakefield skidded on a patch of oil on the fast downhill Hell Hole Bend and his Maserati vaulted a low wall to plunge thirty feet down the embankment. The Englishman was lucky to escape with severe bruising as his car plummeted to destruction.

Bira meantime continued to increase his lead until going into the last lap he had half a minute to spare on Dobson. But the latter's car was slowly disgorging the contents of its oil tank and the ERA driver had a narrow escape when trying to secure the filler-cap he spun on the fast rise after Gravel Pit Bend. Luckily he didn't hit anything too solid and he re-started his car by coasting back downhill. A quick turn and he was back in action.

Just as Dobson gathered speed he was passed by Hug, a lap in arrears, and thinking that it was Villorosi grabbing his second place, the Englishman stopped worrying about lost oil and put his right foot hard down. It was lucky he did so as Villorosi was in fact right behind him and in a desperate effort nearly caught him on the line, finishing just a car's length behind. But safely ahead of all this drama was the flying Bira, who won by two minutes at 91.47mph. Behind Dobson and Villorosi, fourth place was taken by N.G. Wilson (ERA) ahead of Maserati man Hug and G. Sofietti. Bira also set up a new 1500cc record of 92.86mph, beating Charles Martin's previous all-time record, and needless to say his Cork fans greeted his success with richly deserved royal acclaim.

The indefatigable Prince didn't have much time for celebrating though. He was also competing in the Grand Prix and there was time only for a short rest before changing cars and climbing into his Maserati for the feature event. As this was only the second Grand Prix to be run under the new Formula it attracted considerable home and

overseas interest. The new Bugatti and Delahaye cars were the most modern and the fastest ever to be seen in Ireland. After a trouble-free practice, the race favourite was Delahaye's Rene Dreyfus, who first sprung to fame by winning the 1930 Monaco Grand Prix at the age of 25. The works Bugatti car had had a less trouble-free practice, the new machine experiencing many teething problems to the chagrin of its very able driver Jean Pierre Wimille (destined to become one of the most successful post-war drivers before his untimely death in the 1949 Argentine Grand Prix).

To the astonishment and delight of the Cork spectators, it was the dashing Bira who was first away from the line. Using his Maserati's self-change gearbox to maximum advantage he maintained his lead to the end of the opening lap, taunting his works rivals with tongues of flame from the Maserati's exhaust as he decelerated for Victoria Cross. But the power of the Pau Grand Prix-winning car quickly told and Dreyfus went ahead as Bira split the Delahaye pair to keep 1937 TT winner Gianfranco Comotti down in third place. Wimille made a slow start and nursed his Bugatti's engine for several laps before gradually increasing speed.

Dreyfus meantime flashed consistently through the flying kilometre at 145mph and with this speed advantage he gradually pulled well clear of Bira, who was using up all the road in a brave but forlorn effort to remain in touch with the Delahaye. As Wimille turned on the power, he

Grand Prix winner Dreyfus (right) and Voiturettes winner Bira (left) with Comotti.



overtook Comotti to take third place but at half-distance he was still well behind the leading pair. The Bugatti driver then set fastest speed of 147mph but the effort was too much for his new engine and he coasted to a halt soon afterwards at Poulavone Hairpin with suspected piston trouble.

Comotti regained his third spot but it was to be a short tenure as he retired with overheating. English privateer Kenneth Evans (ERA) then took over before he in turn was overtaken by compatriot Louis Gerard in the Delage which he was soon to take to TT success at Donington. Meantime, Dreyfus continued unchallenged on his winning way and lapping three seconds faster per circuit than Bira he went on to win at 92.95mph by two and a half minutes from the Prince, who finished a popular second ahead of Gerard and Evans. Dreyfus also set fastest lap of 95.71mph and though the absence of rival works cars made the Grand Prix a pretty one-sided affair, the meeting overall was once again considered a huge success which boded well for the future of international racing in Cork.

Once again, however, as at Limerick, a promising series was lost as the result equally of an acrimonious dispute between the Cork club and the IMRC and the increasing threat of a bigger European dispute. Had these factors not intervened, it is likely that the southern port city, so accessible to Britain and the continent, would have continued to stage major international Grands Prix. Perhaps one day in the not too distant future, the Cork road races will be revived to bring much-needed business to the hospitable city which has played such an important role in Irish motoring and has suffered so much from the recent recession.

No time for a pint! Wimille clocked 147 mph in his Bugatti.



20. HILL CLIMBS, SAND RACES, SPEED TRIALS (1929-1939)

Apart from the road races, Irish enthusiasts had many other competition opportunities in the Twenties and Thirties with a great profusion of hillclimbs, sand races and speed trials. Some of the more enterprising clubs such as the Dublin University Club also swelled the numbers of participants by press-gang expeditions around Dublin. While some owners maintained their sportscars to impress the ladies and were loath to risk losing face in competition, others invariably fancied themselves as budding Tim Birkin's and these were easy meat for such determined organizers as Dudley Colley and friends!

Their annual Dublin University hillclimb, which commenced life in 1932 was one of the most popular to be held in the south, but the important Irish climb was the annual Craigtlet event. This series was inaugurated in 1929 on the hill beside Belfast on which Harry Ferguson had won a climb in 1913 and where Victor Ferguson took the sportscar class in the next 1925 event. The August 1929 climb took place just before the TT races and Merc-mounted Lord Howe was fastest up the 1.13 mile course with a time of 1m 38.8s, while Victor Ferguson scored a fine repeat success in the 1500 and 2000cc sportscar classes. Billy Sullivan achieved four class wins in the April 1930 climb and equalled Lord Howe's time but the latter returned in August to improve his record to 1m 38.4s.

Archie Frazer-Nash enlivened the 1931 Craigtlet meeting with his Nash "Terror" to take nine seconds off the record as he beat Lord Howe and Tommy Wisdom. The latter's wife, Elsie, recorded the first female success at the Belfast venue by winning the under-2000cc class with a creditable 1m 39.8s. Archie Frazer-Nash returned again the following year but his opening climb lasted a short 100 yards before a gravity-defying charge up the bank forced his retirement leaving Billy Sullivan to set fastest time of 1m 35.8s in his Lea Francis. TT exponent Eddie Hall in his MG Magnette was the star of the 1933 meeting when he lowered the record to 1m 27.6s on his first run and then took off another second to beat J.W. Patterson (Bugatti) and W. Montgomery (Austin), while the enthusiastic Fay



1931 Craigtlet winner. Archie Frazer-Nash.

Taylor made her Irish car competition debut to win her class.

Held in conjunction with the TT races, the annual Craigtlet hillclimb was now an established success. Despite heavy rain, a record number of spectators attended the 1934 event to see Eddie Hall take his MG to a second consecutive success with a new record time of 1m 27.4s. Before going on to take second place in the TT, Hall returned for the 1935 climb to complete a hat-trick of wins with another new record of 1m 23.2s in his supercharged Magnette, well clear of works Austin driver Pat Driscoll and the persistent Billy Sullivan. A record entry of 86 cars was received for the following year's event in which Austin's Bert Hadley lowered the record by a second to beat Bugatti local Hugh McFerran.

Hadley returned with his supercharged Austin Seven for the 1937 climb when despite mounting the bank on his first effort he raced to another

record-breaking ascent in 1m 21.4s. Rain curtailed such speed in the 1938 climb but it didn't inhibit Hadley who put on another winning display to beat Ford Special driver Bill McQuillan in 1m 23s. and complete another fine hat-trick. That was the final pre-war Craigtantlet climb as the removal of the TT races to England had meant a big reduction in entries and consequent financial difficulties for the hard-working UAC.

Another northern hillclimb venue was Ballybannon which was first used during the 1903 Gordon Bennett Fortnight. W.H. Connolly in his Star beat the heavy rain and his rivals to win the 1928 Ballybannon climb with a time of 1m 7.6s for the 1.2 mile ascent. Bentley driver R.G. Heyn reduced this to 1m 5s to win the following year's event, while W. Gregg just beat fellow Lea-Francis driver Billy Sullivan with a new record time of 1m 2.2s in 1930. The UAC climb was then transferred for two years to the .9 mile Croft hill near Hollywood, where Sullivan had his revenge with a time of 1m 37.4s in the opening 1931 meeting and Desmond Montgomery (Lea Francis) and H.W. Sloane (Wolseley) shared best time of 1m 40.6s the following year. The final Ballybannon climb in 1933 resulted in a virtual clean sweep for Victor Ferguson who won five of the six class events and set fastest time of 1m 3.2s in his MG Midget. This was one of Ferguson's

final racing successes as the Belfast driver was unfortunately killed two years later in an English road accident.

Hillclimbs proceeded merrily meanwhile in the south, with the huge success of the opening 1932 Dublin University club meeting on the 800-yard Mount Venus climb which attracted 26 cars and was won by Billy Kavanagh in his supercharged Austin with best time of 39.8s. Kavanagh returned the following year to lower his time to 37.4s while Miss Norrie Comerford scored a class win in the trusty Hillman which she subsequently took to ninth place at Phoenix Park. Mount Venus proceedings, alas, had gone rather too merrily for the local landowners who complained of spectator damage to their gates and fields. When the enthusiasts returned for their next meeting, it was to find that not only had the timing wires been cut but the gates and fences sported liberal coatings of very sticky tar.

The University Club took the hint and transferred their climb to a new venue at Kiltarnan but before the first event there, the Leinster Motorcycle and Car Club staged two climbs on the nearby De Delby Hill. Dudley Colley and his medical student friend Dippy Harris arrived at De Selby for a little unofficial practice and on one of the corners they just missed a large fresh gap in the stonewall, beyond which they found a

"Mount Venus proceedings, alas had gone rather too merrily for the local landowners. ..."





Wilfie Fitzsimmons and his beloved Bugatti — before his misadventure.

disconsolate Wilford Fitzsimmons beside the wreckage of what had once been his pristine racer. After this mishap, Wilfie sensibly turned his attention to reliability trials in which he scored many notable successes including two Hewison Trophy wins before becoming a very popular competitions secretary of the RIAC. Austin driver Billy Kavanagh and E. Doran won the two events which comprised the 1933 De Selby climb while the winners of the second meeting were Colley's friend Dippy Harris in his GN and the redoubtable Miss Comerford in her Hillman.

Harris went on to win the unlimited handicap award in the opening 1935 Kiltarnan hillclimb in which George Statham set fastest time of 51.4s in his Ford Special. Redmond Gallagher in his USR reduced the record to 46 seconds the following year but this was smartly beaten by Austin driver J. Smith on his opening 1937 climb. However, Smith's enthusiasm ran away with him on his second attempt when he overturned, leaving Alec MacArthur to set up a new record of 44 seconds in his MG Mulette. Wherever the immaculately attired MacArthur won, his rival Bill McQuillan was soon to follow and driving the high-backed USR the latter won the 1938 climb with a time of 43.48s. The following year's meeting saw another exciting confrontation between the two drivers when MacArthur narrowly beat his rival to win with a new record of 42.08s.

The two final pre-war years also saw hillclimbing at Ballinascorney in the Wicklow mountains which had originally seen action during the 1914 Reliability Tour, when E.J. Roberts was fastest. The star of the 1938 Ballinascorney 1300-yard climb was Bill McQuillan whose speedy Special set best time of 50.7s, while Dudley Colley also wound up his chain-driven Nash to record an impressive 51.48s. Stanley Woods entered the 1939 climb and was on target for a quick time before vanishing through a hedge after some over-eager cornering, unlike English visitor D.M. Campbell who smartly reduced the record to 50.58s. in his supercharged Alfa Romeo. However, the winner was none other than Alec MacArthur who just pipped Bill McQuillan's best time of 48.81s with a final fraught record-breaking run of 48.79s. Ballinascorney hadn't hosted many competitions but its 1914 event was the last Irish hillclimb before the outbreak of war and by an odd coincidence its 1939 meeting was the final pre-World War Two Irish climb. Hopefully, it will now be left in peace!

Another Irish competition series staged in the Thirties was the Donabate Speed Trials in which, as on the hills, cars raced singly against the clock. The Donabate Trials took place only a stone's throw away from the venue of the 1925 Ballyboghil "hillclimb". The opening 1937 event was won by the popular Frank O'Boyle who wound up his supercharged Alta to race through the timed quarter of a mile section at 101.12mph and beat Redmond Gallagher's USR and the versatile Charlie Manders in the ex-Reggie Tongue MG. Wet roads and an adverse sea-breeze inhibited both entrants and speeds in the 1938 meeting in which David Yule was fastest at 86.79mph in his trusty CMY. Lagonda driver George Briggs just pipped Mick Bourke in Dudley Colley's Nash for second place and the meeting produced two other third placings for the Colley equipe, thanks to Jock Colley's exploits in the motorcycle section. A healthy entry of 26 cars turned out for the final 1939 Trials and though a head-wind reduced speeds, hillclimb exponent Alec MacArthur set fastest-ever rate of 103.55mph in his supercharged MG.

Apart from the hillclimbs and speed trials, there was also a revival of sand racing during the early inter-war period, although the two original sand venues of Portmarnock and Magilligan Strand fell by the wayside. As already related, the closing event of the 1927 season was at the latter venue, which in September 1928 staged its final car event with separate races for touring and sports-

cars. Willie Noble in his Morris-Cowley took the 25-mile touring car section while Amilcar driver F.W. Earney won the sportscar class in which the fastest time of 21m 25s was made by Star pilot W.H. Connolly. Northern attention was now firmly focussed on the TT and Craigantlet events and the Magilligan Strand competitions were abandoned after having received the smallest-ever entry for that final 1928 meeting.

Sand races were also held in 1930 and 1931 at Portmarnock, where Algy Guinness had made his racing debut in 1904. These events were held in conjunction with motorcycle races and the 1930 winner was M.J. Hynes in his Ford Special who beat Vauxhall driver W. Montgomery with a time of 13m 23s for the 10-mile handicap competition. The Kilkenny driver was also fastest the following year but despite improving his time to 12m 59s he was beaten on handicap by C.H. Wilson in a Vauxhall. Only 11 cars competed and this poor support which was partly due to the increasing choice of road races led to the abandonment of the historic Portmarnock events.

Further south, before the various road events took off, successful sand events were held at the seaside resorts of Duncannon and Tramore in County Waterford, not far from the home of pioneer motorist William Goff. The little village of Duncannon staged its first event in August 1929 and a large crowd saw Piltown driver Len Earl take his Humber to success in the opening 30-mile Light Car event which was held over 25 laps of the perfectly flat 1.2 mile course. Kilkenny's George Statham won the unlimited class in his Ford Special while local man J. Power pocketed the standard Ford saloon prize. The organizers billed the course as providing better facilities than the Irish Grand Prix venue, explaining that at Phoenix Park spectators could only see the cars every three or four minutes whereas at Duncannon all the action could be viewed from start to finish!

Kilkenny did not have much in the way of a strong motoring tradition, although Londoner Charles Martin who won many big races at such venues as Avus and Brooklands as well as being a regular Cork Grand Prix front-runner, spent much of his youth at Thomastown. However, the Kilkenny drivers proved pretty adept on the southern shifting sands and they took all the honours in the June 1930 Duncannon meeting in which race distances were reduced to 25 miles. J. Fennelly in a Morris-Cowley won the up-to-12hp event, while George Statham took his Ford Special to another success in the unlimited section and Mrs Buggy beat Waterford's Miss



Frank O'Boyle (Alta), fastest in 1937 Donabate Speed Trial.

Palmer in the ladies' race. Fennelly returned to score a double success in the 1931 meeting but the focus of sand racing attention was now shifting to Tramore which offered superior facilities. The final 1933 Duncannon races saw Austin driver Billy Kavanagh take the small-car event while M.J. Hynes completed Kilkenny's successful run by taking the unlimited class with a record-breaking time of 24m 20s in his Statham-Ford.

The Tramore races ran from 1929 to 1933 and as at Portmarnock the annual meetings also included national championship motorcycle events. The Waterford town was better known for its horse races but it was the motoring competitions which attracted the greatest crowds. Thousands lined the shore and promenade to see the 1929 inaugural event which was enlivened by four hours of music from the local Barrack Street brass and reed band. The official starter was appropriately Sir Ernest Goff and there was keen competition in the opening 20-mile handicap for cars up to 12hp in which J. Fennelly in his Morris-Cowley beat fellow-Kilkenny man E. Frizelle (Hinston) by nine seconds. The locals had plenty to cheer about in the unlimited race which Jackie Greer in a Darracq won by 12 seconds from fellow-Waterford driver J. Kelly in a Buick.

An estimated 20,000 crowd turned out to see the 1930 June Tramore races which also included a ladies' event. Close finishes were again the order of the sunny summer day with additional excitement being provided by M. Parie, whose Calthorpe shed a wheel and overturned. Once again, the Kilkenny clan had a field day, filling the top three places in the smaller handicap race which was won by D. Gaffney from J. Fennelly, both in Morris-Cowleys. George Statham again took the unlimited capacity event beating Carlow's G.B. Jackson in

an Overland, while Miss E. Connolly just pipped Waterford's Mrs Malcolmson in the 10-mile ladies' handicap. A second 1930 meeting was held in September in which P.H. Wade upheld Waterford honour by taking his Ford to success in the unlimited 20-mile race, after P. Tynan and J. Fennelly had scored yet another Kilkenny and Morris-Cowley 1-2 success in the small car event.

A 20-mile race for standard 14.9hp Ford cars was substituted for the ladies' event in the 1931 meeting which attracted 50,000 visitors to Tramore, the largest crowd ever seen in the town. Cobh driver P. Tobin won the Ford race from Clonakilty's J. Hurley but the main excitement was in the 20-mile event for cars up to 12hp which was initially led by Dubliner J.G. Davis. However, 1930 winner P. Tynan, also Morris-mounted, closed determinedly and using all his Kilkenny cunning he squeezed by in the final lap to win by a few cars' lengths. Davis had the consolation of winning the unlimited race in which Tramore honour was also satisfied with local man J.P. Reddy finishing a close second in his Hupmobile.

The Tramore meetings owed much of their success to superb organization with local enthusiasts working at speed to follow the ebbing tide and mark out the course. A large force of Gardai also guaranteed smooth traffic flow and parking and, before the arrival of the various road race series, the Tramore sand events provided a unique southern spectator sport. Inclement weather however greeted the 1932 racers and

not even the best efforts of the locals could smooth the sand which was wet and rutted. Despite the adverse conditions, Dubliner Billy Kavanagh turned on a fine display in his Austin to score a seven-second success from Kilkenny's P. Tynan (Morris-Cowley) and Jackie Greer (Darracq) in the up to 12hp event. Kavanagh was unable to master his handicap in the unlimited 20-mile race but he still managed third place behind Inch driver G. W. Kinley in a Lancia and C.H. Wilson (Vauxhall).

The final Tramore meeting was held in 1933 and it resulted once again in a Kilkenny benefit, with J. Boland taking his Morris-Cowley to success in both 20-mile races. He won the smaller capacity race by two minutes from M.P. O'Brien of Tullow and had a similar commanding margin in the unlimited event from M.P. Abernathy and George Statham. As usual the meeting attracted a capacity crowd, but the reduced entry reflected the increasing driver interest in the proliferating road events and while the racing was exciting it invariably wreaked havoc on the cars.

Driving on the virgin sand provided a delight of unrestricted movement but it was a different story in the wet, when flying sand would beat on drivers' faces like hail and splashes from the pools of sea water invariably drowned the electrics. On top of that, the abrasive sand inevitably found its way into the machinery, with dire results for all moving parts, so it was with a little relief that drivers turned their attention towards the less complicated if more demanding road races. ■

"Driving on the virgin sand provided a delight of unrestricted movement. . . " Dudley Colley at Duncannon.



21. INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS FOR IRISH DRIVERS (1920-1939)

Segrave fastest on land and water

Although it wasn't until the 1970's that Ireland produced its first regular Grand Prix drivers John Watson and Derek Daly, the period between the two world wars saw some notable international achievements by Irish drivers and motorists with strong Irish connections such as Tourist Trophy hero Hugh Hamilton, the redoubtable Algy and Bill Lee Guinness, record-breaker Henry Segrave and French Grand Prix winner Jimmy Murphy.

As already related Algy Guinness was 21 when he made his 1904 Portmarnock race debut before going on to win many British sprints and hillclimbs as well as finishing second in the 1908 Isle of Man Tourist Trophy race. He returned to the Isle of Man following the war to score a notable victory in the 1922 1.5-litre TT, after severely annoying his mechanics by getting them to continually adjust the driving seat of his Talbot-Darracq.

The reason for the fuss was that Algy had overheard another driver say "The old man is past it, you know." Leaving nothing to chance, Algy ensured that he had maximum clear view of his nearside front wheel and once the race started he gained yards on his rivals on each of the island's many lefthand bends to lead his teammate Albert Divo at the end of the opening lap. Algy then had the misfortune to puncture but he fought back to retake Divo and set fastest lap at 55.13mph on his way to a final memorable racing success.

The "old man" incidentally invariably raced with a selection of used spark plugs in his pocket which when properly aimed informed the opposition of an impending overtaking manoeuvre! After retiring from racing he became involved on the official side of the sport but he never lost his native sense of humour, as Sammy Davis found out when his car ran out of steam just a few miles from the finish of a London-Brighton run. Sammy and his wife were working frantically but unavailingly to get the car going again when Algy arrived in his RAC car. "You know very well that the rules expressly prohibit towing," he told them firmly, before adding "— but I don't see anything which prohibits a little push!" With a helpful nudge or two from Algy's official car Sammy and his crew reached Brighton in time to collect a finisher's plaque.

Algy Guinness died in 1954, having outlived his brother Bill Guinness by 17 years. It was the more technically minded Bill Guinness who founded the famous KLG sparking plug factory after winning the 1914 TT using his own specially made plugs. After the war, Bill resumed racing to become one of the most successful British-based drivers of the Twenties. In 1921 he finished second in two major international events, the Grand Prix de Voiturettes at Le Mans and the JCC 200 miles event at Brooklands. The following year he went on to win both these races as well as the Penya Rhin Grand Prix in his Talbot-Darracq.

Bill Guinness was a keen yachtsman and he invariably carried his own and his close friend Henry Segrave's cars to overseas events in his yacht "Ocean River". Back on dry land, Brooklands was a particularly happy hunting ground for Guinness and he was the first member of the exclusive club of drivers who had lapped the banked circuit at over 120mph. He made further motoring history there in 1922 when he broke the land speed record at 133.75mph in his 350hp V-12 Sunbeam. It was a courageous performance on the difficult restricted and very bumpy track and it marked the last time the world record was established on an enclosed circuit.

In 1924 Bill Guinness led his Talbot-Darracq teammates George Duller and Henry Segrave to an impressive victory in the Brooklands 200-mile race. He also won the first Swiss Voiturette Grand Prix at Berne and he led such international aces as Antonio Ascari and Pietro Bordino in the French Grand Prix until a tyre exploded. But a short time later Bill's luck deserted him more comprehensively in what he had planned to be his last race before retiring, the rain-soaked San Sebastian Grand Prix. After taking Alfieri Maserati for second place Bill crashed at 95mph, catapulting himself and his mechanic Jack Barrett down a 50-foot railway cutting. Poor Barrett was killed instantly while Bill was knocked unconscious with severe head injuries. This accident led to the banning of riding mechanics in Grand Prix racing.

It was a sad end to a great racing career and Bill Guinness never competed again, although he took a keen interest in both the Phoenix Park and Ards TT events in which with his brother Algy he sometimes acted in an official capacity. During the 1929 TT Tim Birkin saw a green Bentley ahead of him half hidden in a cloud of dust. Anxious to know which of his teammates was leading him, Birkin made great efforts to catch the mysterious machine. But the green car was going faster than he was in some sections and as Birkin subsequently remembered — “Whoever was driving was certainly putting his foot down; I did not seem to be gaining on him at all. Then he began to slow down and I thought to myself that he must have engine trouble and deserved to, if he intended maintaining that speed all the way. As I passed, Bill Guinness waved from the cockpit; and I have never been persuaded that he was not enjoying a very good private race of his own.” Sadly, Bill Guinness never completely recovered from the effects of his Spanish crash and he died in 1939 in his Kingston home, just down the road from his KLG factory.

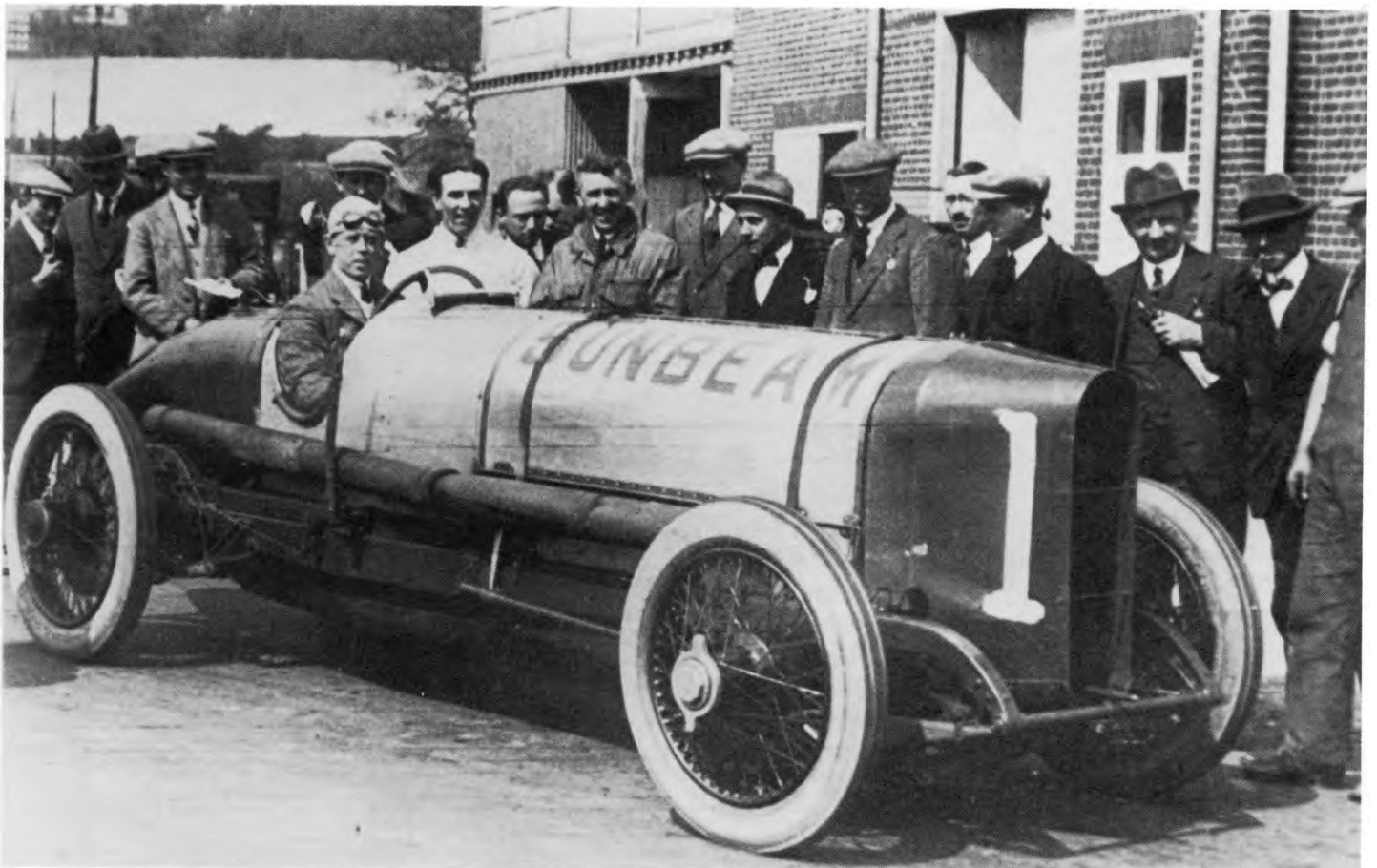
One of the closest friends of the Guinness brothers was Henry Segrave who became an international celebrity of the Twenties as a result

of his record-breaking exploits on land and water. Henry O'Neill DeHane Segrave was born in Baltimore, USA, in 1896 but his father was Irish and he returned shortly afterwards to his Wicklow home with young Henry. Thanks to his father's involvement in Irish motoring, Henry Segrave developed an early interest in car competition and he had learned to steer a car by the age of 10 when the family moved to Belle Isle near Portumna. It was here on the Tipperary side of the River Shannon that he developed the fascination for water which was to manifest itself in later years and, like subsequent leading British Championship contender David McClelland of Toomevara, he also frightened the Tipperary natives with his wild cycling exploits.

Henry was sent to a private school near Rugby before going to Eton, from which he returned to more adventurous holidays at home, riding around the countryside on his Humber motorcycle. He enlisted on the outbreak of the 1914 war and after being wounded in action he became a pilot. The Irishman soon discovered that life in the air was equally hazardous and after being shot down from over 17,000 feet he returned to convalesce in Portumna.

In 1917, Henry Segrave married at the age of 21 in London, a fortnight before the poet W.B. Yeats also married there, and for the rest of his

Bill Guinness, after breaking the world land-speed record, 1922.



life he was based in the English capital, a convenient 30 miles from Brooklands. His renewed interest in motor racing was sparked off by a visit to an American event and soon afterwards he bought a six-year old Opel. Fortunately his new wife encouraged his racing interest, although she must have queried her wisdom when she saw him lose a tyre in his first 1920 outing at Brooklands. Unabashed, Segrave emerged for the final race which he won at 88mph and he scored two further successes that year before joining Bill Guinness as competitions manager at KLG.

The following year he drove for the Talbot-Darracq works team for which he won the first 200-mile race to be held at Brooklands, crossing the line with a flat tyre, as well as finishing a determined ninth in the French Grand Prix after suffering no fewer than 14 punctures! He led the 1922 Tourist Trophy race in the Isle of Man until forced to retire with electrical problems, for which he amply compensated by winning four Brooklands events as well as racing to a fine second place in the Coppa Florio in distant Sicily.

It was his success in the 1923 French Grand Prix which first thrust Segrave into the international limelight. Driving a Sunbeam, he beat the cream of European racing talent to win the arduous 496-mile race at 75.30mph and score the first-ever British car success in the classic Grand Prix. He then went on to take an equally impressive win in the Boulogne Voiturettes Grand Prix. The Sunbeam driver returned to France in 1924 where he once again led the Grand Prix before being demoted to fifth with ignition trouble, despite which he still set fastest lap at 76.25mph.

He made up for his French disappointment by winning the 380-mile San Sebastian Grand Prix in which the unfortunate Bill Guinness came to grief. The following year, Segrave drove a Talbot to success in both the Grand Prix de Provence and the Brooklands 200-mile event, which he took for the third time in 1926, when he also finished second in the Grand Prix du Salon at Montlhery.

It was in 1926 that Segrave turned his attention to record breaking. At Southport Sands, he survived being airborne for 20 yards when his Sunbeam car hit a gully to break the world land speed record for the first time with a speed of 152.33mph. His friendly Welsh rival, Parry Thomas, bettered this by 10mph six weeks later, as Segrave completed his last full racing season with a win at Boulogne, where 15 years earlier Dubliner Harry Robinson had scored the first Irish continental success.

The Sunbeam driver then determined to reach for the magic 200mph figure and to recover the record which had been raised by Malcolm Campbell to 174.88mph. Two Sunbeam aero-engines each producing 400 h.p. were used to power his huge streamlined aluminium-sheathed car. Special tyres were made by Dunlop for the record attempt, each with a maximum life of three and half minutes, just sufficient to allow Segrave time to accelerate, attempt the record and slow down again. Daytona Beach in Florida was chosen for the attempt as there was nowhere suitable in Europe to allow for the nine miles required for the attempt. While on the high seas, Segrave was told of the death of his popular record rival Parry Thomas, who was killed while also trying to beat Campbell's speed at Pendine Sands in Wales.

Thousands of spectators who had camped overnight had to be pushed back by police before the Daytona record attempt could commence at 9.30 a.m. on March 29. But once in his car Segrave quickly found it performed exactly as planned and on his opening run against the wind he became the first person in the world to travel at three miles per minute and to break the 200mph barrier when the Sunbeam was clocked at 200.66mph for the flying mile. On the return run, he made over 207mph to take the record at an average of 203.79mph, despite a frightening experience when his brakes failed and he had to take to the sea to slow down the giant car.

No fewer than 30,000 people including his friend Bill Guinness acclaimed Segrave who had broken the land speed record by almost 30mph, the biggest improvement recorded since Chasseloup-Laubat's first recognised attempt in 1898 at 39.24mph. But even vaster crowds awaited "The Fastest Man on Earth" when he was given a hero's welcome on his return to London, where thousands queued to see his car which was exhibited at Selfridges.

Among the many sports people Henry Segrave had met in the States was water speed record-holder Garfield Wood, who reawakened the driver's interest in boating with some fast runs in one of his own speedboats. Segrave then bought two boats and in 1927 he made his water competition debut to win his first event at Hythe Regatta. Early the following year, he bought a 200hp hydroplane but before he could race it his land record was broken by both Malcolm Campbell and the American Ray Keech, who pushed it up to 207.55mph. Determined to regain the record, he commissioned a new car and with the support of such companies as



Segrave and mechanic after winner the 1923 French Grand Prix.

Dunlop and KLG work went ahead on the vast streamlined "Golden Arrow" which was powered by 930hp Napier engines. With the assistance of Sir Charles Wakefield of Castrol fame, he also made plans for the construction of a speedboat with which he hoped to wrest the 92.86mph world water record from Gar Wood.

The press naturally went to town on this double challenge to the USA and they had to reach for further superlatives when after only one trial run in March 1929 Segrave broke the record at 231.44mph, covering the flying Daytona mile in 15.5 seconds. But for the death of Lee Bible who was also attempting the record in his Triplex Special, Segrave would undoubtedly have bettered this figure on a second attempt. Once again thousands hailed the man who had smashed the world record by almost 24mph. He was knighted on his return to England, after a welcome which included a naval and plane escort and a parade through the streets of London.

Segrave then concentrated on water speed and he won three big races in Berlin, while preparing for his world record attempt. Four months after taking the land speed record he returned to Dublin with Bill Guinness to assist with the first July Irish Grand Prix. From Dublin he went on to Venice, where he won the European Speedboat Championship at 92.52mph, a fraction outside the record.

Convinced that he needed a better boat, the intrepid record hunter designed a new craft and in June 1930 Miss England II was launched at Lake Windermere. A few days later the world's land speed record holder made ready to attack the world water record and though the boat's propellor broke in early trials he persisted to make his big attempt. His new craft skimmed across the water at close to 100mph, but as he broke the record on his return trip at 98.76mph it struck a floating branch and capsized, mortally wounding its 33-year old pilot. The day was Friday, June 13. Segrave's last words to his would-be rescuers were typical of the man "Have we got the record?" he asked

Despite his comfortable background, Henry Segrave was a very practical man of strong scientific bent and with a passionate belief in mechanical progress through speed. A few weeks before he died he wrote "Speed does not always mean speed for speed's sake. It means, as any engineer appreciates, the discovery of all those factors which make better engines, more power for less weight, improved springing, clearer body design, and all the hundred and one points which make mechanical development possible.

"So when an accident happens, it is no use saying 'what's the use?' There is a use. It has taught someone something and the lesson learned may be worth all the risk and all the loss."

The man who had committed his life to speed also had intentions of adding the world's air speed record to his land and water titles and before his death he designed the super-streamlined Segrave Meteor plane. After his death, Castrol commissioned the Segrave Trophy, now one of the world's most prestigious speed awards, which was instituted in 1930 for the most outstanding demonstration of the possibilities of transport by land, air or water. Although it's half a century since Henry Segrave's untimely end, a wreath-laying ceremony is still held each year at Lake Windermere to commemorate the fearless pioneer whose first speed thrills came on the distant hills and streets of Wicklow and Tipperary.

The race in which Henry Segrave made his continental debut was the 1921 French Grand

Prix which was won by a Duesenberg car, the first and only time an American machine won the French Classic. Its driver was Jimmy Murphy, who following in the footsteps of Waterford's Joe Tracy was one of the most important American drivers of the Twenties. Jimmy Anthony Murphy was born in 1894 to Irish parents in San Francisco but he was orphaned at an early age when his mother died prematurely and then his father perished in the 1906 earthquake. He was brought up by relatives Judge and Mrs Martin O'Donnell who gave him a motorcycle on which to ride to school. Within a short time the shy but determined youngster was firmly hooked on speed and mechanical matters.

Jimmy left school at the age of 18 to open his own garage and after seeing his first race at nearby Beverley Hills he set his heart on becoming a racing driver. He persuaded Duesenberg team driver Eddie O'Donnell to take him as riding mechanic in the 300-mile Corona road race which O'Donnell won at record speed. The war then intervened but immediately afterwards Jimmy returned to race participation, acting as riding mechanic to O'Donnell and his teammates Tommy Milton and the famous flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker.

He finally got his first drive at Uniontown in 1919 and though he crashed and was fired by Fred Duesenberg, his tempestuous teammate Milton ensured that he got a second chance. That was in the opening 250-mile race at the Beverley Hills Speedway where he had first seen cars being raced. This time there was no mistake and not only did the Irish-American qualify fastest, he also led from flag to flag to score a sensational 103mph victory over his seasoned rivals.

Jimmy then went on to win at Fresno and later in the year he set a new American speed record of 151mph, which also beat the world record. Sadly, at the end of the season he lost his close friend Eddie O'Donnell, who died with Gaston Chevrolet of car construction fame in a Beverley Hills Speedway pile-up. He also lost the friendship of Tommy Milton who felt that it was he who should have driven the car in which the record was broken at Daytona.

In 1921, spark plug magnate Albert Champion financed the Duesenberg team for an attempt at the blue riband of European racing, the French Grand Prix. Though no American car or driver had made any impression in Europe, Murphy arrived in France determined to reverse this fortune. He was one of the fastest drivers in practice and looked set for a good placing before brake failure caused his car to somersault and he



Jimmy Murphy in the Duesenberg, with which he won both the French Grand Prix and the Indianapolis 500.

was hospitalised with broken ribs. But on race morning, the determined Jimmy insisted on being allowed to compete and with his ribs tightly strapped he was driven to Le Mans and lifted into the Duesenberg, which was also making history by being the first car with hydraulic brakes on all four wheels to compete in a Grand Prix.

Despite intense pain from his ribs, a damaged radiator and a tyre blow out, Jimmy went on to beat the best European drivers and cars and win the gruelling four and a half hour race at 78.22mph. On his way into the motoring history books, he also set fastest lap at 83.40mph. His record-breaking success dismayed the partisan French supporters who booed him as he crossed the line. Later that night at the race reception, the first toast was drunk not to the victorious Irish-American but to third-placed Frenchman Jules Goux. It was more than Jimmy could stand and with his mechanic George Robertson he left to celebrate with bacon and eggs in a nearby cafe.

The following year Jimmy drove the French Grand Prix-winning car at Indianapolis, this time with a different engine and under the title 'Murphy Special'. After a typical barnstorming finish he scored another memorable victory to win America's premier 500 mile race at 94.48mph. He also took several other long-distances events to become the 1922 American Champion. He returned to Europe with a Miller Special for the 1923 Italian Grand Prix in which he finished third, despite having run out of brakes, and he also won major races at Beverley Hills and Fresno.

Jimmy was now so popular in the States that a dance was named after him, "the Jimmy Murphy Fox Trot". He added to his reputation in 1924 by winning at Altoona, Kansas City and Readville as well as taking third place at

Indianapolis, to become American Champion for the second time. What is most remarkable about these achievements is that they were packed into five short seasons.

Having grown up without a father or mother, Murphy who was now 30 told friends that he intended to retire and raise a family. But to consolidate his 1924 American Championship success, he decided to contest one final race at Syracuse. As he went to take the lead, he hit an oil patch and was thrown on to the railings where a wooden splinter pierced his heart killing him instantly. His long-time rival Tommy Milton forgot their disagreements to take Jimmy's body back to Los Angeles.

The Miller car in which Jimmy Murphy was killed was subsequently purchased by Wilbur Shaw, another young driver with Irish associations, who in his own personal tribute to the driver he had admired as a teenager took the four-year-old machine to an incredible fourth place in the 1927 Indianapolis 500-mile race. Shaw subsequently became one of the most successful drivers at Indianapolis where his shamrock-bedecked Boyle Special won the big race in 1939 and 1940. Head of Firestone's aircraft division during the war, Shaw afterwards played a vital role in American racing administration before dying in a 1954 plane crash.

The Irish driver who showed the greatest potential in the Thirties was Omagh-born Hugh Hamilton, whose brilliant career sadly turned out to be as short as it was spectacular. He first came to prominence when his record-breaking speed during the 1931 TT earned him the title "Wild Man of Ards" and two years later he was unlucky to lose the Irish classic after a nail-biting dice with the legendary Nuvolari.

Born in 1905, Hamilton's obsession with cars commenced at an early age and after education

at Oscar Wilde's *Portora alma mater* he worked as an MG car salesman in London. His first race was in 1930, when he finished third with C.R. Whitcroft in the Brooklands Double 12-Hour event ahead of first Phoenix Park winner Ivanowski. The following year he returned to the banked British track to take another third place, despite a broken valve spring, and in the subsequent Ards TT he made his more experienced rivals take note as he broke the lap record and led eventual winner Norman Black until a rocker arm broke in his MG Midget.

Hugh opened his 1932 season with a fourth place at Brooklands before narrowly escaping disaster in the Surrey track's Whitsun meeting when his MG overturned as it swept off the Members' Banking. Little daunted he returned to finish second in the Junior Mountain Handicap, but he had another nasty confrontation in the subsequent 500-mile race when Clive Dunfee crashed to his death right in front of the Bugatti which the Irishman was driving for Lord Howe, who was one of the first to appreciate his great potential. It was in this car that Hamilton had finished ninth on his continental debut in the French Grand Prix and it was also in Europe that he scored one of his most impressive successes when he won his class in the 1932 German Grand Prix.

Hugh was using the daunting Nurburgring circuit to gain the road racing experience which he hoped would enable him to satisfy his ambition of winning his home TT and, though driving a works MG, he raced in Germany without any substantial team support. However, once the race started he quickly broke the class record to thrust his little 800cc machine ahead not only of its class rivals but also most of the 1500cc cars. Despite his unfamiliarity with the demanding 14-mile track, Hugh led to chequered flag to score MG's first significant continental success.

The Irishman returned home with high hopes of a TT win and during practice he smashed the class record at 74mph, faster than Freddie Dixon in his larger Riley. An uncompromising driver who pushed both himself and his car to the limit, Hugh then set out to better this time, but his MG got out of line after passing Victor Gillow's Riley at Ballystockart and despite heroic efforts to control it he crashed heavily breaking his ribs. As already related, he still managed to see the race, having his bed wheeled out to Newtownards Square for the big event.

Hugh's 1933 season opened on a high note with an invitation to drive one of the new K-3 MG Magnettes in the Italian Mille Miglia classic. He

Hugh Hamilton winning the 1934 Coppa Acerbo for M.G.



was to drive with Lord Howe and the pair had a narrow escape in a pre-race recce when travelling at speed in the dark near Venice, the MG's weak headlamps failed to pick out a sharp right-hand corner. However, in a swift decisive stroke, Hamilton did a Leslie Porter impression to hare down a convenient railway track at over 80mph. The MG's sported stronger headlamps in the race itself in which Hugh did most of the night driving. Near the finish, he closed dramatically on class leader George Eyston to whom he finished a close second after 1,000 miles of racing to clinch the team prize for MG, the first time it had ever been won by non-Italian entrants.

He then won the Austrian Automobile Club's Silver Cup for fastest time at the Masaryk Ring before going on to repeat his German Grand Prix class win, this time on Berlin's banked Avus circuit. The MG driver added a hillclimb win at Dresden for good measure and back in England he set fastest lap and dominated the Isle of Man Manin Beg race before his MG's back axle broke in the closing stages. He added a Donington Park win and lap record to his tally before heading home in September 1933 for another crack at the TT with a supercharged MG Midget.

Tazio Nuvolari was a surprise late entry for the 480-mile race and using more tyres than anyone else in practice the *maestro* quickly familiarised himself with both the new circuit and MG Magnette to pose a serious threat to Hamilton's TT ambitions. However, once the race started Hamilton was off like a scalded cat in his smaller 750cc car and he led the race until an unfortunate seven-minute pit-stop during which, as related in the TT chapter, practically everything went wrong. After the stop Hamilton drove like a man possessed, smashing the lap record at 77mph, only four miles per hour slower than Nuvolari in the bigger car, but a last-lap halt for fuel handed victory to the Italian who won by 40 seconds.

Determined to avenge his TT disappointment, the Irishman headed for the Czech Grand Prix where his practice speed on the tortuous 18-mile Nurburgring-like circuit quickly made him the focus of pre-race attention. Among those who came to compliment him was 1928 Targa Florio heroine Madame Junek and wherever Hamilton went he was pursued by a posse of journalists, photographers and ladies eager to be introduced to the fiery MG driver. He lived up to his reputation in the Grand Prix, not only to lead his class by the proverbial mile but also to hound Fagioli, Chiron and Burgwaller in their vastly superior machinery.

The race was run in pouring rain and this

proved to be Hamilton's undoing. On the eleventh lap, his waterproof poncho billowed up behind the steering column and jammed the wheel. The MG driver tried desperately to free it but his wet gloves had little grip and he flew off the track, smashing some concrete posts before somersaulting down a ravine. His car turned over three times and Hamilton was rushed to hospital with broken ribs which also scratched a lung. At first it was thought that he had been killed and in an echo of the Porter-Nixon tragedy the following day's German papers reported his death.

There was now little doubt of Hugh Hamilton's great potential and once he had recovered from his Czech injuries he was invited to drive for Whitney Straight's Maserati team in the 1934 Grand Prix races. He made a sensational debut at Tripoli where he passed Louis Chiron to close on race-leader Varzi before being forced out with carburettor trouble. He was third to Chiron and Etancelin in the subsequent Casablanca Grand Prix before tyre trouble intervened and he then went on to take fifth in the Montreaux GP, fourth in the Marne GP and second in the Albi Grand Prix which he led until slowed by a misfire.

In addition to his single-seater Maserati exploits, Hamilton continued to trace MG's with his teammate Dick Seaman and in August 1934 he scored a fine 1500cc class win at 73.42mph in the Italian Coppa Acerbo race ahead of Cecchini and Seaman. In the Grand Prix itself, he was fourth behind Caracciola, Fagioli and Nuvolari before being forced to retire with engine trouble. He then headed north for the Swiss Grand Prix but this sadly proved to be his last race as one mile from the finish he crashed fatally, apparently having suffered a heart attack.

It was an unfortunate end to such a promising career and it is beyond question that with further experience Hamilton would have developed into one of the world's top drivers. His great courage was matched by an uncanny consistency and an equally obstinate determination to succeed. Though an aloof individual, he was popular with his fellow Grand Prix drivers who with hundreds of race fans came to see him lying in state in Berne. Like his compatriot Willie Nixon who perished in the 1903 Paris-Madrid race, Hugh Hamilton's final resting place is also a long way from home. He was buried in the Bremergarten cemetery, close to the circuit where he died, only a fortnight before the annual TT which no one had tried harder to win.

One of the best known Bentley mechanics of the Thirties was Bill Rockall, who partnered such drivers as Tim Birkin and Kensington Moir and

raced at both Ards and Phoenix Park. Bill who later went into partnership in a London garage with Giulio Ramponi was with Birkin the afternoon Campari outwitted them at Comber.

The Londoner has particularly vivid memories of both Birkin and Hugh Hamilton — “Birkin was brilliant and brave. He was ice-cool at all times and that TT mistake was one of the few of his great career. Off the circuit we didn’t mix socially, but in the races we were two professionals working as a team and of all the drivers I saw, I rate him as one of the very best for skill and courage.

“I must say that Hugh Hamilton also struck me as an exceptional driver in the Birkin mould. He went where other drivers feared to go and he was also naturally very quick. It was very sad that both he and Birkin died so young.”

Apart from Hugh Hamilton and company, other Irish drivers to compete in England during the Twenties and Thirties included Belfast’s Willie Noble, Billy Sullivan from Killyleigh (birthplace of Sir Hans Sloane of museum fame), Lurgan’s Jimmy Shaw and Dubliners Stanley Woods and Fay Tylour. Shaw and Woods were better known for their motorcycling TT and European Grands Prix feats but they competed at Brooklands in 1929, where Shaw finished eighth in one event. Willie Noble won his class in the 1929 Shelsley Walsh hillclimb, at which he was awarded a special prize for the best performance by an amateur, while Billy Sullivan also won his class in the same year’s Southport Speed Trials.

The redoubtable Fay Tylour, winner of the first Leinster Trophy race, also competed with distinction in England. Fay was born in Birr and spent some years in Cavan before going to live in Dublin. Her penchant for speed led her to speedway racing and she won races in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa before turning to four wheels. With one of the MG Magnettes which had just seen Mille Miglia action she was fastest lady in the Spring 1933 Shelsley Walsh hillclimb and later that year she also won her class in the Craigantlet meeting before going on to trounce the men in the Leinster Trophy race.

Fay also drove a Frazer Nash to success in the first ladies’ race at Donington Park in 1935 and she was apparently no less spectacular on the road, spending a night in Holloway prison for a 1935 speeding offence. After storming her way to second place with a Monza Alfa in one Brooklands race, Fay got so carried away that she circulated for several celebratory laps at unabated speed before finally heeding official pleas to come in. Sammy Davis remembered the Irish woman who died in 1983 as a very competent driver —

“who talked cheerfully without stopping and drove with skill, violence and an occasional disregard of regulations which resulted in interviews with the Stewards!” ■

Hugh Hamilton . . . “an exceptional driver in the Birkin mould”.



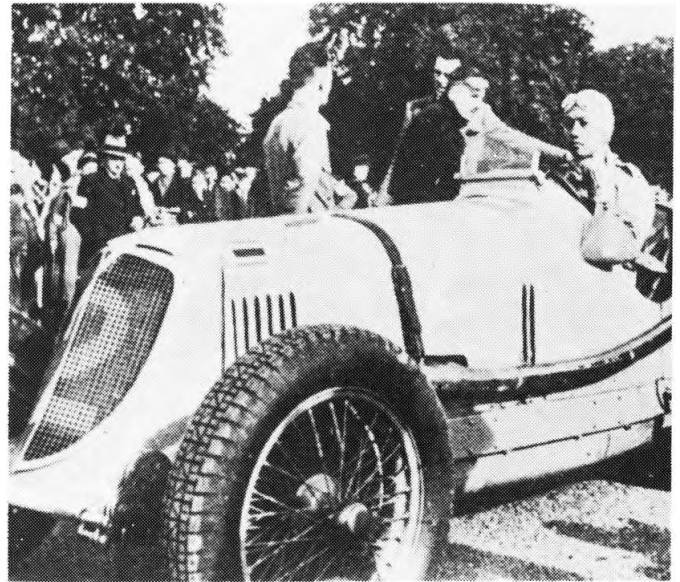
22. PHOENIX PARK – THE FINAL YEARS (1936-1939)

Europe's fastest road circuit – 100 mph

As Dublin's Phoenix Park headed towards the first 100mph lap which would reinforce its status as Europe's fastest road circuit, the heroes of the Irish Grand Prix races of the early Thirties such as Caracciola and Varzi and TT winner Nuvolari were now setting the international Grand Prix world alight in their Mercedes, Auto Union and Alfa-Romeo machinery. Varzi was destined to win the 1936 Tripoli Grand Prix shortly before the first of the only two accidents of his long career, while Nuvolari was still thrilling the crowds as he fought with his outclassed Alfa to hold the all-conquering European Champion Caracciola in his state-subsidized Mercedes. Malcolm Campbell had taken the world land speed record to an unbelievable 300mph but despite the lack of continental participation, the Irish speeds were also creeping up, thanks to the Phoenix Park attraction for the leading British drivers who were seeking points for the main UK award, the Gold Star of the British Racing Drivers' Club.

Thus while financial and other problems brought the Cork and Limerick Grand Prix series to a premature end, the Park races continued to thrive. Following the success of its 1935 meeting the IMRC received a deserved pat on the back with the award of international status for its September 1936 race. The 200-mile event attracted 43 entrants including Austin Dobson in his 2.9-litre Alfa Romeo and the ever popular Prince Bira, who was chasing points to keep ahead of Dick Seaman in the BRDC Gold Star competition. It was Bira's first road race in his ex-Whitney Straight Maserati, while other exciting machinery included the ERA's of Peter Whitehead and Reggie Tongue, and the supercharged Alfa of privateer Anthony Powys-Lybbe.

Practice was optimistically scheduled for five on Friday morning but it was one hour later before the cars were allowed out under a dark overcast sky. Nine drivers lapped at over 90mph and Bira soon got into the swing of things to emerge quickest with a lap of 2m 37s (97.7mph), four seconds faster than Dobson and Whitehead. With 40 cars on the circuit there were many complaints of baulking and officials warned drivers that strong action would be taken if they did not keep



Bira, before his 100 mph lap, 1936.

a sharper eye astern during the race. The only casualty of practice was Philip Jucker who lapped at 80mph and then sprained his ankle as he was climbing out of his Alfa (the Londoner was killed eight months later in the Isle of Man). The main surprise was the speed of 1935 winner Walter Furey who was well inside his handicap estimate although this had been raised from 69 to 73mph.

"Will the magic 100mph lap be achieved?" was the question on everyone's lips as the race started in ideal conditions. As the 40 cars left the line together, it was Bira's blue Maserati which jumped ahead to lead into Mountjoy from Dobson, Tongue, Charlie Dodson and Whitehead. The little Siamese then proceeded to disappear into the blue and at the end of the opening lap he was 18 seconds clear of Dobson's red Alfa.

Driving on the limit to build up an early lead, Bira went even faster on his second lap. All ears strained to catch the public address announcement of his lap times and the Park crowd broke into spontaneous applause when the news was relayed that on only his second lap, the little Siamese had lapped the 4.25 miles in 2m 31s to become the first driver to average 100mph around the historic Dublin circuit. Within three

laps, Bira was in fact catching up the slower drivers, as Dobson pitted for a wheel change before being further delayed with brake problems.

Local reserve driver H.V. McCaughan added to the excitement by completing a few merry unofficial laps before being flagged in by officials while A.F. Milne ended his Ford Special's fine record of four consecutive Park finishes when he ran out of room while attempting to pass Charlie Manders at Mountjoy. The two Austin entries were lapping well ahead of their handicaps and at quarter distance Charlie Dodson led the race before he and Charles Goodacre were each afflicted with burst oil pipes. Michael May in his unsupercharged Alvis then took over until a misfire intervened and at half distance. Walter Furey (MG) came into the picture lapping unexpectedly faster than his 1935 winning average.

Whitehead and Tongue were also well in the hunt with their ERA's before losing valuable time with refuelling stops while Peter Walker in Jucker's Alfa gave Tongue a run for his money for many laps before his brakes went. But at three quarters' distance, despite his rapid pace, it became clear that Bira who was now up to second could not catch Furey. Despite his brake problem, Dobson responded to Bira's quick lappery with a lap of 2m 32s. But if he could not overhaul Furey the Siamese was at least going to take the honour of fastest lap and on his penultimate circuit he scorched around in 2m 30s, to set up a new record of 102.3mph.

Furey stroked home to his second consecutive success to win by five minutes at an average of 77.16mph, while Bira was second at 99.34mph, a minute ahead of MG driver Terry McComb. A.N. McLachlan finished fourth just one second clear of Whitehead with Tongue a further 26 seconds in arrears for sixth. Bira was mobbed by the crowds at the end of the race and his eight points for finishing second helped him win the BRDC Gold Star by a point from Dick Seaman. The race was adjudged a great success and the IMRC retired to plan a similiar international event for the following year.

Owing to the great speed differential between the slower and fastest cars it was decided to change the August 1937 format to two separate 100-mile scratch and handicap events. This was the first time a scratch race had been staged by an Irish Club. Practice was increased to two days and despite the heavy rain on Thursday's opening session ERA specialist Raymond Mays on his first visit was quickest at 93.5mph, ahead of Tongue and Peter Whitehead also in ERA's and Johnny

Wakefield in his Maserati. There was some confusion when a flock of peacocks emerged from the zoo to dispute possession of the track. They forced Dubliner R.D. Cox to take the escape road before Desmond McCracken settled the matter in favour of the drivers in a brief but very feathery confrontation.

The weather improved for Friday's practice and after surviving a kamikaze attack by a deranged Park deer Mays quickly circulated at 103mph ahead of Wakefield, Bira and band leader Billy Cotton, who lapped at 96mph in his ERA. Both Mays and Bira needed a good result to boost their chances in the Gold Star competition in which they were lying first and third respectively. In final practice for the handicap event, Mays and Bira tied at 105mph and a great battle seemed in store for Saturday's opening event.

Once the handicap race started, though, Bira streaked away into the distance as he had the previous year. At the end of the opening lap he led May by three seconds and covering the second lap at a new record of 106.5mph he went 13 seconds clear. May's ERA then threw a conrod and it was left to Bira to commence a long lone chase of the limit men. With an allowance of seven laps, Dubliner David Yule (CMY) took an early lead from Paddy Le Fanu, Manliffe Barrington and I.H. Nickol, but by half distance Bira was up to second and closing fast as he pushed the record to 107.28mph. However, once again the odds had been stacked against him and Yule held on to win by 40 seconds at 78.04mph while Nickol caught Barrington on the

1937 winner Raymond Mays with ERA designer Peter Berthon.



line to take third place and Desmond McCracken finished fifth ahead of Sir A.W. MacRobert. Yule's winning CMY was a supercharged 'special' which had started life as a humble Morris Minor.

Cars lined up according to their practice times for the scratch event with Mays and Wakefield sharing the front row with Bira, whose 12-year ex-Seaman Delage was clad in an long bulbous streamlined shell. Mays in his Zoller-blown ERA was in a determined mood and he raced away to lead by a commanding five seconds at the end of the second lap from Bira, Cotton and Wakefield. Peter Whitehead's ERA had been filled with the wrong fuel and he got no further than Mountjoy on his opening lap. Mays covered his second circuit at 101.6mph and though Bira made desperate efforts to hold him, the Englishman drew away to lead by 31 seconds at half distance having set up a new 1500 lap record of 104.36mph.

Frank O'Boyle in his Alta and Peter Aitken, son of Lord Beaverbrook, made two quick pit stops as Maserati man Wakefield closed on Bira and the pair duelled fiercely, with Wakefield leading for six laps before Bira pushed ahead again. But just when it seemed as if Bira would take second place to the flying Mays, a rear spring broke and he limped into the pits to retire. Mays won comfortably at 102.90mph from Wakefield with Cotton a fine third ahead of Robin Hanson and Bira, who was classified fifth ahead of O'Boyle —

Johnny Wakefield (Maserati), second in 1937.



who did well to take sixth as he covered his final laps on only three cylinders. Mays' win increased his Gold Star lead to eight points while Bira's average of 105mph in the opening race maintained the Park's reputation as the fastest road circuit in Europe.

Uncertainty clouded the 1938 Park meeting as anxiety spread over Czechoslovakia and France manned the Marginot Line. But a full complement of visiting drivers arrived for the September meeting which comprised a handicap event for the Wakefield Trophy over 18 laps and the Dunlop Trophy scratch event over 24 laps, 100 miles. To add to the Park attractions, a horse race was scheduled for 5.30 following the four-wheeled competitions.

Bandleader Billy Cotton headed Thursday's scratch practice at 99.6mph, in the absence of Bira and Chris Staniland who did not appear until the following day, when Bira lapped his Maserati at 106mph, five seconds faster than Staniland. A former RAF pilot and motorcycle record breaker, Staniland was driving his 2.9-litre Multi-Union, a converted Monoposto Alfa which looked uncannily like a pukka Mercedes Grand Prix car, and subsequently came within a whisker of beating John Cobb's 143mph Brooklands lap record.

Handicap practice saw several of the 32 entrants exceed their estimated speeds including Cyril McCormack, son of the singer Count John McCormack. The race itself resulted in one of the closest ever Park finishes. Limit man W.T. Doherty led in his DRA for eight laps until overhauled by D.C. (Bunty) Leechman. Paddy Le Fanu then came through the field to take second place in his LERA just after half-distance. With four laps left, Le Fanu went into the lead but gaining four places in one lap popular English visitor Michael May (Alvis) overtook him a lap from home to win by 35 seconds at 88.03mph from I.H. Nickol (MG Midget) who also passed Le Fanu a mile from the finish.

Alec MacArthur caught fourth-placed driver C.E. Robb as he approached Mountjoy for the final time, before spinning in the excitement and badly baulking the close-following Charlie Manders and Willie O'Riordan. The wily R.D. Cox nipped through the confusion to take fifth place a few lengths clear of Manders. One and a half minutes covered the first six finishers.

Prince Bira, Chris Staniland and Johnny Wakefield started the scratch race from the front row and the Siamese made another of his lightning starts to take his blue Maserati to a five second lead at the end of the opening lap from

Wakefield's blown ERA and Staniland's slow-starting silver Multi-Union. A piston went in Wakefield's car on the second lap promoting Staniland to second, as Billy Cotton walked back to the pits after his ERA had become jammed in gear.

By the end of the third lap Bira seemed en route to his first Park success with 15 seconds in hand over Staniland who in turn was 20 seconds clear of Tony Rolt in an ERA. As the race approached half distance, the Prince enjoyed a comfortable half-minute cushion but one short lap later it was Staniland's Multi-Union which blasted up the main straight in the lead, as Bira once again limped into the pits and retirement in a cloud of expensive engine smoke. It was the Maserati's final Irish appearance before its post-war Tallaght entry by Ken McAlpine.

Alfa driver Robert Arbuthnot was mounting a spirited chase of third-placed ERA man C. Pollock, but each time he assayed a passing manoeuvre, he spun and after clouting the railings, he wisely decided to hold station (Arbuthnot's Alfa was being tended by none other than the original Gough railings assailant, Giulio Ramponi). Meantime, Cotton's mechanic Wilkie Wilkinson cycled over to the bandleader's car, where he soon remedied the gear change problem and rushed back to the pits on four wheels. Cotton quickly donned his helmet and goggles and rejoined the fray in determined mood.

The rotund musician was many laps in arrears but he caused great excitement by passing Rolt and then chasing after Staniland whom he also overtook to loud cheers. The latter wisely decided not to risk his lead by dicing with the wild Billy and he went on to win at 97.45mph by a mile and a half from Rolt, with Pollock whose ERA boasted the revolutionary Technauto suspension taking third place ahead of Arbuthnot. While the rest of the Park competitors remained for a flutter on the horses, Cotton raced off for final rehearsals at the Theatre Royal where nicely combining business with pleasure, he was booked to play that night. Race-winner Chris Staniland sadly perished in a pre-war flying accident.

As the war clouds rolled inexorably over Europe, the Irish Motor Racing Club gamely went ahead with its September 1939 meeting which owing to the absence of overseas entrants was changed at the last minute from a major scratch event to a handicap 100-mile race preceded by a motorcycle thresh. The meeting took place on Saturday September 9, six days after Britain had entered the war. Among the bike entrants was

the brother of Dublin racing driver Dudley Colley, Jock Colley, the Irish 350 Hillclimb Champion, who sadly was shortly to join the long list of RAF casualties. Although the Dublin government had opted for neutrality, the effects of the conflict were to be felt in Ireland as elsewhere in Europe and many drivers brought their wireless sets to Phoenix Park to keep an anxious ear to the latest war bulletins.

Fifteen drivers practised, with Bray man Bill McQuillan fastest at 82mph in his V8 Special. Scratchmen Frank O'Boyle and Alec MacArthur from Sligo qualified in borrowed cars, the former awaiting the return of his Alta from England, while MacArthur was unable to get the special fuel he needed for his supercharged MG. Second quickest was Mallow driver Aubrey Thompson in his TRS, the beautifully turned out Special comprising mainly Ford and Riley parts in which Thompson had been unlucky to lose second place in the recent Limerick Grand Prix when the engine failed a few miles from the line.

The race was held in perfect weather conditions and limit man G. Norman led for the first six laps before being overwhelmed by his faster rivals led by Pierce Cahill. The MG man was going much quicker than his handicappers had estimated and he looked likely to maintain his lead as he lapped at a steady 79mph. However, scratchman Alec MacArthur was also making impressive progress as he circulated at 93mph in his supercharged MG.

1939 Park winner Aubrey Thompson, from Mallow.



The rapid pace saw the early demise of many cars including that of Bill McQuillan and at half distance there were only eight drivers left, as Cahill fought to maintain his lead from Aubrey Thompson. The Mallow man had just progressed to second place, having shaken off the ambitious Dudley Colley who had stayed in his slipstream until the engine of his Frazer Nash spread itself expensively around the circuit. With independent springing all round and a de Dion rear axle, Thompson's car was performing as impressively as it looked and its driver went ahead five laps from the finish.

Slowed with a slipping clutch Cahill then lost second place to MacArthur when he pitted and as he headed for a repeat visit he was quickly waved on in case he lost another position. Stanley Woods was giving a good account of himself in fourth place until with four laps to go he was passed by George Mangan in his CMY. As Cahill's clutch worsened he was forced to take the long way around Mountjoy — behind the trees — but Thompson kept his car firmly on the track to hold off the fast-closing MacArthur and win by 24 seconds at 82.24mph. Cahill retained his third

place ahead of Mangan, Stanley Woods and Paddy Le Fanu.

The latter's quickest lap of 94.10mph represented a new 1100cc record and it was also the fastest at which an Irish driver had ever lapped Phoenix Park. It was an appropriate native tribute to the energy and enthusiasm of the IMRC and the RIAC who together had given life to the unique city race series. As the cars reluctantly left the Park that darkening September evening, few realized that it would be almost a decade before Dublin would once again resound to the sound of racing engines.

The 1939 Park races were the last to be held in Europe until the mid-Forties and they closed an action-packed chapter in Irish and international motorsport. The Phoenix Park, Ards TT and other road series had put Ireland firmly on the international racing map while such brave and resourceful drivers as Joe Tracy, Algy and Bill Guinness, Henry Segrave and Hugh Hamilton had also made a significant contribution to the sport. It wasn't a bad achievement for a small agricultural country on the remote western seaboard of industrialized Europe. ■

Between the trees and gas lamps, ERA driver Raymond Mays exits Gough Corner, Phoenix Park.



23. FROM THE COCKPIT

Drivers and Mechanics remember

Many of the pre-war Irish competitors survived until recently and their accounts provide some idea of what it was like to race between the lamp standards of the Phoenix Park and the stone walls of such circuits as Ards and Cork.

One of international racing's most popular characters was the inimitable Sammy Davis who was also motorsport editor of *Autocar* for many years. Sammy's most famous event was the 1927 Le Mans 24-hours race, when he retrieved his battered car from a multiple crash to score a memorable win for the Bentley team. Like many other pre-war competitors, Sammy relished the road racing in Ireland, where he first competed in the Ards TT before going on to finish second to Boris Ivanowski in the 1929 Saorstat Cup round of the Irish Grand Prix.

"I liked Le Mans and Ards but I thought first that the four and a half miles Phoenix Park circuit was totally inadequate," he subsequently recalled. "However, I quickly got used to it and after my first practice I wouldn't hear a word spoken against the place. The race start was a near-disaster for me, because in my haste to get away I got my overalls caught up in the dashboard and though I thought it was all very funny, my team manager was considerably miffed that I didn't make the lightning start I had promised in our final briefing.

"Past the stands for the first time, it was Ramponi's red Alfa which led from my teammates Green and Shaw, then Ivanowski in another Alfa and then myself. After three laps, my team manager must have breathed a little easier as I was almost up with Ramponi and the Russian and as battle commenced I wondered if our little car would hold out.

"Normally the Lea-Francis rev limit was around 4,700, at which Ramponi and Ivanowski gained a bit on the straight, so we went up to 4,800-4,900. Whether or not our engine would stand up to it, it was now in the hands of Fate, but the risk had to be taken as my signals showed that we were losing a little every lap, the Alfa team gaining in particular on acceleration after the right-hand Mountjoy corner.

"However, it was encouraging to see that

Ramponi was having to do all he knew at the corners, although I must admit the melting tar also made things a bit too exciting for us. It was particularly bad at Mountjoy, the Zoo turn and the sweep downhill to the Gough corner, and the spectators at these places all had their money's worth!

"Mountjoy was the very devil of a place, and five different lines resulted in five different sorts of four-wheel skids. Zoo turn then became great fun, the whole car drifting wide, flat out, with the steering turned the opposite way to the direction of the corner in an effort to correct the slides. I went faster and faster as I learned more about the downhill bit, although it also was treacherously slippery. Though I had one really bad swinging skid at Gough, I knew by the tyre marks that the Alfas were having problems as well and Ramponi disappeared once into the woods at Mountjoy.

"Fortunately there was scarcely any bother in passing the slower cars, though some mechanics would simply not look behind them and we sometimes had to go by on the left camber of a right turn after Mountjoy. Poppe, in the fast supercharged Austin, the Riley team, and Frazer Nash were the most helpful drivers, always giving way and signalling one on. My mechanic, Jack Hewitson, was fine because though he'd not been with me before, he never panicked when the car suddenly altered course on the tar, or when I once bumped the kerb and thought I'd bent a wheel. Jack also kept a close watch astern and he managed the gauges good and proper, even while we were talking — and, of course, he also kept me well supplied with bulls-eyes! Don't forget the race was four hours long, without a stop, and was none of your modern Grand Prix sprints.

"The Alfas were lapping at 75.3mph and I was averaging 75.6 in my flat-out efforts to maintain contact. As the race progressed, we could see the preparations for the Alfas' refills and that made us try even harder, as we were not stopping at all. Two laps after one of the Alfas' quick stops, I caught sight of a red car in the distance and it was Ramponi trying to make up for lost time. A few seconds later, we had an almighty slide and we

only got around Gough corner by the skin of our teeth, but Ramponi wasn't so lucky when he slid at the same place.

"He left the road and mounted the pavement and the impact was so severe when he hit the railings, that it bent both axles and put him out of the race. Neither Ramponi nor his mechanic were hurt and we tried to signal the Alfa pits to tell them that they had crashed but were alright. It was pathetic for the next few laps to see the Italian and his mechanic trudging back to the pits after their fine drive, and one wished it was possible to give them another car to keep up the fight.

"Ivanowski was still ahead of me, of course, and going great guns, and nothing we could do seemed to make any impression on him. One thing I've never mentioned before about the race is that my car was taking a hell of a battering, as we had driven it on the limit all the time. For an inexpensive sports car, the Lea-Francis really stood the test well, but we lost the odd few bits and pieces, as well as having a damaged front wheel which kept me on a razor's-edge, wondering if it would eventually give way.

"But we never stopped trying and as the last laps came round after what seemed an absurdly short time. I really stood the engine on its head, trying to gain a little on the Russian. Ivanowski beat us across the line by exactly a minute, but we had the consolation of winning the team-prize, to make the event a major success for Lea-Francis. Although poor Burney finished only thirteenth due to plug trouble, Dublin Lea-Francis distributor Jimmy Shaw had the additional bonus of the Irish Driver's Prize, for his fine run into fifth place, and we had a right royal celebration afterwards, being joined by the big Ivanowski, with whom I got on famously — despite our rivalry on the circuit!"

Sammy Davis claimed that he never afterwards hit a patch of wet tar without recalling his exciting 1929 Phoenix Park dice with his Alfa-Romeo rivals. However, it wasn't melting tar but the torrential downpour of the 1931 Irish Grand Prix event which remains one of the strongest memories of Ards and Park regular Wilkie Wilkinson, one of the outstanding mechanics of European racing from the Thirties to the more recent Sixties.

Wilkie was hospitalised with blood poisoning after that arduous 1931 Grand Prix and his memories of the race give some idea of the important and dangerous role of the usually underpaid mechanics, whose exploits seldom made headlines (unless they perished in a race accident like



Mechanic Wilkie Wilkinson with bandleader Billy Cotton.

Bill Guinness's companion, Jack Barrett). That 1931 Park event marked a turning point in Wilkie's race as his driver George Eyston ensured that he was paid the same £20 rate as the works Italian mechanics.

Wilkie recalls "But the money was earned, I can tell you, with many long hours of preparation on the car. We had to balance all four wheels, plus two spares, by cleaning all the grease out of one hub and spinning each wheel on it in turn, achieving balance by winding lead wire around the spokes in appropriate places.

"Less routine work was done on the rear axle: we had the car that had suffered crown wheel and pinion failure at Brooklands with Ramponi driving. The problem was traced to a flexing axle casing which had allowed the oil to leak out past the seals. We fixed a grease-gun in the cockpit holding at least a pint of oil, and connected it by

a long flexible pipe to the rear axle. During the race I was to turn the gun down several turns every lap to keep the axle topped up with oil.

“We also found the chassis frame flexed during practice, causing the passenger’s door to fly open. I fixed a metal bracket across the door, which meant I had to jump over the door to get in and out. For refuelling we fabricated a big funnel capable of holding five gallons of fuel. It was while making this that I badly cut the palm of my right hand and got leaded petrol in the wound. It quickly turned septic and on the morning of the race Eyston took me to a surgeon to have the wound lanced and bandaged.

“I was to have another job in the race: Eyston, who normally wore glasses, had two pairs of goggles with correcting lenses. When the goggles he was wearing became dirty, he would shout ‘change’ and I would swop his goggles over as quickly as possible, then clean the dirty pair for the next swop.

“In the race we got away to a good start and I felt confident despite my numbed hand. Then it started to pour with rain. If Brooklands was tough, this was terrifying. On the fast straight on the back leg of the circuit, the Maserati seemed to be going in every direction at once. With the car sliding about on the wet road I found it difficult to concentrate on such tasks as keeping the air pressure in the fuel tank at the required 2.5 pounds per square inch. If I didn’t use the hand pump enough, the engine would begin to spit and splutter- ‘Pump the damn thing,’ Eyston would shout. If I pumped too much the carburettor would flood and the engine lose power; when the tank was full it was particularly difficult to keep the pressure steady at the red mark on the gauge.

“In the terrible conditions Eyston needed clean goggles very frequently and the shout of ‘Change!’ would come nearly every lap. Cleaning goggles in an open racing car in these conditions should have been impossible but somehow I managed it. After a while I saw Sir Henry ‘Tim’ Birkin on the Alfa Romeo trying to pass us. Performing my other function as a rear-view mirror, I tapped Eyston on the shoulder ‘He can’t pass me,’ George shouted.

“Soon, however, soaking plug leads sent us into the pits with a misfiring engine. It seemed to take a long time to change all eight plugs and we fitted softer ones more suited to the slower wet speeds. The rain became worse. I could see lightning and hear thunder above the roar of the cars. Just as I was changing Eyston’s goggles yet again, I noticed the dynamo which was driven off the back of the camshaft, start to vibrate badly.

The mounting bracket was broken and it was about to fall into the cockpit, probably on to the driver’s feet. I wedged my right foot on top of the gearbox to keep the dynamo in place.

“Worse was to come. As we came into a corner the car jumped out of gear. Eyston found the gear again and shouted at me to hold the lever in place. So on we went in the pouring rain: the gearbox seemingly red-hot under my right foot; me pumping up the fuel pressure; topping up the gearbox oil; changing and cleaning goggles: and — worst of all — holding the car in gear with my septic right hand.

“It was so awful that I felt I didn’t care if we crashed, won, or retired. I lost all interest in my surroundings and I just went on mechanically doing the job I was supposed to do. Despite the conditions, we were lying third behind Birkin in the Alfa Romeo and our team mate Campari in his Maserati, all of us lapping at over 80mph.

“The engine began to splutter again, this time because we were running out of petrol. Luckily

The great Tazio Nuvolari, who died in 1953.



we were approaching the last corner before the pits so we could stagger in for more petrol and get away again with little time lost. I was climbing back over the door, when Eyston shot off, almost throwing me over the tail of the car. I just saved myself by catching the rear of the seat with my feet, but even then I think I would have missed my hold had Eyston not shot out his left hand to grab me. We had now fallen back to fourth place, where we finished the race behind Birkin, Campari, and Lewis. Less than four minutes covered the first four cars.

“Soaking wet and dirty after two and a half hours of racing, we climbed from our car, stood while the National Anthem was played for Birkin’s victory and then drank a glass of champagne. Only then did I become aware of the state of my hand and arm. Red streaks were running up my wrist towards the elbow. Under my armpit was a noticeable lump. George looked at it and immediately rushed me to hospital where my sleeve had to be cut away to get my overalls off. The hand was again lanced.

“This was long before the days of antibiotics, so there was a serious risk of blood poisoning which could have killed me. The winner that day, Sir Henry Birkin, was to die two years later after burning his arm on a racing car exhaust pipe. My misfortune was further aggravated by the fact that the team went home without me as the doctor said I must not travel for at least three or four days. I received much kindness from Irish people and that helped to make a bad time bearable but I still maintain I earned my £20!”

Although Wilkie survived the conflict, the 1939 war sadly swallowed up such fine drivers and enthusiasts as Luis Fontes, Johnny Wakefield, Jock Colley and TT entrant Grover Williams, who was murdered at Buchenwald and also the great Fernand Gabriel who was killed in an air raid on Paris. Tazio Nuvolari and Rudolf Caracciola came to more peaceful but equally ironic ends. A respiratory complaint made it dangerous for the gallant Nuvolari to inhale petrol or exhaust fumes but despite this drawback he finished second in the 1947 Mille Miglia and he led the wet 1948 1,000 miles classic in his open Ferrari by half an hour, despite losing the car’s bonnet and having to use a bag of oranges to replace a broken seat.

Then the car’s chassis started to break up and as the little Mantuan lurched through Modena, Enzo Ferrari turned aside and wept, as he realised both what it meant to Nuvolari to continue and the impossibility of his car lasting the distance. Finally, the brakes faded with only 100 miles to go and after a series of near-accidents, even the

great Tazio could do no more. Completely exhausted, he slept in the house of a priest before returning to Mantua to find his home besieged by hundreds of sympathetic locals.

The man who never gave up trying and who had scored two notable TT wins at Ards, died in his own bed in 1953. Thousands from all over Italy and abroad followed his funeral cortege through the streets of Mantua, as *Il Mantovano Volante* was buried in his racing uniform as he had requested the day before his death. One of the most vivid pictures of Nuvolari in action comes from author George Monkhouse — “Novolari always sent tingles down my spine. To see him in action, chin out, sitting well back in the driving seat, his outstretched hairy brown arms flashing in the sun as he made his blood-red Alfa perform seemingly impossible antics, not once but on corner after corner, lap after lap, the tyres screaming and the crowds yelling themselves hoarse, was quite fantastic. There was something soul-stirring about Tazio Nuvolari.”

Nuvolari’s calmer contemporary, Rudolf Caracciola, who had also triumphed at Ards as well as Phoenix Park went on to win the 1935, 1937 and 1938 European Championships, the equivalent of the modern World Championship, before war interrupted his career. Bad crashes at Indianapolis in 1948 and at Berne in 1952 forced

Prince Bira took up sailing and flying.



his retirement and fourth place in the 1952 Mille Miglia was the great German's final race result.

With no equal in wet conditions, Caracciola was better known to race fans as the Regenmeister (Rainmaster) and his fine judgement and even temperament earned him many successes as his more impetuous rivals fell by the wayside. A liver complaint led to the German's premature death in 1959 and he was buried in Lugano, where his second wife Alice recently related his many happy memories of Ireland, both of the Phoenix Park and Ards circuits and the friendliness and enthusiasm of the Irish spectators.

Switzerland also marked the final appearance of the talented Achille Varzi, who made a courageous recovery from drug addiction and a major love affair to resume racing after the war. But while practising for the 1948 Swiss Grand Prix at Berne, Varzi crashed at 110mph and was killed when his Alfa Romeo overturned. It was only the second accident in the long distinguished career of the Milanese who had finished third to Nuvolari and Campari in the 1930 TT.

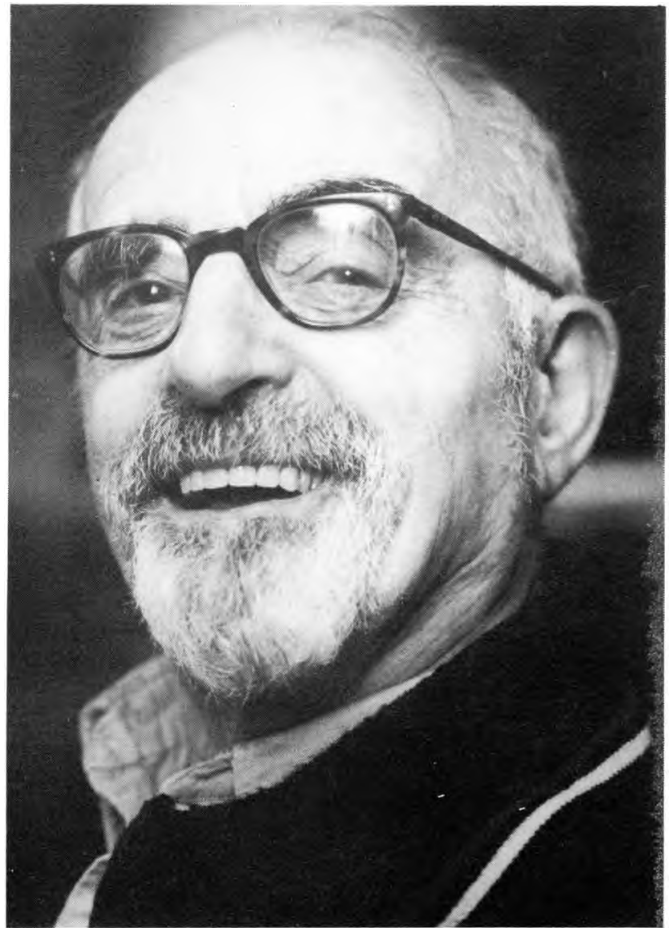
Another famous Ards competitor was John Cobb, who went on to push the world land speed record up to 394mph in 1947, before being killed like Henry Segrave while going for the water speed record at Loch Ness in 1952. Two other Irish race participants died more peacefully. Inaugural Irish Grand Prix winner Boris Ivanowski died in France after the war, while Prince Bira who was also a talented sculptor and regularly exhibited at London's Royal Academy turned his attention to flying and represented his native Thailand in sailing before dying there in 1985. Giulio Ramponi died recently in London.

Kaye Don, winner of the opening TT at Ards, set up world water speed records before retiring prematurely after being sentenced to a prison term for manslaughter following the death of his mechanic while practising for the 1934 Isle of Man races. He died in 1982, not far from the Brooklands track where he had won his first races. Just down the road from Don's Surrey home, the amiable Sammy Davis died in 1981 at the age of 94. Unlike some of motorsport's more modern participants who quickly learned how to exploit the racing, Sammy never grew rich on his racing exploits. He perished in the blaze which enveloped his Guildford flat after he knocked a paraffin heater over in a fall.

Sammy who was an accomplished illustrator worked right up to the time of his death, painting racing scenes. In between receiving visitors, he twice a day fed the birds which descended with punctual regularity on the window of his first-floor

flat. With his devoted wife Suzanna who survived him by only 12 months, he would often reminisce about his competition days.

"I always enjoyed the racing," he told me, "but the Irish road circuits were especially fresh and exciting and totally different to confined places like Brooklands. The atmosphere was also a big contrast and the crowds were among the most enthusiastic I had ever seen — though occasionally the school children got too carried away and had to be ejected from the pits and scrutineering areas!" Sammy had conveniently forgotten that his first brush with the racing world came when as a schoolboy, he had helped push Selwyn Edge's Napier through the streets of London in order to attend the pre-1903 Gordon Bennett Trials weigh-in!



Sammy Davis at the age of 94.

Though unimpressed with the more commercial modern racing, the 1927 Le Man winner's enthusiasm for the sport was as strong as ever at the age of 94 and a mention of the first race he ever witnessed, the 1903 Gordon Bennett event, would provoke great excitement. On one occasion when describing that epic race he lapsed

into the present tense. "That Jenatzy is some fellow to watch," he said. "When he comes into a corner it's like there are five or six Jenatzy's fighting to get around. If only he calms down he will make a great driver...!"

Of the Irish racing drivers, Dudley Colley died prematurely after the war but his Frazer Nash is still campaigned by his equally enthusiastic son Tony. Incidentally, Dudley's many off-circuit exploits included driving an Austin 7 across Dublin's pedestrian Metal Bridge! Frank O'Boyle survived dangerously to the age of 84 before succumbing to injuries received when he stepped off a moving bus, while George Mangan and veteran race organisers Nathan Lepler and Barney Manley have only recently passed away.

Mallow's Aubrey Thompson has also died but his beautiful Phoenix Park winning TRS is now owned by Kilkenny chemist Kieran White (who has many splendid tales to tell of a one-legged Anglo-Irish lady who numbered several pre-war Irish drivers among her close friends!). Bray racer Bill McQuillan has sadly died after a long illness but the great Stanley Woods is enjoying well deserved overdue retirement in Downpatrick. Retirement is apparently something that the hyper-active Charlie Manders never heard of and he scorches around Dublin on business as he did years ago in Cork and Phoenix Park.

Another scorcher is Welsh-born Charles Martin who now terrorises west London on his bicycle where, with his wife, Joy, the former Cork Grand Prix regular is a popular regular of Kensington's Windsor Castle hostelry. Following his pre-war racing exploits, Charles had an equally exciting war career which involved ferrying undeclared passengers to night rendezvous in occupied Europe, activities which gained him the US Legion of Honour as well as other decorations.

Charles counts his Cork experiences as being as memorable as his successes at Brooklands and Avus, where he won before 400,000 spectators in 1937 to pick up one of motor racing's most ornate trophies. As part of their efforts to cement the Axis relationship, the Germans had commissioned the super trophy for the event which on paper appeared to be a certain walkover for an Italian team or driver. However, as Charles relates "Neither Nuvolari nor the Alfa team arrived and I beat the Maserati's. Goebbels was politely complimentary but he was plainly not as amused as I was — though the Germans may have had the last laugh, as my crew and myself had to eat and drink our way through the equally generous prize money which we were not allowed to take out of the country!

"I absolutely loved racing in Ireland, a country where I had spent some of my childhood with my stepfather near Thomastown, Kilkenny. On the continent there was always great atmosphere but nowhere did I find anything to match the Irish enthusiasm which was bloody marvellous. It was all so easy and relaxed too. Nobody hid behind rules or regulations and yet the organization was always perfect.

"We used to take the cars to the Cork circuit in racing trim with no problems about licences or number plates or tax or anything like that and of course wherever we stopped we were immediately surrounded by crowds. Everyone made us feel at home and seemed to enter into the spirit of the racing, with flags everywhere, as well as lots of attention from the press who seemed to appreciate the importance of the racing for the country.

"I think the only time I saw anyone upset there was when I once came across a herd of cows and the owner wasn't too happy with the effect of my noisy Alfa so close to milking time! What had happened was that I'd damaged a big-end and I had to drive around the country for over 150 miles to run in the new one. I met lots of carts and jaunting cars but as I sat there surrounded by the animals I thought it must have been the only time in history when a full-blown Alfa Grand Prix car shared the road with a herd of cows.

"The Cork circuit was top class. The long straight was just right for the faster cars and I can tell you I got the old Alfa really wound up there. It was a bit hairy in the 1936 race as with the high wind I had to aim for the gaps and gates to anticipate the gale which usually carried me back across the road — all at about one hundred and thirty! The back section of the circuit was also exciting with lots of bends and a gradient. It caught out a few of the drivers including Mervyn White who had travelled over with us and who had the mother and father of a prang. Bira and I also had a right ding-dong there in the 1937 race before he got it all wrong and crashed.

"I went well the first year I went to Cork but after a big scrap with Austin Dobson my engine packed up and I had to push across the line. I left nothing to chance with preparation for the 1937 Grand Prix and I had some fine fun with Bira before he overdid it. Despite the awful wind I broke the four minute barrier for the first time and after fastest lap at over 92mph I thought I would win. But then the Irish rain came down and two of the smaller cars stayed ahead — handicappers never allowed for the wet!

"I also drove in the TT races at Ards in 1935

and 1936, going out the first year with a burst oil pipe and finishing twelfth the second time. The atmosphere there was a little more formal than in Cork but the enthusiasm and the interest in the cars was just as great. I raced at Brooklands, Donington Park, Le Mans and all over France and Germany as well as Czechoslovakia and though each of these places had its good points none of them offered that exciting blend of real road racing and audience participation which I think was the secret of the successful Irish races. The people were so very hospitable and they just loved the bit of sport.

“Another thing which greatly impressed me was the eagerness of the local racers. It wasn't all that long after ‘the Troubles’ and there wasn't much money about but some of the drivers had cobbled together some very fine cars — and I'd never seen so many ‘Specials’ in my life! But they went like hell and lasted the distance and gave the drivers of better cars a run for their money. Unfortunately I never got to know many of the local drivers very well. Hamilton for example was just before my time but I heard some wonderful stories about him and he was certainly a coming man before he died so young.

“Of the other drivers who raced in Ireland I would rate Nuvolari as the very best. He was an extraordinary individual. To do what he did in that TT and win in a car he'd never seen before was just incredible, he was marvellous. I raced against him at a few places and he used to talk to his car, you know — and even pat it like a horse! — and all the time he'd be pointing in every direction but the right one. He had magical presence.

“I didn't know Caracciola so well. He was a distant sort of chap and very tied up with his wife who was a great timekeeper. But he was without equal in the wet. My best friend was Dick Seaman who drove in the 1935 and 1936 Ards TT's before going off to join Caracciola at Mercedes. Dick was a very dedicated driver and he often told me that he learned a lot from road circuits such as Ards. He raced MG's with Hamilton whom he knew very well and for whom he had the highest respect as a driver. I was a witness at Dick's wedding in 1938 and it was a terrible shock for all of us when he was killed just six months afterwards.

“One thing about Ireland was that as far as I know apart from Mervyn White who was killed in Cork and the Duke of Grafton who died in Limerick there were never too many accidents, despite all the miles covered and the wide range of racing experience. That said a lot for the ability

of the less experienced local men who certainly never pussyfooted around yet managed to stay on the road most of the time. The Duke of Grafton was not experienced enough for the big Bugatti he was driving. I felt very guilty about that for a long time afterwards — I was the one who had sold him the car.

“The racing was more fun in those days and I can't understand a lot of the modern stuff. There's far too much money now and politics and one shower of rain and the cars are all off the track — and they only race for an hour and a half unlike in the Thirties when we raced for three or four! I am glad I raced when I did when it was all such good fun. And to race as I did in Cork between the hedges and stone walls, now that was something completely different. The challenging Irish road circuits certainly provided a splendid contribution to a most exciting era in motor racing history...” ■

Charles Martin ... “the racing was more fun in those days...”



POSTSCRIPT: FRUITS OF THE LABOUR

With the demise of the popular Sammy Davis went one of the last links with the heroic days of early motor racing. But the legacy that had been left to Ireland by the eventful Gordon Bennett Cup race continued to grow and once Peace had broken out in 1945, Irish enthusiasts saw that motorsport didn't lag far behind. The first post-war international event to be staged in either England or Ireland was the Ulster Trophy race which was held at Ballyclare in August 1946, hot on the heels of a well-attended Dublin speed trial. The sport attracted many new enthusiasts and the Fifties saw further classic road racing at such places as The Curragh, Dunboyne, Wicklow and Dundrod. It was to the latter circuit, thanks to the energetic Ulster Automobile Club, that the historic Tourist Trophy races returned in 1950.

That inaugural wet TT provided 20 year-old Jaguar-mounted newcomer Stirling Moss — one of motor racing's immortals — with his first major success and helped him to clinch the first of no fewer than 10 BRDC Gold Star Awards. In 1951 the Dundrod and Wicklow road circuits provided another talented driver with his first success, the dashing Mike Hawthorn who seven years later just pipped Moss for the honour of being the first Englishman to win the Drivers' World Championship. Among the many other famous drivers to race in Ireland in post-war years were veteran Louis Chiron; Ferrari aces Piero Taruffi, Eugenio Castellotti, Wolfgang Von Trips and Mike Hailwood, whose father Stan had competed at Ards. The Dundrod TT and Ulster Trophy races also attracted such top drivers as World Champions Alberto Ascari, Giuseppe Farina and Juan Manuel Fangio, while the Brazilians Carlos Pace and Ayrton Senna and World Champions Emerson Fittipaldi and Alan Jones competed at Mondello Park.

Other post-war race entrants included quiet London silversmith Roy James, who was arrested for his part in the Great Train Robbery shortly after competing in the 1963 Phoenix Park races in which he finished third. A more accomplished visitor to Ireland was 1983 European Formula Two Champion Mick Thackwell, the youngest-ever Grand Prix driver, who stayed in Dublin and

Dromineer in the early Eighties, while the stone cottage above Glencree in the Dublin hills where playwright John Millington Synge once lodged also numbered among its guests the German Taffy Von Trips and Holland's Godin de Beaufort, both of whom died in racing accidents in the Sixties.

But the influx of post-war achievers was well matched by the emergence of local talent such as Fifties stars Joe Kelly, Bobby Baird, Malcolm Templeton and Desmond Titterington, who drove for both the Jaguar and Mercedes works sportscar teams. On the international rally front, Dubliner Cecil Vard was a consistent Monte Carlo frontrunner in the Fifties, while compatriots Ronnie Adams and Frank Bigger with Derek Johnston won the event in 1956, a feat repeated eight years later by the effervescent Paddy Hopkirk. Dublin's Rosemary Smith also blazed a trail for the ladies with top placings in the East African Safari and Canadian Rallies as well as winning the 1966 Tulip Rally for the Rootes work team.

Paddy Hopkirk's co-driver on his epic run to second place in the 1969 London-Sydney Marathon was Alec Poole, the first driver in Britain or Ireland to race turbocharged saloons, thanks to Clareman Henry Freemantle's expertise. Poole went on to win the 1969 British Saloon Championship, while other successful UK saloon exponents were Pat Mannion, Wicklow's Basil Dagge and Sligo's Bill McGovern, the only person to take the British Saloon Championship in three consecutive years. Fatalities on the roads led to the development of Kirkistown circuit and Mondello Park, the country's first purpose-built track, on which the racing proved to be as competitive as on the roads, with the result that the mid-Seventies produced an incredible flowering of Irish motor racing talent.

John Watson scored his earliest car success at Kirkistown before going on to win his first Grand Prix for the American Penske team in Austria in 1976 and as earlier related he was very unlucky to lose the 1982 World Championship by five points to Keke Rosberg. On his way to a typical inspired success in the 1983 Long Beach Grand



Dublin Grand Prix driver, Derek Daly.

Prix, Watson made Formula One history by storming through to first from twenty-second place on the grid, the longest climb made by any Grand Prix winner.

The versatile Belfast driver proved to be just as successful in sportscars as in Formula One machinery and he finished second in the 1987 World Endurance Championship. As well as contesting the 1988 title, Watson will also drive his 240mph Jaguar in the prestigious American IMSA series with sponsorship from Burmah Castrol, the company which half a century previously backed his compatriot Henry Segrave's successful land speed record attempt at Daytona.

John Watson isn't the only Irish driver to have reached Grand Prix status. After an action-packed British Formula Libre career, fellow-Belfast driver Damien Magee drove for the Hexagon Formula One team, while Derek Daly was a regular driver for Tyrrell and Williams before commencing his current US Indycar programme. Fellow-Dubliner David Kennedy went on to drive for the Shadow Grand Prix team after a triple British Formula Ford success in 1976 and



European Formula 2 Champion Mick Thackwell lived in Ireland.

in 1987 with Mazda he scored class wins in the World Endurance Championship.

Between 1976 and 1987 Irish drivers won or were runners-up in no fewer than 36 single-seater British Championships. Among those to distinguish themselves in Britain and overseas were Bernard Devaney and Eddie Jordan from Dublin; Dundalk's Tommy Byrne; David McClelland from Toomevara in Tipperary (more famous for its hurlers!); Kildare's John Murphy; Alo Lawlor from Dun Laoghaire; Inchicore's Dave Griffin; Ballymena's Trevor Templeton; multiple championship winner Kenny Acheson from Cookstown; Colin Lees from nearby Magherafelt; Mayo's Martin Birrane; Jim Murray from Galway's Salthill Hotel; Kerryman Tim Flynn, twice British Formula Vee Champion; Sligo's Frank Hopper; Northampton-based Jim Walsh; Limerick's Brian Cullen; London-Irish driver Eddie Jones and Michael Roe from Naas, who as previously related became the first Irish driver to win the North American Can-Am Sportscar Championship in 1984.

Belfast's Martin Donnelly was the leading



Shamrock power! Michael Roe (Naas) and Kenny Acheson (Cookstown), leading Formula Ford contenders in Britain.



World champions, Mike Hawthorn (left) and Alberto Ascari, raced in Ireland.

British Formula Three Championship contender in the latter half of 1987 before going on to win the Macau Grand Prix, while fellow-Ulster driver Eddie Irvine dominated both the RAC and Esso British Formula Ford 1987 national titles and northerners Ormond Christie, Norman Wolsey and the late Davy Evans each won the World Hot-Rod Championship.

Irish mechanics and Irish-built racing cars have also made names for themselves abroad and in addition to the Formula Vee cars manufactured by Wicklow's David Sheane, Ulster Crossle and Mondiale machines are now sold extensively throughout the world. While post-war Sexton Trophy winner Frank Keane went on to business success in Ireland as managing director of Motor Import (BMW) Ltd. and other companies, and David Gray headed for RDS publicity management, fellow-Dublin rival Sydney Taylor graduated from racing driver to entrant, eventually managing the Theodore Formula One team and such drivers as Alan Jones and Le Mans winner Vern Schuppan. Former Dublin driver Eddie Jordan numbers Grand Prix drivers Stefan Johansson and Martin Brundle among his Formula Three proteges while Irish mechanics now display their wrench power in every category up to Grand Prix racing.

Bosco Quinn from Joe Tracy's county of Waterford currently heads Eddie Jordan's team in the British Formula Three Championship which also features Dubliners Owen Hayes and Gary Smith. Coleraine's Gary Anderson worked for the McLaren team before turning his talents to manufacturing the Anson racing cars, while Dubliner John Walton is one of the key men in

the Benetton Grand Prix team. Vince Higgins also worked for Theodore, while Robert Lovell-Butt, son of former racer, Dickie, now mechanics for a leading UK vintage team.

Former Formula Two driver Bernard Devaney is employed by the Paul Newman-Carl Haas team in the US, where Shay Campbell plays a major role on Roberto Guerrero's CART crew whose programme includes the famous Indianapolis 500 classic, won by Irish American Jimmy Murphy. Wicklow's Aidan Jones was a leading light in the Yeoman Credit Formula One team, while Clonakilty racer Henry Morrogh went one better by opening motor racing schools in the USA, France, Belgium and Italy, where he numbered such Grand Prix stars as Riccardo Patrese and Eddie Cheever among his proteges.

Just as with literary luminaries Wilde, Shaw, Joyce, Beckett and Behan, Ireland produced a disproportionate number of talented mechanics and drivers whose inevitable gift of "the Blarney" as Sammy Davis and others pointed out did much to enliven the international racing scene. With conviction, and a belief in their own ability, rather than with banners or slogans, they made their way like the equally courageous Sean Kelly and Stephen Roche in a difficult and dangerous sport.

As this book hopefully demonstrates, this burgeoning of native talent was no accident and Irish drivers and sports fans alike owe an enormous debt to those enthusiastic enterprising race administrators, north and south. Their hitherto unsung exploits were directly responsible for bringing international motor racing to Ireland, from the Gordon Bennett Cup to the Ards TT

series and the Limerick, Cork and Irish Grand Prix races at Phoenix Park — where each year a two-day race meeting still takes place between the trees and gas lamp standards, as it did during the Twenties and Thirties.

So, a belated 'Thank You' to the likes of Percy and Mecredy of Irish Motor News; the far-seeing Belfast pair Harry Ferguson and Wallace McLeod; William Goff, Walter Sexton and Charles Segrave of the RIAC; racer-turned-administrator Wilfie Fitzsimmons; the late RIAC trio Barney Manley, Nathan Lepler and George Mangan; and their many hard-working colleagues whose dedicated work ensured such prestigious international events and attracted the best drivers of the day to Ireland.

When Dublin Corporation has finally completed its incomprehensible destruction of the city's most historic areas, it might perhaps in con-

junction with the government and tourist authorities examine the feasibility of attracting top class international racing back again to Dublin. Of course it requires money, but more importantly it first demands the vision and dedication of those earlier Irish race administrators and the elementary ability to grasp, like Harry Ferguson, the enormous advantages for the country in terms of positive publicity and tourist revenue. Each year, new venues are added to the international competition calendar, while Ireland fails to exploit its great tradition and its many talented drivers.

Meantime, while we wait for a serious discussion of the subject, we can at least rejoice that once upon a time, the unique Irish road and town circuits were graced by the incomparable artistry and sportsmanship of such brave pioneers and courageous drivers as Camille Jenatzy, Fernand Gabriel, Tazio Nuvolari, Achille Varzi, Rudolf Caracciola, Tim Birkin, Hugh Hamilton and Sammy Davis. With skill, style, speed and daring they certainly stirred the green dust! ■

Motor racing's longest drive. . . . John Watson storms from 22nd to 1st place in the 1983 Long Beach Grand Prix.



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IRISH MOTOR RACING RESULTS

GORDON BENNETT CUP 1903

327 Miles, Athy, Co. Kildare.

C. Jenatzy	(Mercedes)	6 hours	39 minutes	49.25mph
R. De Knyff	(Panhard)	6 hours	50 m 40 s	
H. Farman	(Panhard)	6 hours	51 m 44 s	
F. Gabriel	(Mors)	7 hours	11 m 33 s	
S.F. Edge	(Napier)	9 hours	18 m 48 s	

Fastest Lap Gabriel 51.7mph

Year	Circuit	Miles	First	Second	Third	Winner's Speed mph
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IRISH GRAND PRIX

1929	Phoenix Park	300	B. Ivanowski (Alfa-Romeo)	G. Kidston (Bentley)	B. Ivanowski (Alfa-Romeo)	76.40
1930	Phoenix Park	300	R. Caracciola (Mercedes)	V. Gillow (Riley)	G. Campari (Alfa-Romeo)	85.88
1931	Phoenix Park	300	N. Black (M.G.)	H.R.S. Birkin (Alfa-Romeo)	R.T. Horton (M.G.)	64.76

(Note:— The placings in the Irish Grand Prix are based on the added results of the Eireann and Saorstat Cup).

EIREANN CUP

1929	Phoenix Park	300	B. Ivanowski (Alfa-Romeo)	G. Kidston (Bentley)	H.R.S. Birkin (Bentley)	76.40
1930	Phoenix Park	300	R. Caracciola (Mercedes)	G. Campari (Alfa-Romeo)	Earl Howe (Mercedes)	85.88
1931	Phoenix Park	300	H.R.S. Birkin (Alfa-Romeo)	G. Campari (Maserati)	B.E. Lewis (Talbot)	88.80

SAORSTAT CUP

1929	Phoenix Park	300	B. Ivanowski (Alfa-Romeo)	S.C.H. Davis (Lea-Francis)	W.H. Green (Lea-Francis)	75.02
1930	Phoenix Park	300	V. Gillow (Riley)	G.E.T. Eyston (Alfa-Romeo)	A. Frazer-Nash (Austin)	72.20
1931	Phoenix Park	300	N. Black (M.G.)	R.T. Horton (M.G.)	A.T.G. Gardner (M.G.)	64.76

TOURIST TROPHY

1928	Ards	410	K. Don (Lea-Francis)	L. Cushman (Alvis)	H. Mason (Austro-Daimler)	64.06
1929	Ards	410	R. Carracciola (Mercedes)	G. Campari (Alfa-Romeo)	A. Frazer-Nash (Austin)	72.82
1930	Ards	410	T. Nuvolari (Alfa-Romeo)	G. Campari (Alfa-Romeo)	A. Varzi (Alfa-Romeo)	70.88
1931	Ards	410	N. Black (M.G.)	M. Borzacchini (Alfa-Romeo)	S. Crabtree (M.G.)	67.90
1932	Ards	410	C.R. Whitcroft (Riley)	G.E.T. Eyston (Riley)	E.R. Hall (M.G.)	74.23
1933	Ards	478	T. Nuvolari (M.G.)	H.C. Hamilton (M.G.)	T.E. Rose-Richards (Alfa-Romeo)	78.65
1934	Ards	478	C.J.P. Dodson (M.G.)	E.R. Hall (Bentley)	T.S. Fotheringham (Aston Martin)	74.65
1935	Ards	478	F. W. Dixon (Riley)	E.R. Hall (Bentley)	Earl Howe (Bugatti)	76.90
1936	Ards	410	F. W. Dixon & C.J.P. Dodson (Riley)	E.R. Hall (Bentley)	A.P.F. Fane (Frazer-Nash-B.M.W.)	78.01

Year	Miles	First	Second	Third	Winner's Speed mph
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PHOENIX PARK 1932 – 1939

H'Cap	1932	Junior	50	A. Potterton (M.G.)	D.C. MacLachlan (Riley)	B. Sullivan (Sullivan Spl.)	58.55
H'Cap		Senior	50	I. Waller (Alvis)	H. McFerran (M.G.)	G. Beattie (M.G.)	77.87
H'Cap	1933	Junior	100	A.H. Potterton (M.G.)	W. Kavanagh (Austin)	D.C. MacLachlan	63.40
H'Cap		Senior	100	F. O'Boyle (Riley)	B. Sullivan (Sullivan Spl.)	I.M. Berkery	67.90
H'Cap	1934	Junior	75	G.F. Manby-Colegrave (M.G.)	F.W. Earney (Amilcar)	J. Wasson (Singer)	88.50
H'Cap		Senior	100	M.J. Hynes (Statham-Ford)	A. Corry (M.G.)	R. Tongue (Aston-Martin)	80.20
Scratch	1935		200	H.W. Furey (M.G.)	L. Fontes (Alfa-Romeo)	L.R. Briggs (M.G.)	69.94
Scratch	1936		200	H.W. Furey (M.G.)	B. Bira (Maserati)	W.T. McComb (M.G.)	77.16
Scratch	1937		100	R. Mays (E.R.A.)	B. Bira (Maserati)	W.T. McComb (M.G.)	102.90
H'Cap			100	D. Yule (C.M.Y.)	B. Bira (Maserati)	I. Nickol (M.G.)	78.04
Scratch	1938		100	C. Staniland (Multi-Union)	T. Rolt (E.R.A.)	C. Pollock (E.R.A.)	97.45
H'Cap			75	M. May (Alvis)	I.H. Nickol (M.G.)	P. Le Fanu (L.E.R.A.)	88.03
H'Cap	1939		100	J.A. Thompson (T.R.S.)	A.P. MacArthur (M.G.)	M.P. Cahill (M.G.)	82.24

Year	Circuit	Miles	First	Second	Third	Winner's Speed mph
CORK GRAND PRIX						
H'Cap	1936	Carrigohane	201	R.E. Tongue (E.R.A.)	A. Powys-Lybbe (Alfa-Romeo)	A.C. Dobson (Alfa-Romeo) 85.53
H'Cap	1937	Carrigohane	201	H.B. Prestwich (M.G.)	A. Powys-Lybbe (Alfa-Romeo)	C.E.C. Martin (Alfa-Romeo) 76.33
H'Cap	1938	Carrigohane	201	R. Dreyfus (Delahaye)	B. Bira (Maserati)	L. Gerard (Delage) 92.95
CORK O'BOYLE TROPHY						
H'Cap	1938		50	G.D.B. Colley (Frazer Nash)	D Yule (C.M.Y.)	C.H. Manders (Adler) 71.03
VOITURETTE RACES						
Scr	1938		75	B. Bira (E.R.A.)	A. Dobson (E.R.A.)	L. Villoresi (Maserati) 91.47
LIMERICK RACES						
	1935		150	L. Fontes (Alfa-Romeo)	P.G. Fairfield (E.R.A.)	P.N. Whitehead (Alfa) 64.91
	1936		150	A. Hutchinson (M.G.)	A.C. Dobson (E.R.A.)	P. MacClure (Riley) 57.14
	1938		150	J.D. Maclure (M.G.)	R. Campbell (Morgan)	W.A. McQuillan (McQuillan Spl.) 54.21
LEINSTER TROPHY						
(SKERRIES CIRCUIT)						
	1934		104	Miss F. Tylour (Adler)	A. Dobson (Alfa Romeo)	D. O'Clery (Riley) 61.20
(TALLAGHT CIRCUIT)						
	1935		103	J. Toohey (Ford)	A.P. Huet (M.G.)	C. G. Neill (Bugatti) 59.33
	1936		153	J. Toohey (Ford)	D.M. Campbell (Aston Martin)	M. Barrington (Frazer Nash) 60.20
	1937		153	D. McCracken (Morgan)	R.D. Cox (M.G.)	D. Yule (C.M.Y.) 61.95
	1938		153	St. J. Horsfall (Aston Martin)	C.H.W. Manders (Adler)	J. Elliott (Triumph) 73.79
	1939		153	C.E. Robb (Himmelwagen)	A.J. Welch (M.G.)	R.B.S. Le Fanu (L.E.R.A.) 64.16
CUAIRT BHRE SERIES						
H'Cap	1934	Town Circuit, Bray	102	R.B.S. Le Fanu (Adler)	H.T. McCalla (Sunbeam)	G. White (M.G. Magna) 45.49
H'Cap	1935	Town Circuit, Bray	120	D.M. McCracken (Frazer-Nash)	F.A. Gannon (Lea-Francis)	R.B.S. Le Fanu (Adler) 51.24
COUNTY DOWN TROPHY						
H'Cap	1934	Bangor Circuit	100	W.T. McCalla (Sunbeam)	A.R. Finlay (M.G.)	W.F. Ayrton (M.G.) 67.14
H'Cap	1935	Bangor Circuit	150	M.H. Fleming (M.G.)	ffrench Davies (F.I.A.T.)	B. Sullivan (Bugatti) 61.83
H'Cap	1936	Bangor Circuit	150	A. Powys-Lybbe (Alfa-Romeo)	L.R. Briggs (M.G.)	D. Taylor (Bugatti) 84.36
ULSTER TROPHY						
	1937	Ballyclare Circuit	150	R. Campbell (Morgan)	J.R. Weir (M.G. Magnette)	H. Prestwich (M.G. Magnette) 53.73
PHOENIX PARK SPEED TRIALS, JULY 1903						
2,853 yards						
Touring Cars up to £300				E.T. Baker (Duryea)		2m 27.8s
Touring Cars up to £650				J.T. Overton (Georges Richd.)		2m 16.8s
Touring Cars up to £1,000				J.W. Cross (Humber)		2m 6.2s
Touring Cars over £1,000				D. Hall (Wolseley)		2m 13.4s
Steam Cars				W.J. Warren (Serpollet)		
IAC 100 Guineas Challenge Cup for Light Racing Cars (Under 650Kg.)				L. Thery (Decauville)		1m 53.2s
				A. Rawlinson (Darracq)		2m 10s
IAC 200 Guineas Cup for Racing Cars (up to 1,000Kg.)				J.E. Hutton (Mercedes)		1m 28.6s
				Baron de Forest (Mors)		1m 29.6s
				C.S. Rolls (Mors)		1m 29.8s
Daily Mail Cup for Fastest Car over Flying Kilometre				Baron de Forest (Mors)		27.2s 83.5mph
				C.S. Rolls (Mors)		28.0s
				L. Rigolly (Gobron Brillie)		28.4s

Autocar Challenge Cup over Flying Kilometre	Baron de Forest (Mors) F. Gabriel (Mors) L. Rigolly (Gobron Brillie)	26.6s 84.09mph 26.8s 27.2s
Private Members' Cup over Flying Kilometre	C.S. Rolls (Mors) E. Hutton (Mercedes)	28.8s 79.25 mph 29.8s

BALLYBANNON HILLCLIMB, JULY 1903

600 yards

Touring Cars up to £300	E.T. Baker (Duryea)	62.8s
Touring Cars up to £1,000	J. Scott Montague (Daimler)	63.2s
Touring Cars over £1,000	J. Hargreaves (Napier)	59.4s
Racing Cars up to 650Kg.	A. Rawlinson (Darracq) E. Brun (Prunel)	56.4s 58.2s
Racing Cars up to 1,000Kg.	E. Campbell Muir (Mercedes) C.S. Rolls (Mors) W. Werner (Mercedes)	32.4s 33.8s 36.00

CLOUGH SPEED TRIALS, JULY 1903

2.5 miles

Graphic Trophy Handicap Touring Cars	J.W. Cross (Humber) J. Scott Montague (Daimler) E.C. Instone (Daimler)	3m 29.8s 3m 32s 3m 41.4s
Racing Cars under 650Kg.	A. Rawlinson (Darracq) E. Brun (Prunel)	3m 24.6s 3m 54.8s
Racing Cars under 1,000Kg.	L. Rigolly (Gobron Brillie) J.W. Stokes (Napier) E. Campbell Muir (Mercedes)	2m 5.4s 2m 12.6s 2m 12.8s

CORK SPEED TRIALS, CARRIGROHANE, JULY 1903

2.25 miles

Touring Cars under £650	R.W. Leaden (Century)	2m 53.4s
Touring Cars under £1,000	G. Iden (MMC)	2m 48.2s
Touring Cars over £1,000	P. Garrad (Daimler)	3m 4s
Steam Cars	J. Warren (Serpellet)	2m 2.6s
FINAL	J. Warren (Serpellet) G. Iden (MMC) R.W. Leaden (Century)	2m 7.8s 2m 35.2s 2m 59.4s
Racing Cars under 650Kg.	M. Villain (Prunel)	2m 49.4s
Cork Constitution Cup for Racing Cars up to 1,000Kg.	C.S. Rolls (Mors) J.E. Hutton (Mercedes) M. Cunningham (Wolseley)	1m 49.6s 1m 52.8s 2m 00.8s
Special Match	J. Scott Montague (Daimler) C.S. Rolls (Panhard)	2m 55.6s 2m 56s

KERRY CUP, BALLYFINANE, JULY 1903

1,200 yards

First Heat	C.S. Rolls (Mors) J.W. Cross (Humber) P.G. Garrad (Daimler)	1m 5s 1m 33.6s 1m 40s
Final	C.S. Rolls (Mors) P.G. Garrad (Daimler)	1m 8s 1m 22s

PORTMARNOCK SPEED TRIALS 1904

1 Mile

Touring Cars under £200	H. Sturmey (Duryea)	1m 53.8s
Touring Cars £200 – £400	F. Churchill (Hallamshire)	1m 57.6s
Touring Cars £400 – £600	A.H. Walker (Darracq)	1m 58.2s
Touring Cars £600 – £1,000	P. Martin (Daimler)	1m 31.4s
Touring Cars Unlimited	A. Lee Guinness (Mercedes)	1m 19.4s

GREEN DUST

IAC Challenge cup for Racing Cars under 1 ton.	A. Macdonald (Napier) C.S. Rolls (Mors) A. Lee Guinness	57.4s
IAC Challenge Cup for Racing Cars under 13cwt.	A. Rawlinson (Darracq) G. Wilton (Darracq)	
Flying Kilometre Trial	A. Rawlinson (Darracq) A. Lee Guinness (Darracq) C.S. Rolls (Mors)	28.8s 77.62mph 30.0s 74.52mph 32.8s 68.15mph

PORTMARNOCK SAND RACES

1925 25 miles Light Championship of Ireland	P.J. Tracy (Alvis)	31m 41s
1930 10 miles	M.J. Hynes (Ford Spl.)	13m 23s
1931 10 miles	C.H. Wilson (Vauxhall)	12m 4s

MAGILLIGAN SAND RACES

1907 3 miles	E. Herington (Ariel)	3m 19s
1909 1.2 miles	G.A. Phillips (Humber)	1m 29s
1926 May 25 Miles Touring Cars	T. McMillan (Rhodes)	28m 18s
1926 May 25 Miles Sportscars	T. McMillan (Rhodes)	20m 43s
1926 July 25 Miles Touring Cars	C.J. Chittick (Star)	26m 45.2s
1926 July 25 Miles Sportscars	J.E. Coulter (Star)	23m 24.6s
1 Mile Standing Start — Touring Cars	C.J. Chittick (Star)	
1 Mile Standing Start — Sportscars	J.M. Carson (Alvis)	
1926 Oct. 10 miles Handicap	C. Wilkinson (Rhodes)	10m 25.2s
1926 Oct. Flying Mile	C.E. Norris (Lea-Francis)	41s
1927 May 10 Mile Scratch Race	G.C. Strachan (Gwynne)	11m 48s
1927 May 25 Mile H'Cap Touring Cars	M.J. McCall (Gwynne)	29m 40.6s
1927 May 25 Mile H'Cap Sportscars	C.A.R. Shillington (Austin)	26m 13s
1927 May 1 Mile Standing Start, Sportscars	H. Ferguson (Austin)	63s
1927 Oct. 1 Mile Standing Star Start, Touring Cars	G. Strachan (Gwynne)	
1927 Oct. 1 Mile Standing Start, Sportscars	G. Strachan (Gwynne)	

ROSSLARE SPEED TRIALS 1913

Open 10-20HP	S.T. Robinson (Talbot)	3m 55.2s 61.22mph
Open 20-26HP	S.T. Robinson (Talbot)	3m 44.2s 64.29mph
Open Over 26HP	S.T. Robinson (Talbot)	3m 16s 73.47mph
Private Owners 10-20HP	J.A. Carvill (Talbot)	5m 43.4s 41.96mph
Private Owners 20-26HP	C.P. Kirk (Darracq)	4m 29s 53.57mph
Private Owners Over 26HP	T. Talbot-Power (Lancia)	4m 45.2s 51.28mph
Goff Cup, Flying Mile	S.T. Robinson (Talbot)	107.78mph
Dunlop 100 Guineas Cup, 4 Mile Race	C.P. Kirk (Darracq)	4m 29.4s 52.25mph
Dunlop 200 Guineas Cup	S.T. Robinson (Talbot)	2m 59.6s 80.18mph

DUNCANNON SAND RACES

1929 30 Miles Light Cars	H.V. Earl (Humber)	
1929 30 Miles Unlimited Class	G. Statham (Ford Spl.)	
1929 30 Miles Ford Class	J. Power	
1930 25 miles Up to 12HP Ladies Race	J. Fennelly (Morris Cowley) Mrs. Buggy	
1931 25 miles	J. Fennelly (Morris Cowley)	28m 4s
30 miles	J. Fennelly (Morris Cowley)	30m 10s
1933 20 Miles H'Cap Up to 12HP	W.J. Kavanagh (S/c Austin)	28m 10s
1933 20 Miles H'Cap Unlimited	M.J. Hynes (Statham Ford)	24m 20s

TRAMORE SAND RACES

1929 20 Miles Up to 12HP	J. Fennelly (Morris Cowley)	30m 57.4s
1929 20 Miles Unlimited	J.C. Greer (Darracq)	30m 47s
1930 June 20 Miles Up to 12HP	D. Gaffney (Morris Cowley)	
1930 June 20 Miles Unlimited	G. Statham (Statham-Ford)	
1930 June 10 Miles Ladies	E. Connolly (Morris-Cowley)	

IRELAND'S UNIQUE MOTOR RACING HISTORY 1900 - 1939

1930	Sept. 20 Miles Up to 12HP	P. Tynan (Morris Cowley)	26m 10s
1930	Sept. 20 Miles Unlimited	P.H. Wade (Ford)	26m 41s
1931	20 Miles Up to 12HP	P. Tynan (Morris Cowley)	27m 21s
1931	20 Miles Unlimited	J.G. Davis (Morris)	26m 43s
1931	20 Miles Ford Class	P. Tobin	29m
1932	20 Miles Up to 12HP	W.J. Kavanagh (S/c Austin)	24m 19s
1932	20 Miles Unlimited	G.W. Kinley (Lancia)	26m 46s
1933	20 Miles Up to 12HP	J. Boland (Morris Cowley)	27m 31s
1933	20 Miles Unlimited	J. Boland (Morris Cowley)	26m 29s

BANGOR HILLCLIMB

1907		A.F. Craig (Daimler)	59.6s
1908		H. Ferguson (Argyll)	54.8s
1909		S. Corry (Stanley)	45.2s
1910		E. Graham (Talbot)	59.0s

HOLLYWOOD (WICKLOW) HILLCLIMB

1907		T. Henshaw (Daimler)	2m 3s
1908		F.G. Cundy (Napier)	1m 46.8s

BALLYBANNON HILLCLIMB

1925		C.G. Cathie (Star)	71.0s
1928		W.H. Connolly (Star)	67.6s
1929		G. Heyn (Bentley)	65.0s
1930		W. Gregg (Lea-Francis)	62.2s
1933		V. Ferguson (MG Midget)	63.2s

GLENDHU HILLCLIMB

1903	1,540 yards	W. Goff (Napier)	5m 1s
1904	1,540 yards	W. Goff (Clement)	3m 15s
1905	1,540 yards	T. Henshaw (Daimler)	2m 11s
1914	1,540 yards	J. Nardini (Nardini)	2m 5s

CULTRA HILLCLIMB

1905	700 yards	R. Workman (Minerva)	77.4s
1906	700 yards	R. Workman (Minerva)	80.4s
1907	700 yards	H.C. Craig (Daimler)	65.4s
1909	700 yards	E. Craig (Itala)	53.0s
1910	700 yards	J. W. Scott (Standard)	50.6s
1911	700 yards	C.B. Hurst (Chambers)	52.4s

BALLYNASLAUGHTER HILLCLIMB

1906	1.5 miles	F.A. Bolton (Daimler)	2m 24s
1907	1.5 miles	T. Henshaw (Daimler)	2m 28s
1908	May	T. Henshaw (Daimler)	2m 30.4s
1908	Aug.	F.G. Cundy (Napier)	2m 7.6s

BALLINASCORNEY HILLCLIMB

1914		E.J. Roberts (Singer)	2m 19s
1938	.75 mile	W. McQuillan (McQ. Special)	50.70s
1939	.75 mile	A.P. MacArthur (MG Magnette)	48.79s

DE SELBY HILLCLIMB

1925		J.J. Reddy (Armstrong Siddeley)	63.4s
1933	Mar.	W.J. Kavanagh (S/c Austin)	
1933	June	D. Harris (G.N.)	48.5s

MOUNT VENUS HILLCLIMB

1932	800 yards	W.J. Kavanagh (S/c Austin)	39.8s
1933	800 yards	W.J. Kavanagh (S/c Austin)	37.4s

KILTERNAN HILLCLIMB

1935		G. Statham (Ford Spl.)	51.4s
1936		R. Gallagher (USR)	46.0s
1937		A.P. MacArthur (MG Magnette)	44.0s
1938		W. McQuillan (USR)	43.8s
1939		A.P. MacArthur (MG Magnette)	42.08s

CROFT HILLCLIMB

1931	9 mile	B. Sullivan (Lea-Francis)	97.4s
1932		W.D. Montgomery (Lea-Francis) and H.W. Sloane (Wolseley)	100.6s

MISCELLANEOUS HILLCLIMBS

Callow	1905	S. Cochrane (Mercedes)	68s
Callow	1906	Moore Brabazon (Minerva)	2m 21.8s
Glenmacnass	1905	S. Cochrane (Mercedes)	95s
Gilnahirk	1906	T.H. Dunlop (Peugeot)	93.6s
Graiguenamanagh	1907	T. Henshaw (Daimler)	1m 49s
Altidore	1907	T. Henshaw (Daimler)	1m 51s
Delmeges Glen	1907	J.P. Goodbody (Peugeot)	9m 19s
Carnmoney	1908	H. Ferguson (Argyll)	70s
Glendun Bridge	1908	I.G. Davidson (Ford)	7m 45.2s
Garvagh	1908	T. Henshaw (Daimler)	63s
Newport	1909	Rev. E. Archdall (De Dion)	
Speenogue	1909	G.A. Phillips (Humber)	2m 11.8s
Farmers Bridge	1909	G.A. Phillips (Humber)	2m 23s
Magheramore	1909	E. Graham (Vauxhall)	71s
Magheramore	1910	E. Graham (Talbot)	63.6s
Glengesh	1924	R.D. Cox (Singer)	
Red Brae	1924	H. Ferguson (Austin)	66.8s
Cornelscourt	1925	J.J. Reddy (Armstrong Siddeley)	29s
Ballyboghill	1925 July	A.M. Ellis (Salmson)	70.4s
Ballyboghill	1925 Oct.	J. McKeever	63.0s

MISCELLANEOUS SPEED TRIALS

Rossbeigh (Kerry)	1908	F.G. Cundy (Napier)	1m 25.8s
Killeagh (Cork)	1925	J.A. Cross (Chrysler)	35.6s
Deansgrange	1925	P.J. Treacy (Delage)	29s (Won Handicap)
Deansgrange	1925	J. Lacey (Alvis)	29.8s (Fastest)
Donabate	1937	F. O'Boyle (Alta)	101.12mph
Donabate	1938	D. Yule (CMY)	86.79mph
Donabate	1939	A.P. MacArthur (MG Magnette)	103.55mph
Inch Strand Races			
10 miles Ford Class	1924	F. Carroll	
10 miles Hackney Class	1924	R. Lavin (Delage)	

CRAIGANTLET HILLCLIMB

1913		H. Ferguson	
1925		G.C. Cathie (Star)	106.2s
1929		Earl Howe (Mercedes)	98.8s
1930		Earl Howe (Mercedes)	98.4s
1931		R.J.G. Nash (Frazer Nash)	89.2s
1932		B. Sullivan (Lea Francis)	95.8s
1933		E.R. Hall (M.G.)	86.6s
1934		E.R. Hall (M.G.)	87.4s
1935		E.R. Hall (M.G.)	83.2s
1936		H.L. Hadley (Austin)	82.2s
1937		H.L. Hadley (Austin)	81.4s

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