

THE NATIONAL

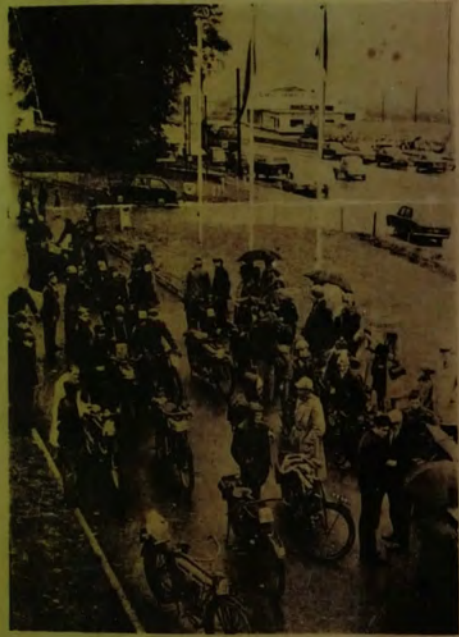
Celebrating 50 years of the Irish rally
that became an International event

3rd Irish National Veteran MOTOR CYCLE RALLY

A Competition devoted exclusively to Veteran, Vintage and Post Vintage Motor Cycles and Three Wheelers will take place in the South of Ireland on

27th & 28th SEPT. '69

(Specially Reduced, Hotel and Sea Travel Rates.)



Competitors at Start of 2nd National Rally

Come and enjoy—

Good Traffic Free Roads,

Beautiful Scenery,

Excellent Entertainment,

**Lots of Prizes and
Starters Awards for
all.**

also on 25th September, 1969

The Munster Motor Cycle Rally

A Touring Competition of approximately 160 Miles confined to Entrants of above.

**DETAILS FROM THE MUNSTER MOTOR CYCLE AND CAR CLUB,
VERNON MOUNT, CORK, IRELAND.**

The Irish National Vintage Motorcycle Assembly

1967 – 2016

Celebrating 50 years of enjoying old motorcycles, having good fun,
making lifelong friends and riding great roads



Editor:
Phillip Tooth

Sub-editors:
Robert Swan, Chris O'Mahony,
Morgan O'Regan and Joe Dwyer

Design:
Chris Carroll-Davis



Photographs were supplied by many
National Rallyists, who retain the
copyright. Special thanks to:



Mary Adams



Robert Swan



Till Schwarzlose



Phillip Tooth



Freddy Glendahl



Dorian Rollin

All rights reserved. This publication, or
any part of it, may not be reproduced,
or appropriated, in any form or by any
means, without the written permission
of the copyright owner.

Published by Munster Vintage
Motorcycle and Car Club Ltd, 2016
Printed and bound by Carraig Print Inc.
Litho Press, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork



Dear Reader

In the run up to this year's event it became apparent to us that the 50 year
history of the National was not well documented.

Ask any participant, whether they are new to the Irish National Vintage
Motorcycle Assembly, a habitual regular, or a lifer, and they will talk about
favourite roads, near misses, impromptu social or involuntary mechanical
stops, friendships made and knowledge acquired or imparted.

Two years ago, having decided that a book on the National might
be of interest, we approached Phillip Tooth and he readily agreed to
coordinate and compile a publication.

We thank all those who contributed articles, reminiscences and
photographs. We particularly wish to acknowledge Phillip's guidance,
input and advice in getting the book into print.

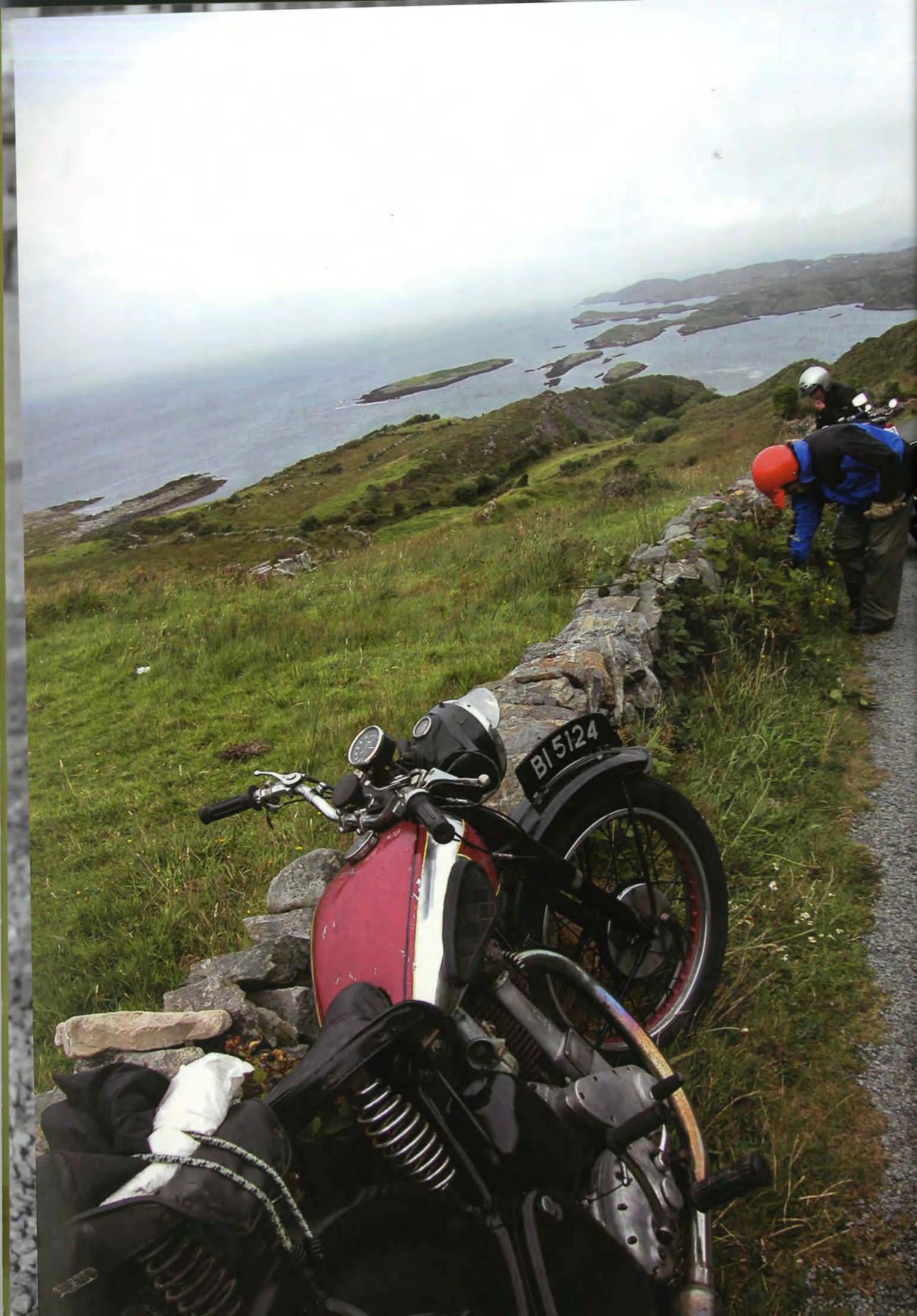
We hope that it will be a source of information, a refresher of memories
and a reminder of fellow enthusiasts who are sadly no longer with us.

Additionally, programmes for each of the 50 years have been uploaded
to the Rally website. Hopefully, these in time will, in conjunction with this
book, be aids to tracing a motorcycle's history.

Enjoy the read, the photographs and the trip down memory lane.

Yours in vintage motorcycling,

Organising Committee, Irish National Rally
On behalf of Munster Vintage Motorcycle and Car Club Ltd
www.irishnationalrally.com
www.munstervintage.com



Munster Vintage Motor Cycle & Car Club

ALWAYS BREAK DOWN
OUTSIDE A PUB

1967 National Rally 2016

TIME FLIES WHEN
YOU'RE HAVING FUN

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE IRISH RALLY THAT BECAME AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT

FOLLOW HEAVY BLACK LINE. STRAIGHT ON AT ALL JUNCTIONS UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.
SIGNPOSTS ARE FOR JUNCTION IDENTIFICATION ONLY, NOT NECESSARILY DIRECTION.

MILES	DIRECTION & SIGN	TOWN	MILES	DIRECTION & SIGN	TOWN
1			15		
0	KENMARE BAY HOTEL	KENMARE	64	TAKE THE AJAY!	GLENGARRIFFE
2	THE MUNSTER VINTAGE MOTORCYCLE AND CAR CLUB	KENMARE	66	WATERING HOLES	
3	IN THE BEGINNING...	KENMARE	76	JAPANESE NUTTERS IN THE NATIONAL	
4	MY FIRST NATIONAL	KENMARE	78	TEAM BUILDING WITH A LEVIS	
5	BROKEN FRAMES AND BUCKLED WHEELS		82	LADY'S VIEW	
6	CAN WE FIX IT? YES WE CAN!	BONANE	84	TOP OF COOM? TOP OF THE WORLD!	
7	HOLLYWOOD HARD MAN		86	WORLD CHAMPIONS ON THE NATIONAL	
8	ALL ABOARD THE SKYLARK!		88	NOW WHEN WAS IT THAT...	
9	PRIEST'S LEAP 5KM		96	IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR	KENMARE
10	SPECTACULAR SCENERY		100	A POSSIBILITY OF PRECIPITATION	KENMARE
11	WE LOVE THE RAIN!		106	THEY MADE IT POSSIBLE	MOLL'S GAP
12	JOHN KNOX, ME AND THE NATIONAL		114	LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES	KILLARNEY
13	THE NATIONAL CAN BE A DRAG...		122	THE CHEQUERED FLAG	KILLARNEY
14	FROM MONTE CARLO TO THE NATIONAL		28	CASTLEROSSE HOTEL	KILLARNEY



The Munster Vintage Motorcycle and Car Club

Chris O'Mahony and Robert Swan look back at the history of Ireland's premier motor sport club

The Munster Vintage Motorcycle and Car Club is a bit like Trigger's famous sweeping brush. There have been some changes of structure as the years passed – a couple of new broom sticks and a few new heads – but there is a strong continuing thread of history that can be traced from the early days to the present.

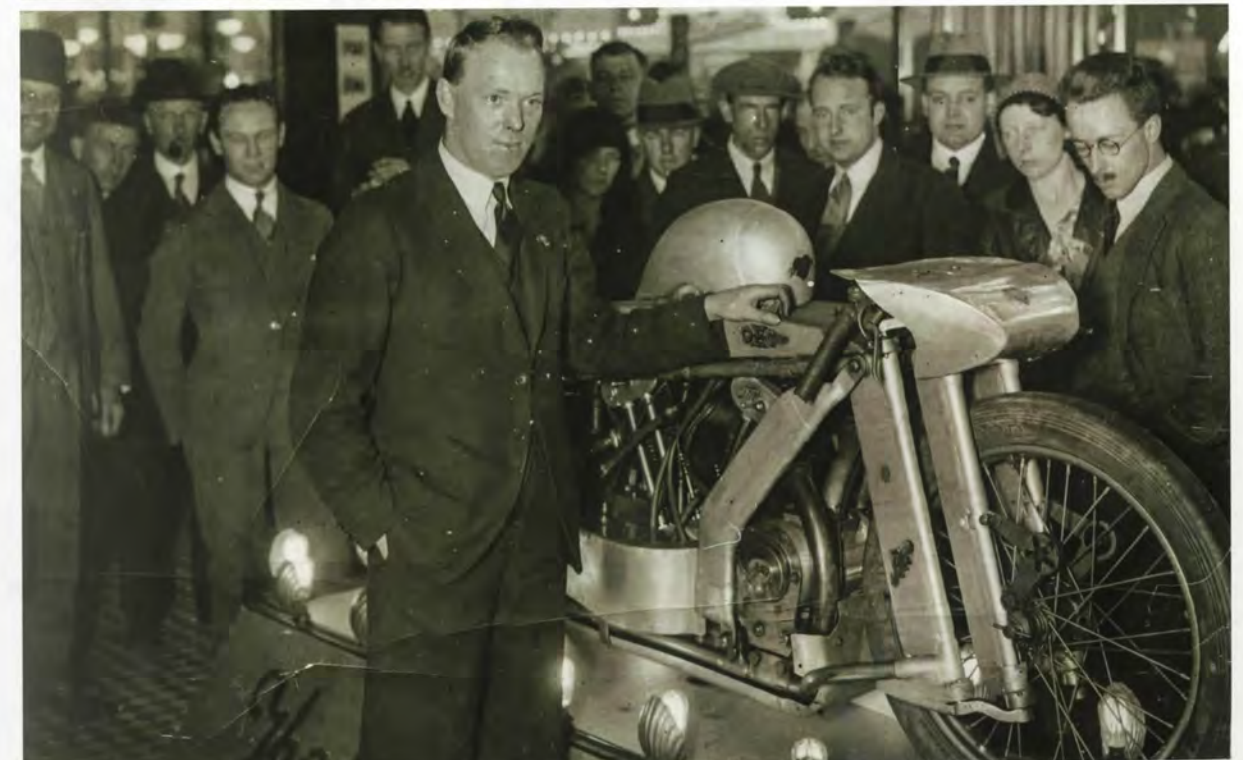
The Club, and motorsport in Cork City, can trace its history back to 1910, when the Cork and District Motor Club was formed (it incorporated in 1923) to cater for two-, three- and four-wheeled motorsport in the area. The Club's first event of 1911 was a 103 mile Reliability Trial from Cork to Killarney and back. Records show that Motorcycle Trials were held in 1914 and 1915. Motorcycle events recommenced in 1919, and ran throughout the 1920s. In 1928 cars were included.

In August 1928 the Club ran the Irish Mile Speed Championship for motorcycles on the new Carrigrohane Straight road, and this was again the venue in 1930 when the Motorcycle Land Speed Record was raised to 150.73mph by Joe Wright. The fact that the Club ran such high profile events must reflect the enthusiasm, passion and dedication felt by the members to keep the sport alive in the difficult times of the 1920s and early 1930s in Ireland.

▲ By the lake at Gougane Barra, 1910

There is no dispute that a new record was set by Joe Wright on the day, but the issue arose as to the exact machine used. The OEC Company had planned to take the record to publicise their machine, but unfortunately the supercharged OEC gave trouble on the day and the record was actually set on the practice bike which was a supercharged Zenith. There was an element of adverse publicity when the story broke in the UK, but then they say that all publicity is good publicity, and there was certainly no fault in the running of the event by the Cork and District Motor Club.

A Zenith broke the record...



but an OEC took the glory

Subsequently the Club was actively involved in the running of the Cork International Motor Races in 1936, 1937 and the Grand Prix in 1938. The 1938 meeting, over two days, comprised of three races; a 50 mile handicap for racing and sports cars from Ireland and Britain, the Formula Free race of 75 miles for cars under 1.5 litre, and the highlight, a 200 mile race to be run to the new International Formula to be known as the Cork GP, the only race ever run in Ireland to GP rules.

Although an estimated 70,000 spectators attended the 1938 races, the financial strain of the events led to the Club's demise. In spite of this setback, the nucleus of enthusiastic and dedicated members remained, and in 1938 the Munster Motor Cycle and Car Club Ltd was formed to continue organising sporting events for cars and motorcycles. It is interesting to note that Reggie Tilson, who had been Chairman of the International Motor Races in the three years to 1938, was one of many who continued into the new Club, and indeed was on the organising committee of the first National.

For 21 years the Club met in meeting rooms at 33 South Terrace, Cork, but then in 1959 the members took the brave step of purchasing Vernon Mount House and surrounding grounds as the Club's Headquarters. For many years, the Club catered for "modern" car and bike events. There were road rallies and test trials for the cars, and scrambles and trials for the bikes. Then there was the annual Speed Weekend for both cars and bikes. Harking back to its pre-war roots, for many years the Club ran a Sprint meeting for cars and bikes at the Carrigrohane Straight road, and the crowds were thrilled by the competing machines, including the sight and sound of George Brown on Nero, his Vincent twin. There was usually a hillclimb the next day, originally at the Airport Hill which was closed for the event, or later on at Farnanes.



In the midst of this activity the Club also nurtured an interest in "old crock" events for both cars and motorcycles. It inaugurated the Cork Veteran Run in 1956 to cater for old cars and motorcycles. In view of the long history of motorcycling in the Club, the decision was taken to organise an event catering solely for old bikes, which resulted in the organisation of the inaugural Irish National Motorcycle Rally in 1967.

In 1996, Vernon Mount was sold, and eventually in 2003 the four sections (Cars, Bikes, Vintage and Karting), agreed to form separate clubs to share the assets, and to cater for their sectional interests. In July 2003 the Munster Vintage Motor Cycle and Car Club Ltd. was formed. Its purpose was to take over that share of the assets of the old Club which related to the Veteran and Vintage activities, to continue to organise the ongoing Veteran and Vintage events in the Calendar, and generally to promote Veteran and Vintage activities.

The Club Members are proud of this history and tradition, and to still have some of the old trophies and awards, together with the Presidential Chain of Office dating back to 1938. In June 2013, the Club organised an event to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the 1938 Cork Grand Prix. This was a major undertaking, but was most rewarding. The high point was undoubtedly the appearance of the actual Bugatti which had made the fastest lap in the 1938 Grand Prix. In 2015 the Club organised a most successful weekend event to mark the 60th Cork Veteran Run, and in 2016 the Irish National Motorcycle event is being run for the 50th time.

Throughout the years from 1910 to 2016 the enthusiasts in Cork have kept an interest in motor sport alive in the South of Ireland. The success of the Grand Prix 75th Anniversary event, and the ongoing international following for the Irish National Vintage Motorcycle Assembly, show that both the Club's traditions, and its future, are in good hands.

Images courtesy of Irish Examiner



Native: "That was a close shave, Mister."
Visiting Driver (new to Cork mountain foliage): "Well, it's a d---n long time since there was one around here."





In the beginning...

From Vernon Mount to Youghal and Killarney, **Robert Swan** recalls the early Nationals

The National came about due to the dedication, foresight and enthusiasm of Paddy Morrissey. Paddy loved motorcycles, and in the mid 1960's he thought that something needed to be done to encourage their preservation and use.

He arranged for the Munster Motorcycle and Car Club to hold a Show in the Clubhouse at Vernon Mount, and encouraged people to restore bikes for display. I was amongst those members who got a suitable machine, and restored it. Of course Paddy was shrewd enough to know that once you had a bike, then your interest would grow, and thus he was cleverly creating a base of local enthusiasts interested in the sport. I got a 1910 Triumph, which, with help from my friends, was duly fettled and running for the show. This is the machine now owned, properly restored and enthusiastically ridden by Morgan O'Regan.

The Club then organised and hosted the First National on 30 September and 1 October 1967. Over 50 entries were received, including 11 from across the water. I well remember excitement building as the date neared. I also remember being called to meet Paddy in his house in Victoria Street, where he told me that one of the UK entrants had a problem with his bike, and would I mind lending my bike to this visitor. To soften the blow Paddy had arranged for me to accompany Paddy Bassett in his Grand Prix Morgan, now owned by Morgan O'Regan, where I acted as technical advisor and navigator.

It is thus true to say that I approached the First National with a slight degree of irritation, as I was missing out on riding my bike. However in reality Paddy Morrissey saw that as a non-motorcyclist I might be safer on three wheels, and indeed I continued to borrow Morgans until the 5th National in 1971, when I finally got to take part riding a bike.

First National 1967

Paddy Bassett and I fettled the Morgan and the day dawned bright and sunny. We were topped up with fuel by the attendant in the Silversprings Garage, and joined the other entrants at the start, lined up beside Tommy Foley riding his Sunbeam, now owned and ridden by Austin Ryan. We had a trouble-free run, and basked in the evening sun on the quayside in Youghal before going to Monatrea House for the dinner and overnight stay. Oily motorcyclists were transformed with their sparkling white shirts, and the sport and fun continued until the early hours.

Second National 1968

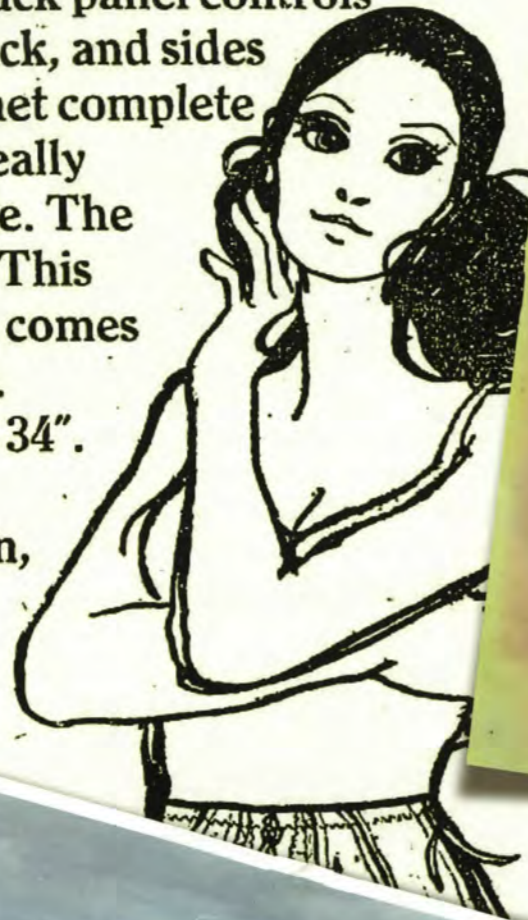
I was then living in Ealing, so took holidays to borrow Colonel Dunlop's F Type Morgan and take part. I remember another sunny weekend, and travelling to Youghal via Tallow at a cross roads I had reason to remember Bassett's advice, that if the Morgan would not stop then you should steer around the crash. We arrived in Youghal safe and sound. A good night was had by all as in the previous year, and we managed a late call the next day for the concours. Paddy Morrissey realised that many of the overseas competitors had taken a full week's holiday to travel to Ireland, and that something should be done to entertain them. Thus was born the Munster Rally, to be held midweek in 1969.



RON ENJOYS
THE 3rd IRISH NATIONAL RALLY

Tummy Tamer.

The 1241 Waist-high Girdle has a tactfully boned front panel that's a *very* persuasive tummy tamer. You'll have the flattest tummy you've ever had. A downstretch back panel controls you round the back, and sides of elastic power net complete the picture of a really smooth silhouette. The zip is in the side. This girdle, No. 1241, comes in white or black. Waist sizes 25" - 34". There is also a High-line version, No. 1240.



2nd Irish National Veteran MOTOR CYCLE RALLY

A Rally devoted exclusively to Vintage Motorcycles and Three-wheelers and incorporating Vintage classes.

28th & 29th SEPT. '68.

Reduced Hotel Rates

Specially Reduced Rates for Sea Travel

SEVEN CLASS Prizes for Winners and Runners-up

MUNSTER MOTOR & CAR Club, Cork,



Competition as well as

BELTS, made of careful accessorising and main points to be taken from Irene Gilbert autumn-winter collection, which was shown in Dublin yesterday.

This 'champagne' collection of items were named drinks or cocktails was made of coat-and-dress ensembles, suits, cocktail and evening Fabrics were all-important, tweeds and double-faced appearing to be the most popular. Belts appeared on almost everything, although not frequently on coats. Where garment was not belted, the was usually defined by seaming, or cutting. Miss Gilbert used soft glove kid leather belts, which were usually broad, gathered into the buckle. The clothes were all in matching or contrasting ensembles. The effects of the office go-slow meant that mink hats Miss Gilbert's Martyn Boswell, had to team with two of tions, did not arrive, to make do with bonnet from two Grafton which came to her.

ARTISTRY.

One of the worn with typified the whole white coat and wool. In a diagonal



Picture shows Miss Peggy Calnan finishing the hats for the Irish Olympic team.

WATER RATIONING ENDED IN BELFAST

Water rationing ended in Belfast yesterday. It was imposed on July 31 after the summer drought and it meant that supplies were reduced or cut off in certain areas of the city from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily. The Water Commissioners thanking the public for their co-operation and restraint during the period warned, however, that the reservoirs were still below normal and economy was still needed.

Big Entry For Vintage Motor-Cycle Rally



ENTRIES for the Munster Motor Cycle and Car Club's second Irish National Veteran and Vintage Motor Cycle Rally, to be held on September 28 and 29 next, have already reached the 100 mark.

Said Mr Paddy Morrissey, one of the rally organisers: "We are very pleased with the response to date, and we are certain that this year's event will be even better than the bumper turnout last year".

At the moment, Paddy and his team are in the midst of a frantic burst of organisational activity. Everything is being laid on for the competitors, especially those from overseas. "We are," said Paddy, "even going to collect their baggage from the boat and take it to their hotels and for this we had to devise a complicated system of labelling, since hotels and guesthouses in Youphal are involved as well as those in Cork."

In the field of entertainment too, nothing is being left undone to make this a pleasant weekend, and in fact only Saturday morning is being left free for shopping and sightseeing. Otherwise, apart from the actual competition, it will be one busy round of social functions for the competitors.

THREE LADIES.

Three ladies are taking part this year, two of them Dublin housewives, and the other from England. Riding a 1928 Royal Enfield is Mrs Bunnie Styles from Clondalkin, while from the same part of Dublin comes Mrs Cathleen Boland on a 1927 Triumph. Mrs Hazel Green of Southampton

has entered a 1923 two-stroke Omega.

The oldest machine in the rally is likely to be that brought from Dalkey by Mr Marcus Thompson, who will ride his 1909 600 c. c. Humber.

One of the most extraordinary machines on view will surely be the 1925 Ner-a-Car of Mr Joe McMahon of Portadown, a motorcycle which was much ahead of its time in having hub-centre steering and an exceptionally low centre of gravity, together with a limited amount of streamlining which gives it a rather weird appearance.

RACING MODELS.

Former racing models will also be in evidence, among them being a 490 c. c. Norton International entered by Mr. Ian Thompson of Richmond, Surrey, and dating from 1925.

Ted Beckham of London is bringing an unusual Grindlay-Peerless of 1925, with a Barr and Stroud sleeve-valve engine, and among the bigger classes will be a Henderson four-cylinder entered by R. E. May of Marcham, Berks. This machine first took the road in 1929, and is complete with sidecar.

Really big power, however, comes from 1,150 c. c. in the side-valve engine of Felix Burke's 1937 Brough Superior, which he is bringing from Cheltenham.

There will be two starting points for the rally; one in Cork, and the other in Cloanmel for visitors entering through Dublin. The route will be of about fifty miles, and in each instance will finish in Youghal, where the Concours d'Elegance will be held and the awards presented.

Hearts Delight



Third National 1969

The first midweek Munster Rally. The assembled throng travelled from Cork to Clonmel for lunch, and then returned to Cork. The weather was glorious and the scenery described as majestic. There was a visit to Kinsale on the Friday, and that evening the Munster riders were joined in the Vernon Mount Clubhouse by those of us who were the weekend contingent, and had been working all week. The Saturday run went to Killarney. This National was really the end of the beginning, as the hardy souls who had been out midweek spread the good word that there was fun, sport and bumps to be had, if we took the few days holidays to join in.

A Morgan is an honorary motorcycle combination 1

Sam Hull, Belfast, Sun JAP 2

Jim Hennessy and Paddy Morrissey 3

Fourth National 1970

This was really the first full scale National as we know it now. The Munster Rally headed to the West Lodge Hotel in Bantry, via Drimoleague, in heavy rain. Bikes had to be bump-started outside the pub, and George Kingston impressed the visitors with his ability to ride fast in the rain with bald sidecar tyres. Back to Cork to meet up with the weekend riders on Friday in Vernon Mount. The National started from Blarney on Saturday, and went to Killarney, based on the Glen Eagle Hotel, though some of us roomed in the Cahernane. I drove the Grand Prix Morgan that year. It had become hard to start, so I asked a strong rugby playing friend to navigate, and he made light of the task. Again I remember sunny weather, and great fun in good company.

Later Years

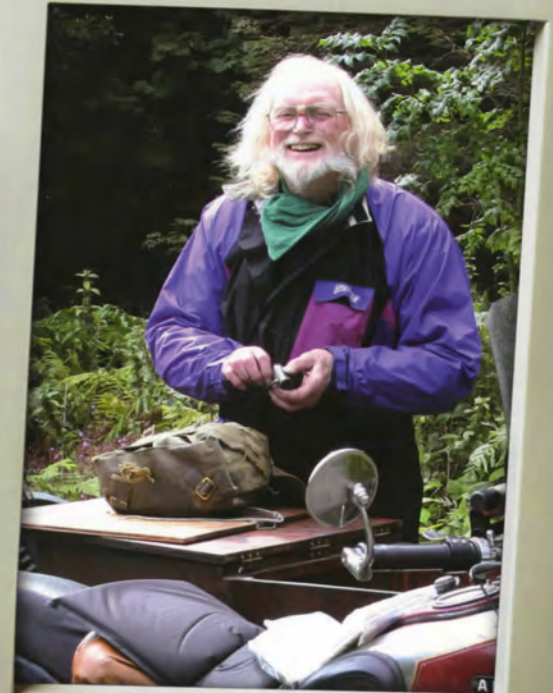
Paddy was under pressure from the Irish Tourist Board to bring the event to different areas, and over the next few years we travelled to Clonmel, where the hotel was on strike, and to Youghal again. But the die had been cast, we all wanted to go west, based variously in the West Lodge Bantry, the Mount Brandon and other hotels in Tralee, the Great Southern, Ryan and Torc hotels in Killarney, with an overspill on the 25th to the International for roll mop herrings, but finally to the soulmate of venues, Terry's Kenmare Bay Hotel. Oh the good times. And they roll on, as we are now settled in the Castlerosse in Killarney, as good as any of them but with better food, and a hill to start the bike down. What more could you want?

Why has it been so successful? Well you could talk about the scenery, the repairs, the roads, the bumps and the characters, but really I suppose for me, the main reason for the success has got to be that it has always been great fun. Thanks, Paddy.





Stanley Woods admire a 1913 Vee Twin New Hudson entered in an Irish Rally.





My first National

Ian Thompson recalls how two venerable motor cycles dismantled themselves over 1,000 miles

The first Irish rally was advertised in the Vintage MCC magazine, which is usually read from cover to cover before breakfast on day of receipt. Before the toast had time to cool down after a rapid standing-quarter through the pages, the other end of the telephone was attached to friend Dick Quick's ear; he had noted the Irish jaunt also, and we decided to go.

After entries had been accepted we then sorted out what to ride. Dick, looking through his varied selection of vintage spares, decided to build up his 1930 Sunbeam model 90. I settled on the '37 Inter Norton. We decided on an early start on the Thursday, not too early as a feeling of fragility and longing for bed overcomes one at about 4am. So we (my wife rode the rear wheel) arrived at Dick's abode at about 8am but he, being a cellar dweller, was still asleep.

▲ Thompson still keeps his fork dampers tight...

Ha! He shouts, leaps, from his bed into his Trial Master and lid and proceeds to pack. We had decided to travel light, taking only the barest minimum. He borrowed a duffel bag from his flat mate, and grabs his best clean dinner and dance shirt, wraps it carefully around his tools to stop them from bouncing out, and stuffs them into the duffel and announced packing complete. I suppose travelling light is open to individual interpretation!

We arrived at his garage to find the bike still in pieces but a hurried half hour with spanners and paint pot soon had all the major legal requirements covered. The great moment had come. We pushed, and pushed, and pushed again – after connecting the HT lead the glad sound was heard. We were off, together with Dick's Copper pals who came to watch the fun so we had a police escort for the first half-mile. After clearing London we decided to clear sooted plugs along the Western Avenue until Dick's chain jumped off calling for violent evasive action but all was under control, at the front end anyway. We stopped, unpacked Dick's tools, and proceeded to take the necessary steps to adjust. This done the dinner dance shirt was ceremoniously wrapped round the anti-rust protected tools and we were each away again. Being that our bikes were registered before the speedometer laws of '37 how did we know how fast they went?!

We pressed on to a transport cafe near Cheltenham and pulled in, my wife being given menu directions hurried inside, our task being to clean off excess oil (Inter owner's will understand) and examine machinery for weight

Sir Richard Quick
K.C.B.I.





removal, in my case a Can bolt (can't call a Brooklands Can a silencer) was missing. Dick's only trouble was a lost rocker oil feed bolt but he was pleased with his loss as the oil dribbled out and anointed the anvil chorus in the right places and with the right amount (which no previous amount of supplication on a prayer mat facing Wolverhampton, together with calling on the divine intervention of George Dance and Charlie Dodson, could do!).

We pressed on into Welsh Wales indeed to goodness! It was from here our troubles began. I'm sure Wales is still hostile to English and Irish invaders because we had not gone more than five miles into Wales when Dick ran out of petrol ascending a hill. Fortunately, we had just passed a garage at the bottom of the hill so a freewheel race was initiated. Nothing was coming so we lined up abreast across the road as the flag dropped by my wife as starter, a mighty boot and we were away. Dick took the lead, we tucked in six inches behind his wheel. Being the heavier bike we pulled out to overtake at about 45.

So engrossed in this silent dice we didn't notice that a huge lorry had caught up. He tooted, I looked round and saw a massive radiator, quickly snicked the lever into second and was past Dick and in single file before being overtaken by an irate lorry driver.

Again we ascended the hill, this time successfully and proceeded along the A40, deeper into the valleys being pursued by a Welsh Nationalist rain cloud. This cloud, not playing the game, cut across the corners and deposited its contents upon us no matter how big a bite we took on the throttle to evade it. We stopped and decided to let it overtake and ride on

▲ *Quick has retired the Beam and rides his Rudge*

in the following sunshine, but that cloud had forced the use of higher RPM and the resulting damage to the pre-Commando engine had given rise to a fractured cut-out bolt. After disconnecting all wiring around that area and stuffing the offending article in a pocket no lights worked and this put paid to our scheme to arrive at Fishguard after dark. As Dick's bike didn't have lights we would ride in on mine, and now mine hadn't any. There was only one solution; dusk was in an hour's time and we had 50 miles to do before Fishguard. There was only one way to do it even though Dick's engine was making a clonking noise and would only do 80. We arrived at Fishguard a couple of minutes past 7pm. After a merry meeting with the other members of the English contingent the next item to be tackled was kip and glad we were of it.

The next day we were up, not bright but too early and were roused off the ship at Rosslare at 6am. The journey from the cafe at Rosslare to our hosts at Kilmore Quay was over incredibly bumpy roads covered in manure and ended in a surprise as Dick pointed to a Norman Keep appearing out of the morning mist, and stating we were staying there. We were welcomed by our hosts in true Irish manner, which is something that, once experienced, one never forgets.

After the ladies had adjourned, the serious work of repairs was considered, discussed, and rejected until the afternoon. Then shirt-sleeves were rolled up and bodging commenced in the tractor barn, the offending items being repaired, replaced and tightened up in a manner and placed where Pa Norton and John Marston would do a slow roll in their graves if they could but have seen.

On Saturday we temporarily forsook our Norman residence and rode to Wexford to meet our Rally hosts and begin competition. We arrived at the Talbot Hotel and proceeded to enquire of our Rally hosts; the receptionist gave us a jaundiced look and disappeared into the inner sanctum. Meanwhile, we figured out the reason for the black looks. When we looked at ourselves it hit us like a brick together with the smell. Imagine three motorcyclists in full gear, liberally covered in assorted fresh cow pat, standing in the foyer of the Savoy.

Having partaken of another breakfast in the foyer, handed to us on a tray at a discreet distance by an incredulous waiter, we began our journey after being informed that the Waterford starting point was closed and that we would start at Clonmel at 12 noon – approximately 100 miles distant. Our hosts, having our welfare at heart and driving a black Zodiac, said they would lead the way at a reasonable speed. We had travelled about five miles when I noticed a large round calibrated instrument with moving pointer attached behind the steering damper, strange to say I never noticed it over the other side of the ditch. Still the needle only moved around the 45-50 mark so when a 12-mile straight opened up, well, it was too good to miss. Dick's backside appeared and head disappeared into the dark recesses of the steering damper region, his right hand furiously working gear change and throttle, as he proceeded to motor down the traffic. An 85-90 speedo reading was maintained but unfortunately all good things come to an end and so did the good road and we were down to cruising in the mid 70s again.

After passing through Ross and Waterford we pulled up about 20 miles from Clonmel, my wife deciding to rest in the car for the remainder of the journey; it is quite tiring on the passenger over those bumpy roads.

We progressed into a motorcyclist's dream, the road opened out into a new carriageway with lots of high speed curves and bends that you can see round and no traffic. So slide on to the back pad, head down behind the stone guard, and away using all the road and keeping the tap open where one would normally ease off on our traffic-clogged roads. Absolute paradise – until the road reverted to the old style about a mile from Clonmel. Leaping over a small hump-back bridge entering Clonmel there appeared a Garda having a quiet rest and smoke in a gateway. His surprised expression in mid-puff was worth seeing.

Having been treated again to a true Irish welcome on behalf of Ireland, the Munster MMC, Paddy Morrissey, and Jim Hennessy the organisers, we proceeded to the bar of a grand hotel utilised for the purpose of starting the rally. Generally the choice of drinks in Ireland is big black long-stroke singles or high-power twins. Having partaken of a good sample of Guinness and lunch the rally started at 2pm. We were off.

Pottering along, taking our time and enjoying the scenery, we were surprised to see a 1925 Ajay belt past with what appeared to be a Cossack in the saddle exhorting us to hurry. Without further ado, we tucked in behind and were surprised after about 20 minutes' motoring to pull up before a pub. He leapt off his mount, rushed into the bar and declared: "What were we having?" Before we could answer a high-powered twin was thrust into our hands and quenching of the terrible thirst began. With the drinking time we had in hand, docking in at the control was done on time.

Seeing the manner of things, the 'Beam's and the Norton's speed were put to good use and more time was had in the appreciation of long-stroke singles at the following controls. From here on recollection becomes slightly hazy.

The second control section ran through some beautiful mountain scenery, with purple hills in the distance and the sun was shining on the unbelievably green country side. The pub before the end of the section was reached – it couldn't be missed as a line of bikes was parked across the road, making progress beyond impossible. We reached the start of the third section, which began at the foot of a local hill climb course.

Dick was away a minute ahead of the Norton; he disappeared in a flurry of smoke and flailing right arm and it made quite an impression as he charged the hill and hairpin bends wrestling the 'Beam and hand-changing the cogs. Then it was our turn; in fact we felt a fraud with foot change and close-ratio box taking the work out of the ascent. Even so, metal filings were left to mark our passage, safe but not uneventful.

After the ascent, while we were looking long and lingeringly at a pub, I hit a large bump bringing me metaphorically and physically to earth. The fork damper had worn out, that last bump being the last straw. So we proceeded to Dungarvan without this necessary aid to comfort with the hope that the rebound springs could cope. The pub procedure was again enacted at the next control to ensure insulation from discomfort.

Proceeding from Dungarvan to Youghal we came across an excellent piece of ear 'oling road leading to a suspension bridge. But as the steering damper was worn out, the best remedy we could find for this was pulling up before O'Brady's Bar and sampling a long-stroke single. We toured down the main street in Youghal looking for the rally sign and progressed into the country which has much to be admired. But this didn't help us as we had a time schedule to keep and had only two minutes in hand. My wife

was keeping time as my watch was a little blurred. We about-turned and met several other strays and proceeded through the town in the reverse direction to find the sign, my wife stating this was done at 40 in bottom gear on the wrong side of the road, past a mounted Garda, but I have no recollection of this. I put it down to rally strain.

We found the mischievous sign lurking behind a parked car and proceeded to clock in by the Quay two minutes late. After enjoying a chat and a lubrication, we travelled in a gentlemanly manner to the finish at Monatrea House Hotel and Country Club, overlooking the bay at Youghal.

My wife was despatched with luggage to procure sleeping accommodation and our interests were turned to the machinery. After de-oiling the Norton I was horrified to find the whole back end loose, as well as every nut and bolt from the saddle tube back. This was suitably dealt with but discoveries of all tank bolts stripped, loose gearbox and broken stone guard supports didn't raise my morale. The gearbox was reset but the other things had to take their chance as only a limited amount of Aerolastics were forthcoming. Dick's 'Beam was in reasonable shape, only a worn-out fork and steering dampers being traced. So the bikes were wheeled into the stables and forgotten and the serious matter got under way – we progressed to the bar. Consolation was forthcoming until dinner. And what a dinner. They killed the fatted calf with a vengeance. The Irish are well-known for their table and they excelled. It was fabulous.







Broken frames and buckled wheels

They're all part of the National, says **Robert Swan**, but that doesn't stop riders coming back for more

As the man said: the National breeds a strange, functional kind of bike. Back in the 1970s, certainly in the UK, there was much interest in spit and polish. Norman Broadbridge concluded that many UK bikes were being restored to functional uselessness, while also commenting that the Irish did not seem to do much maintenance. Of course these days we are more affluent, and machines are often immaculately presented as well as being properly restored. They look good and go well.

From the early days of the National it was apparent that the bike had to be strong, sturdy, mechanically sound and able to withstand the relevant mileage over rough roads. Most importantly if it expired it had to be capable of being fixed, as it was only 51 weeks to the next National. Looks were not of any great importance, especially for the Irish riders who didn't have ready access to spare parts, chroming or indeed machining facilities. I well remember taking a rocker from my New Imperial to the foreman of the only big machine shop in Cork for re-bushing, only to be told to go away as he could do nothing with 'that old metal'. And he was one of the Club Scrutineers.

Once out on the road on the National however things looked up. Entrants brought with them many skills, and we were amazed to see castings being repaired by aircraft engineers in the Technical School in Tralee, gear teeth being welded up on the side of the road in Listowel, and heavy welding being done in the bedrooms of the Kenmare Bay. I wonder, is that nail still in the main fuse? People worked together to get bikes back on the road, helped by the likes of Paddy Bassett, Fred Repkow,

and Paddy Guerin who brought their own equipment to the Rally to help with the repairs.

Thus was born a central ingredient of the National: the Cabaret, which has had many stars down the years. Of course not all the help was innocent. One Ariel rider had always claimed that his machine was a works special and very rare. Imagine the joy of his friends when it broke down and they all assisted in the dismantling to find that it was, as suspected, bog standard. They fixed it anyway.

When Morgans attended in big numbers there was usually at least one stripped down at the front door of the hotel for the entertainment of all but the unfortunate owner. This is not to single out Morgans, but possibly the fact that they had some space to carry spares was a factor. Advice was always plentiful if not useful, but in the end the penny dropped with us callow youths that while we thought we knew it all, it was in fact the older riders who really did.

There are many stories of spokes being brazed together, nuts being recovered from ditches and refitted by the side of the road, and of course the Bud Ekins frame repair using a length of chain. As they say, any port in a storm. Not all repairs were immediately necessary. One rider took advantage of spare time during the evening to carry out preventative maintenance on his Model X Matchless by fitting a set of new valves that he had brought with him. I acquired the discarded set and they ran perfectly in my bike for over 30 years. As they say, a good deal needs no paper.

On the other hand not all repairs were permanent. Punctures can be an issue on bad roads. Jan Barton borrowed an M20 one year, and had





seven punctures in the rear tyre, even though nobody could spot any fault in tyre, tube or wheel. Another rider used to stop every 30 miles to adjust his clutch. An interested onlooker asked why he didn't just fix it, to which the reply given by another rallyist was: "That is what he thinks he is doing."

If all fails on the road then you are into the recovery van. But this is not the end of the world. You might be seated beside a young lady, or gent if appropriate. One long-time competitor says that the best day he ever had on the National was the day that he spent in the van. How he remembers I do not know, as he keeled over in the Kenmare Bay car park when poured out of the van. Thanks for minding him, Noel.

Breakdowns are indeed part of the scene and the entertainment. Experience has shown that avoiding them is best accomplished by good preparation work done at home in the days before the National. The knack is to achieve this while not altering the appearance of the machine or disturbing the patina. Thus visitors and your friends are tricked into thinking that you have done nothing, and are amazed when your bike stays going through the week. Sorry about that Norman, you were coddled.





Can we fix it? Yes we can!

When he needs to repair a bike, Paddy Guerin relies on ingenuity and enough nuts to fill a bucket

Over the past 25 years the National week has meant happy days to me, and the nights weren't bad either – wonderful friends and great crack. On the run-up to the rally I usually put some thought into what I need to put in the back of the breakdown van to cover all eventualities. I've always got it wrong. No sooner would I set up at Kenmare or Killarney than someone would come along looking for the very thing that I didn't bring – although my trusty bucket of odd bolts, nuts and washers is the most essential part of my kit and it hardly ever fails to provide a solution. Anyway, a bit of knowledge and a visit to the hardware or engineering shop usually got us sorted.

I remember the 35th National, when the rear wheel of Pip Billing's



▲ No bother, Paddy can fix it

Vincent outfit began wobbling as he was riding briskly along the old butter road leading to Tralee. I was following on my 680 Brough Superior, and when I got to the car park of the Earl of Desmond Hotel I saw Phillip leaning over the seat of the Rapide counting the broken spokes... one, two, four, six. Pip exclaimed: "Six broken spokes!" to which Phillip responded: "I haven't finished counting yet – eight, nine, ten!" Ten broken spokes – that was half the spokes in the drive side of the wheel. Another few miles and it would have collapsed. Pip only had two spare spokes, so I told Phillip to ride his Model 18 to the nearest motorcycle shop and buy some more of the same gauge.

When he got back, he said that they had asked what bike the spokes were for but he replied that if he told them they would only say they didn't have any. They insisted, he told them, and they said they didn't have any. But he came back with a bunch of second-hand spokes from a Honda 50.

I cut all the broken spokes to the same length with a cold chisel, leaving the threaded end intact. Then I used one of Pip's spares as a measuring stick and lap-brazed the cut Vincent spokes to the Honda spokes. They might not have looked a pretty sight but Pip used them to rebuild the wheel, finish the rally, and ride all the way home from Kenmare to Cambridge.

Another day a rear sprocket came adrift on an outfit, so I decided to drill four shallow holes between the sprocket and the drum. Then I popped a ball bearing in each hole and brazed around it. What was meant to be a temporary repair lasted very well and the bike returned to the National several more times. Just pity the poor bugger who tried to drill them out. He must have wondered what the hell was in there!

On another evening I had a chap call to the van with several spokes minus the heads. No problem – this time the spokes were long enough for me to braze on small nuts and then round them off. He was back the next evening with another fistful. I reckon we had the wheel respoked by the weekend.

Last year, one of the overseas guys called at the van and asked if I had a spare washer in my bucket that he could have, but I had my head down doing some other job. Without looking up, I said 'No bother, boy' in the



- 1 There's always an audience for the National torch bearer
- 2 We recommend Nivea for soft hands

Cork/Kerry lingo, which he must have taken to mean not to be bothering me because he promptly disappeared. I couldn't find him again to explain.

Looking back, where have all the years gone? I think of friends who no longer ride the Cork/Kerry hills and valleys with us, and join in the entertainment until the small hours. May God be good to them. By the way, all warranties on work done have now expired.



Pip starts pulling the spokes from his wheel...

... but everything stops for cheesecake





Hollywood hard man

Bud Ekins could have been a star guest at classic events anywhere in the world, but every year he kept coming back to Ireland. **Phillip Tooth** raises his glass to a legend

When I met Bud at the National I tried to interview him in the bar at the Kenmare Bay Hotel for a magazine feature, but the place was buzzing and there was too much noise. "Let's go to my room," Bud shouted in my ear. "We can hear ourselves think there."

He closed the door behind us, reached for a litre bottle of duty-free whiskey that was three-quarters full, and handed it to me. "That's for you," he said, before pulling a full bottle from his bag and cracking open the top. I was out of my depth already, and the night had only just begun.

Of course, we talked about his racing career. His first big race was in 1949 – before I was even a twinkle in my father's eye – when he rode his Triumph in the Big Bear Endurance Run. This 150-mile off-road race started in the Californian desert before climbing into the San Bernardino mountain range. He didn't win, but it convinced him to buy a better bike – a 500cc Matchless single. He would go on to win the race three times and by the mid-1950s Bud was the top scrambles and desert racer in Southern California. That gave him a Matchless factory ride in world motocross events in Europe.

Bud also won the Catalina Grand Prix, and was a founder of the Baja 1000 which runs down the Mexican Peninsula. He made record times in that as well.

Bud first met Steve McQueen when he walked into his workshop in 1957 and asked for advice on desert racing. "He was just a regular guy," said Bud. "We used to go riding in the Californian hills and soon became good friends."



Steve McQueen lent his bike to a good mate

McQueen became a pretty good rider as well. So much so that he joined Bud and his brother Dave as a member of the American team (all riding Triumphs) for the 1964 International Six Days Trial. Team captain Bud crashed out on the third day with a broken leg, and McQueen misjudged the route through a forest section and parked his 650 Triumph against a tree at 30mph. McQueen was out of the running and joined Ekins on the sidelines. Bud would win four gold medals and a silver during his seven years of competing in the ISDT.



Friendship with Steve led to the jump that launched McQueen into motorcycle history. In *The Great Escape*, McQueen rides a 500cc Triumph across an Austrian meadow, chased by German soldiers on BMWs. McQueen is trapped by two huge barbed wire fences, so he decides to jump his bike over them. Or at least Bud does.

"I wound the Triumph up through the gears and nailed the throttle wide open," he recalled. Then he took off from a bump in the grass and sailed into history. Never even bothered with a helmet.

The stunt ace was modest about his effort. "I jumped. They filmed. That was it." He was paid \$1000 for the 60-foot jump – a huge sum of money in those days, and until then, a record for stunt work.

He might have been a champion racer and famous Hollywood stunt man, but on the National he was one of the gang. When a Matchless G80 rider ran off the road and twisted his forks, Bud and fellow American Kenny Smith quickly sorted it when one grabbed the bars and the other the wheel. A quick, hard yank pulled everything straight. No spanners, just brute force and know-how. And when Bud punctured his rear tyre, he laid his Matchless over on its side, pulled out the wheel spindle, removed the wheel and within minutes had inserted a replacement tube. Then he loosened the tank cap and let petrol dribble onto a rag, which he used to wipe the grease from his hands. Those ISDT skills were still there.

When he was too frail to ride, Bud passengered a Panther outfit piloted by his American buddy Drino Miller. Riding along the remote Black Valley, Drino lost control on a tight left-hander with a negative camber and crashed through a barbed wire fence. Help was soon at hand, and I found Bud sitting on a rock, puffing on a Gauloise between taking a nip from a hip flask. As we waited for the ambulance to arrive, I told Bud that he was getting too old to be jumping fences. And when it finally did arrive, he looked at me and said: "If that ain't a smokin' and drinkin' ambulance, tell 'em to call another one."

A while back, Bud told me that, if he could take any bike home with him to California, it would be my 1926 Model 18 Norton. I said it wasn't for sale, but he could take it for a ride and on the last day of the rally he rode it to the Cork ferry. When we stopped, he apologised for making 'a ding' in the mudguard – he had hit a pothole (no surprises there) and, because he was so much heavier than me, the saddle frame had made contact. I'm glad it happened.

Bud's ding is still there.





All aboard the Skylark!

There's more than one way to climb a mountain, as veteran rider **Chris Harvey** explains...

Dave Miller, Austin Ryan, Dave Jolley and I were trying to get over the Laharn road the first time it was on the route. Dave Jolley was in front and, being on a hub geared Triumph, was away and not to be seen for a while. The rest of us achieved various elevations before failure and retreat for belt and gear alterations, and further attempts at trying to carry that extra half of one mile an hour round a bend as this could carry you up the next incline to (and this is what it feels like) victory. After a while and many attempts, back down the hill came Dave Jolley on a borrowed 'modern' bike.

"You've no chance, it goes on for another mile and gets steeper," was Dave's assessment of our predicament. We were planning our route to get us back with the other riders when down the hill came a Ford Escort van. It was a small van. It had a trailer on it. It was a small trailer.

The driver halted. "Morning, lads. It's a fine day today."

We agreed it was.

"Are ye having trouble getting up the hill?"

We agreed we were.

I don't know why Austin said it, as it was obviously not technically possible (he might have meant to say 'me' rather than 'us') but his next line was: "Will you be giving us a lift to the top?"

"I will," replied the driver before he executed a three point turn on a one-in-four, single track hill and luckily he only managed to hit my bike with any real force.

As I said before, it was a small trailer, with no sides, and no back. Which was good, because three bikes wouldn't have fitted if there were sides or a back. They didn't fit anyway. They were too long. And there were no straps...

It must have been the first year I entered on a veteran because I arrived at the first check and pub at Castlemaine with only a couple of Americans in front of me and upon reaching the bar heard the barman (the old variety, dark suited, owner) ask the first Yank what he wanted.

"Could ya fix me a coffee." (no question mark; it wasn't a question). The barman silently turns around and retreats to the kitchen where, out of sight, we are treated to the sound of water being drawn, a kettle being placed on the hob, boiling (three minutes), water being poured into a cup, the coffee being spooned into it (far off days before frapachinno et al) and his return to the room. Sugar was talked of and payment made. He then turned to the next American and enquired upon his needs, and was told: "I reckon I could go a coffee too."

The barman looked at him for a second then replied: "Look, this is a pub, we sell beer and whiskey, so what'll it be?"

"If you lads stand on the tow bar fixing and hold the bikes on we'll be fine," was his solution.

And off we set. Four men all a few pounds over their fighting weight, three bikes and the van. That poor engine. The next 10 minutes were tense, intense, exciting and scary all at the same time. It was obvious to me that the van would fail and we would instantly jack-knife and roll down the hill, killing us all. Then I looked down and realised that was the least of our worries.

The tow hitch was made of Meccano rejects (I'm joking, it was actually made of Dexion racking tack welded together) and was incapable of holding three lummoxes for more than a few seconds. Our only hope was that when it snapped, as it surely must, we would be slowed down by Dave Jolley who was riding a foot behind us grinning. All the time we were simply holding our bikes on. And then like any great story we were at the top. It was over. We were okay. We were going to live.

We 'unloaded' the bikes (four seconds) and pushed away to restart. Dave Miller's bike faltered, almost stopped, then burst into life and he shot out of the layby across the road, over the ditch into the field, back out over the ditch and off down the road. You're never safe on a veteran!



Spectacular scenery

Join **Robert Swan** on a tour of counties Kerry and Cork – but roll off the throttle, take it easy and enjoy the view!

Ireland is known as the Emerald Isle, famous throughout the world for its scenery. From the beaches and valleys of Donegal in the north, past the magic of Clew Bay, Connemara and the Cliffs of Moher, the Wild Atlantic Way weaves its way south to the peninsulas of Kerry and West Cork comprising the Dingle Peninsula, the Ring of Kerry, the Beara Peninsula, the Sheep's Head and the Mizen Head.

The Emerald Isle comes at a price, and rain and mist from the Atlantic can be an issue. Obviously, on wet days the views and scenery can take on a dark and forbidding hue which is unique in its own way. I will never forget splashing through puddles and potholes in the Black Valley on that wet year, with the mist and gloom weaving a strange, eerie spell over the landscape. Then the clouds lifted, the sun came out, and the view was revealed with brilliant colour and clarity through the rain-washed air. I was talking to a lady who had been sitting in a sidecar, in the rain, for three days when the mist suddenly cleared at the top of the Priest's Leap. As she saw the wonder of Bantry Bay spread below in the sunshine she uttered the immortal words: "Now I know why I've been here all week."



Views and Routes are of course linked. You need the road, often of varying quality, to reach that vantage point where the view most suits your taste. If you can combine the great road with the great view, and maybe the ideal weather, then you are lucky indeed, and should perhaps stop and catch the moment with a photograph. Each peninsula has its own characteristics, but all have in common a combination of mountain and sea which can make a great view. However the areas away from the coast can also be scenic in their own way, with inland lakes and vast valleys to catch our eyes.

Dingle has spectacular views from the Scenic Route to Camp across to the Maharees, or back across Dingle Bay to the Ring of Kerry from the steep climb north from Castlemaine. Both these views have the added bonus of being reached by challenging roads to add to the joy. When in Dingle, the Sleah Head drive clockwise on a fine sunny day is truly amazing. Initially looking south from Ventry you can see the Skellig Rocks, now famous for Star Wars movies, standing out in a glittering sea. Past Sleah Head, looking out over the Blasket Islands, and then to top it all the stunning view along the north coast across Smerwick Harbour to where the mountain tops are lined up like shark's fins against the sky.

The Ring of Kerry is on every tourist's agenda, but the National leaves the familiar N70 highway and explores backroads. There is a loop from Waterville through Ballinskelligs that goes over a steep climb before opening out to a magnificent view to Valentia Island and Port Magee. On the main road along the south coast you overlook Caherdaniel and Derrynane, as you travel along to Sneem.

Inland there is a maze of roads through the centre of the peninsula, and a favourite is up through the Ballaghasheen Forest which suddenly opens out at the top to reveal the vastness of the Glencar Valley stretched below. Turn left for the Climbers, and then past the beauty spots of Lickeen Bridge and Caragh Lake. Or turn right in Glencar for the Ballaghbeama Gap, another favourite. The options then are to explore the Black Valley, and indeed the Gap of Dunloe if you are feeling adventurous, or perhaps travel to Kenmare, or turn left to Molls Gap, Ladies View and the best view of Killarney's Lakes.

The Ring of Beara is usually approached from Kenmare by the Tunnel Road, dropping down into Glengarriff, with a truly stunning view across Bantry Bay towards Whiddy Island and the Sheep's Head. Travel west beside the sea to Adrigole and Castletownbere, where Paddy Morrissey was amongst the Irish Army personnel who took possession of the British Treaty Port base on Bere Island and hoisted the Tricolour there for the first time. Leaving Castletownbere there are stunning views on the western loop through Allihies, then the challenging road past Cod's Head and back to Eyeries, with a chance of a sight of the Skellig Rocks in the distance.

The Healy Pass crosses the peninsula from Adrigole to Lauragh, and is a favourite both for its twists and turns and the spectacular views. Going north from Adrigole you climb the rugged terrain by way of a series of hairpin bends as you thread your way past rocky outcrops. The view from the top back over the switchback road is a favourite of many. However for me the jewel is to proceed a short distance over the crest and to stop where the view opens out overlooking Glanmore Lake, across to Kilmakilloge and on to the Ring of Kerry in the distance. On the right day this is heaven indeed.

Sheep's Head is bounded by Bantry and Durrus, and there is a great



view south from the top of the Goat's Path over Dunmanus Bay and the Mizen Peninsula, and tremendous views across Bantry Bay to the Caha Mountains as you travel back towards Bantry.

The Mizen Peninsula and the West Cork area is a tourist destination in its own right. Influenced by the Gulf Stream my favourite areas are less stark and more verdant, and Glandore and Unionhall have a certain pretty attraction.

Not all of our days are spent on the coast, and there are many fine views inland. Priest's Leap is a challenging road, and combines superb views with

that uniquely National feeling you get as you watch motorcyclists wend their way along narrow, isolated tracks in fantastic countryside which is largely uninhabited and undeveloped. A rare joy in today's world. The narrow road from the Top of Coom to Ballingearry has great views back across to Mullaghanish and then down towards Lough Allua and Inchigeelagh.

But if disaster befalls and your bike has broken down, you can always linger over a late breakfast in the dining room of the Castlerosse. The view over the golf course to Killarney's Lakes and the surrounding mountains is probably as good as any.







We love the rain!

Travelling from a sun-drenched island in the Mediterranean to a rain-lashed one in the Atlantic seems mad, but **Albert Pisani** and his Maltese mates wouldn't miss the National

Way back in 1989 a handful of vintage motorcycle enthusiasts sat down one summer's evening at Armier, the Maltese equivalent of Kilmakilloge, to set up The Historic Motorcycle Club Malta. As the club grew from strength to strength, an invitation was sent out to Bob Currie, then editor of The Classic Motor Cycle magazine, asking him if he would like to sample a few of our motorcycles. He accepted, but unfortunately ill health and his eventual passing put paid to his visit. Undaunted we persevered and sent out another invitation, this time to the new incumbent and a well known face amongst Irish National rallyists, Phillip Tooth, who also accepted. Since then many of our motorcycles have been featured in various classic magazines, but a common factor amongst these articles was that space on our Island was at a premium and we needed to venture further afield to enjoy our mounts to the full.

Phillip's offer of a BSA Star Twin couldn't be refused and resulted in me and my wife Anne travelling the breadth of the UK and Ireland twice over, establishing our initiation to the Emerald Isle and our first National, the 30th edition of 1996. In truth, what unfolded in the following days was a collection of initiations, and these all left an indelible mark on us and changed our whole perspective of what really constituted vintage or classic motorcycling.

Malta is a beautiful island steeped in history, constant blue skies, surrounded by crystal clear seas. Also, it is dry, hot and looks parched for nine months out of 12. So one can imagine what a dramatic change it was to witness the colours and the scents that unfolded as we rode for the first time through the Black Valley in the rain, the lilac hues of the heather against the greys and greens suddenly brightened in a flash of cold sunlight. Or the twists and turns up Priest's Leap, falling away as rapidly and dramatically as they rose, as we wound our way down to Bantry Bay. But what truly made the "Irish" so special for us, along with the participants and the variety of motorcycles, was the Ring of Beara.

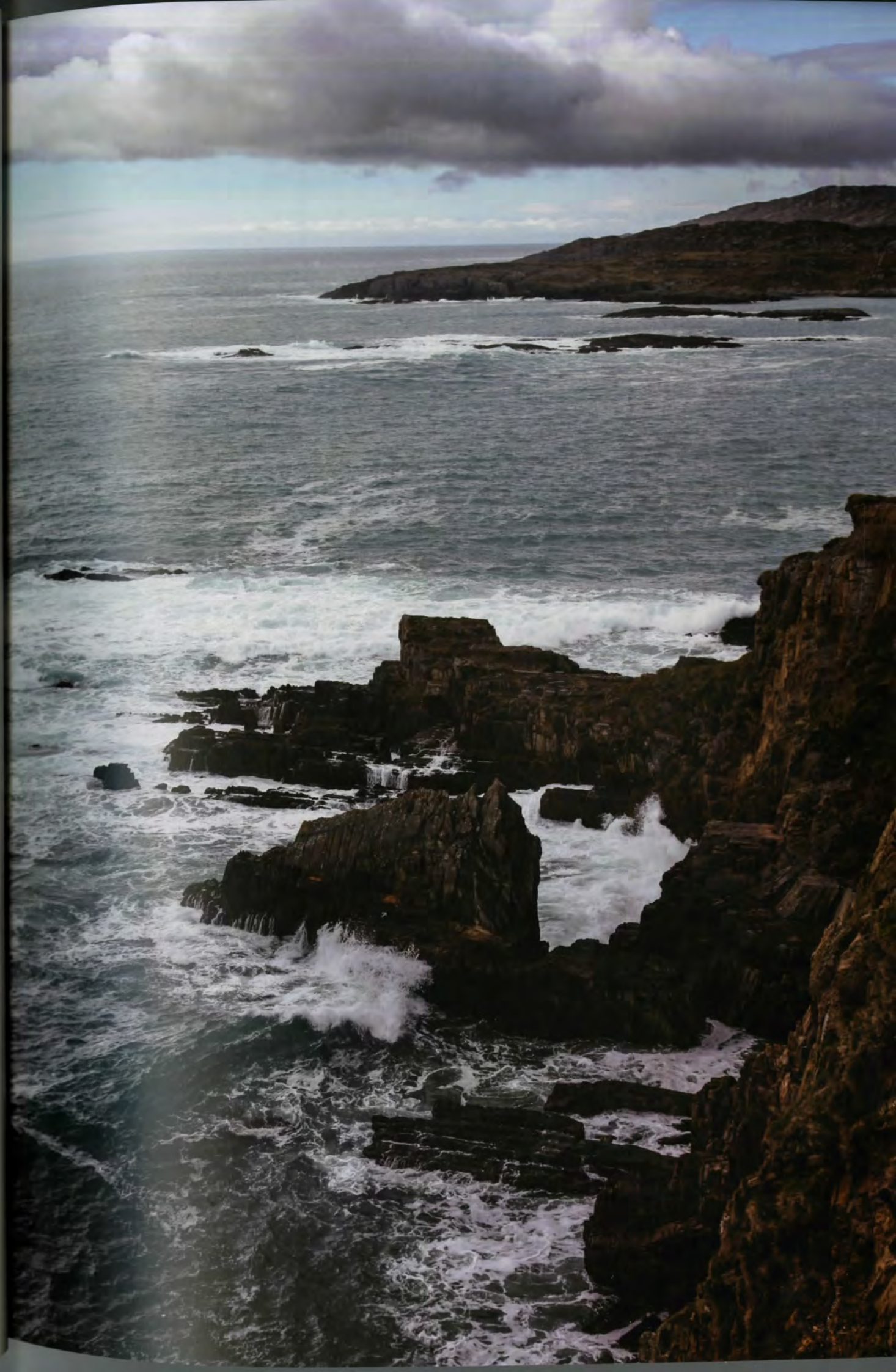
Starting in Glengarriff, or for ease of reference the Blue Loo pub, and ending in Kenmare, it encompasses a playground that the organisers know will leave a lasting impression on anyone. The charge up the convolutions of the Healy Pass to the top, with the occasional heart-stopping moment as one scrapes a footrest, followed by the breathtaking view of the lakes below as you reach the crest and begin the descent is magical. As is the ride to Teddy O'Sullivan's place overlooking the Atlantic. What a feast it is to watch the tide ebb and flow, while sampling Helen's fantastic salmon sandwiches and a little something to wash them down with; while trying to guess from the beat of the engine what motorcycle approaches, as one by one participants make their way to this idyllic spot. Not forgetting Dave McMahan playing Irish tunes on his accordion to everyone's delight.

▼ *Ray Bonnici (Bunny),
Tony Cassar, Mimmo Placenti,
Anne Marie Pisani, Albert Pisani,
and Alberto Allario*



Yes, this rally is also about the characters and their motorcycles. Assembled is most of the motorised two-wheeled spectrum from yesteryear, from turn of the century single speeders to early sixties classics with or without chairs attached. And while you get to enjoy seeing these great steeds wind their way along the twisty routes by day, you also get to know their able masters, male and female, who will gladly, over a pint of stout or lager, relate their stories or give advice to anyone willing to listen or seek it. What a great bunch.

Of course such an event doesn't just happen; it takes a lot of planning and preparation and to do this a dedicated band of officials pit their all, year in year out, pumping life into a legacy that has now spanned all of 50 years. Victims of their own success, every year they are inundated with fresh requests of attendance and every year, like the true professional enthusiasts that they are, they juggle it and manage to accommodate all. Saying just thank you seems a little meagre in such circumstances but they are heartfelt words that go some way to express the gratitude of those who, year in year out, look forward with childlike anticipation to a week of magical bliss!





John Knox, me and the National

Philip Maguire on the man that flew around the world but always made sure he was home for the big event

A young couple clicked open the outdoor picnic chairs indoors for the second day running. Sitting silently they looked over the heads of their children. They were kneeling on the seat inside the caravan, looking through a small clear patch in the condensation they had made with their fingers. It was hopeless – the rain was bucketing down. The beach was barely visible. All of them, dry inside their “Holiday Home”, felt sorry for the motorcyclists in the field beside them.

John was on his hunkers – his pipe was losing the battle with the rain – but he was fine. He was making the final adjustments to his 1947 350cc AJS. He looked over the tank of his bike towards the caravan park. “God help them,” he said, grinning. “They haven’t a clue what a perfect day it is – 30 minutes from now and I will have my mouth open feeling the rain bouncing off my tongue.” Magical. John was alive and well. It rubbed off on me. It rubbed off on us all.

John and I were pals from the 1980s but we only started motorcycling together in the late 1990s and attended many runs and rallies together early into the next decade – but not the National.

He spoke about this great event and spent considerable time assuring me that both I and my BSA B31 lacked all the requirements to enter. I wouldn’t last one day let alone four and: “Anyway, its invitation only and you wouldn’t fit!”

What was worse, my first bike back in the late 1960s was a Puch 50, second a Francis Barnett with a 225 Villiers engine. “Two-strokes,” John



John enjoys a half of Guinness... the second half

roared. “Rubbish – you can’t beat the sound of a British four-stroke single.”

Meanwhile, John was working away trying to ensure I would be invited. He was well in with the committee. I naturally assumed it was due to his extraordinary motorcycle maintenance skills, riding ability and navigation.

Finally the year arrived – we were off to the National. Soon I discovered that John was well known to the committee as an Arab, a singer of “On lkla Moor bar tat” (On Ilkley Moor without a hat) – but most of all for his ability to smoke a pipe in the non-smoking dining room, squatting underneath the table like an Indian chief with a peace pipe and a cardboard box over his head.

Nothing John said prepared me for the first day of the National in the lower car park of the Kenmare Bay Hotel. I walked into a working museum. There were machines ranging from just over 40 to just under 100 years old. There was an almost tangible enthusiasm in the air. Everyone was working to ensure that each machine was fit for the day ahead. This was not just the riders making sure that their own machines were good – it was everybody ensuring all machines worked. It was a team event in the real sense.

John was kneeling at his bike – immaculate – making last minute minor adjustments with a vice grips and a claw hammer. Luckily I was never let near it!

I would challenge John Quirke and Paddy Guerin to make one single cable, capable of working a Sturmey Archer bicycle three speed, from the undamaged strands of the six cables that came from the handle bars of John’s AJS – amazing – but he never missed a day.

John had a simple view – buy a diary in December, mark in the National – and let the year’s commitments work around it. He knew that this rally was not about motorcycling or maintenance, technical chats or intimate chats or having fun in the evening. It was about all of the above – each and every one. Living in the moment. He was the perfect entrant.

John was ready for anything, anytime – dancing with Kazi in his best jacket or singing solo in the Rainbow Room of the Kenmare Bay Hotel. I thought I had just played the last chord of Summertime when John entered, stage left, singing: “Zimmer time...”

John enjoyed every second and every minute of the National and was the personification of larger than life. He was second only to the National itself.

His favourite place was the Healy Pass – in particular the climb up from the Cork side. John’s final climb is complete; his ashes and his spirit rest atop the Healy Pass.





The National can be a drag...

Keep an open mind as **Dirk Hüttemann** explains away some of his life choices...

It all started on a rainy day in Denmark in the summer of 2001. No beach weather at all. So we opted for a trip to the port city of Esbjerg and ran across a Salvation Army second-hand shop. Maybe there was something for the kids or the missus? At first sight there was nothing for me... until I stumbled over a 1960s pink polka dot lady's dress that yelled: "I'm 100% retro nylon, rescue me. I won't disappoint you. One match and you're on fire!" Who, me on fire? Here in this shop, the kids next to me? Suddenly it clicked. Why not get something really daft for the National, which was starting in two weeks' time. Without the kids & missus watching I tried that kitsch dress on, only to be caught by the old lady running the shop. I don't speak a single word of Danish except "pølser" but I guess the complete thesaurus of bad Danish words poured down on me in a five-second deluge. Probably also including the German occupation of Denmark – sorry for that folks.

After her hysterical outcry, my kids stared at me in total disbelief. It was as if they had been struck by pølser lightning. "Daaaaaaaaaaddy?" I told them it's for the Irish rally. Okay? They Okayed it half-heartedly as they knew from my stories that something besides riding bikes was going on in Ireland, and they nodded. My weirdo shopping spree totalled an unbelievable 10€ for dress, pumps size 42, bra 85D, long pearl necklace, ugly handbag and a grey wig. Why don't we do the shopping for the ladies? It would ruin the economy but save enough shekels for our next bike.

Before leaving Kenmare on the Friday morning of the National, I strapped my little surprise bag on my trusty Triumph. I knew that the last pub stop of the afternoon would be at Kilmakilloge pier. And Kilmac was the place to let it happen. Rolling down from top of the Healy Pass towards An Síbín bar that afternoon I worried where to change my clothes without spoiling the moment of surprise. Up the road from Kilmac pier was my best idea. Hoping no redneck culchie would turn up the very moment I'm changing clothes. Approaching Kilmac I saw the gang already gathered in front of O'Sullivan's having a pint. Quick right turn up the road, into the bushes, off came my heavy biker's gear. And right when in shorts and putting on "my" bra a distant ka-chunk ka-chunk was suddenly a very close ka-chunk ka-chunk behind the next tree! Tractor-cum-culchie! I panicked. I didn't want to be hanging from the tip of the culchie's pitchfork begging for mercy, or being locked up with his sheep for further "treatment". Pretending to having just found my personal toilet in the ditch I donned my jacket in milliseconds, pants flying half mast and the usual head nodding to say all was fine on planet earth. The nodding was happily returned. Maybe my nodding technique including head turning, angle and twinkling eye was so perfect after 20 years on the National that he assumed I was a local. Now with ears like a NASA radar I was continuing to dress fully.





Full dresser you call it? Bra stuffed with my gloves. Handbag and necklace carefully placed. Dressed to kill. But how do you kick start a bloody bike with pumps? How to keep the dress down? How to hold my big bag? Problems only women understand. Bike rolling downhill, second gear, then engine roaring and heading for some fun. I threw the bag with my "proper" clothes towards the first guy near the pub, not knowing that it would be held hostage. Within a second I was spotted and the place was going wild. Now how to stop the bike on that fresh gravel? Right, rear brake. But again my pumps were wreaking havoc: no rear brake I could reach. Applying the front brake almost made me fall down in front of the crowd. More embarrassing than my silly dress.

Once I stopped, the fun started, with Dave Mac giving his best. I was invited to take several intoxicating drinks. Strong men dancing with me in wild manners and quite a bit of courageous onsite MOT testing done: yes, this guy had balls. I remember Paddy Guerin wouldn't stop dancing. And he was a good lead dancer. We were all rolling on the floor. When everything settled down we had to rush towards Kenmare Bay Hotel for the farewell banquet. But where was my bag? I wouldn't dare riding 20 miles in women's clothes. Just imagining if I broke down or came off the bike! The ambulance picks you up and, hello, admits you in full earnest to the lady's ward. I would have probably screamed: my girdle is killing me. My bag turned up, I rushed to the hotel, put on some lovely red lipstick and had a lovely night out with the boys.





From Monte Carlo and Fort William to the National

Arthur Jolley recalls a journey that took him in a new direction thanks to a borrowed bike

The reason for this rather ponderous title is because I came to know the National rather late in my motor sport life. When I was introduced to it in 1995 I recognised it at once as an event of international standard.

At the end of 1945, when motor cycling resumed in a limited way, I got the smell of petrol and purchased a bike. While always interested in mechanical matters and having been in school with Harry Lindsay, Reg Armstrong and Neville Gray, I suppose it was inevitable that this interest turned towards wheels – mainly two. I purchased a 1927 AJS from Neville Gray but soon changed to a 1929 Ariel Colt on which I won a race in a grass track meeting at Stepside, Co. Dublin in September 1946. After that there was no going back!

Competing in trials and scrambles on a 1939 ISDT Royal Enfield then followed. This was a heavy but sensitive machine on which I got to France and Switzerland in 1947. The Enfield was followed by more suitable machinery – a 350 AJS and, in 1949, a 500cc Ariel, the most versatile of them all. With a box of bits, it was used with some success in hill climbs and short circuit races as well as cross country events. At this time there were fairly close links between two- and four-wheels and as well as being active with bikes I got involved in navigating in car events. As a result I met Cecil Vard and a fateful conversation in 1950 led to me navigating him in ten Monte Carlo Rallies.

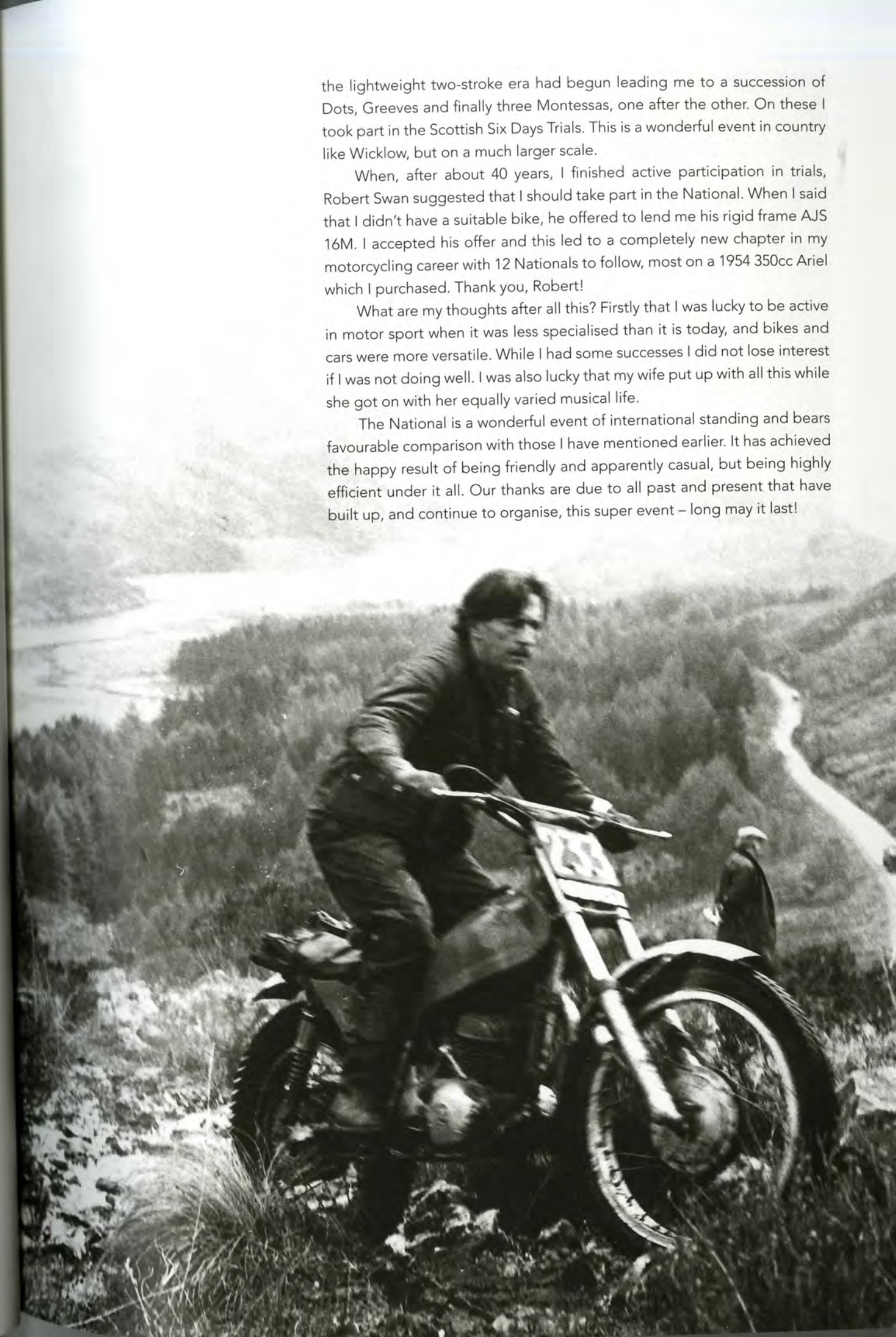
However, my main interest was always in two wheels and by the 1960s

the lightweight two-stroke era had begun leading me to a succession of Dots, Greeves and finally three Montessas, one after the other. On these I took part in the Scottish Six Days Trials. This is a wonderful event in country like Wicklow, but on a much larger scale.

When, after about 40 years, I finished active participation in trials, Robert Swan suggested that I should take part in the National. When I said that I didn't have a suitable bike, he offered to lend me his rigid frame AJS 16M. I accepted his offer and this led to a completely new chapter in my motorcycling career with 12 Nationals to follow, most on a 1954 350cc Ariel which I purchased. Thank you, Robert!

What are my thoughts after all this? Firstly that I was lucky to be active in motor sport when it was less specialised than it is today, and bikes and cars were more versatile. While I had some successes I did not lose interest if I was not doing well. I was also lucky that my wife put up with all this while she got on with her equally varied musical life.

The National is a wonderful event of international standing and bears favourable comparison with those I have mentioned earlier. It has achieved the happy result of being friendly and apparently casual, but being highly efficient under it all. Our thanks are due to all past and present that have built up, and continue to organise, this super event – long may it last!





Take the Ajay!

Got a spare bike? Follow **Robert Swan's** lead and introduce a rider to the National

In the old days motorcycles were mostly bought to get people from A to B, whether for work or pleasure. In Arthur Jolley's musings he reminds us that some were multi-purpose, being used for transport during the week, and for competition at the weekends. Some bikes however have a destiny carved out for them that the maker never intended. One such is the 350cc AJS 16M referred to by Arthur as being lent to him to ride on the National.

Bought from Michael Murphy in the mid 1970s it was restored to the standards of the time: big end, valves and rings from Chopper in Hamrax, bit of welding to the mudguards, and a quick fog over with black cellulose. Good second-hand chains. Who needs lights?

However, through the years the AJS was destined to play an ongoing role in encouraging enthusiasts to take up or re-enter our hobby. These riders seemed to enjoy themselves, as well as adding to the fun for the rest of us through their varied personalities and exploits.

The AJS introduced Arthur and others to the National, and it was also lent to riders if their own mount failed, or they were without a bike at the time. When Arthur first let it be known that he was borrowing the bike from me, one of his ISDT friends told him to bring plenty of spanners if he was riding one of my bikes. However, the bike did not let either of us down and Arthur was encouraged to buy an eligible motorcycle of his own, which he rode and enjoyed for many years.

The AJS introduced Jim Casey to the National; indeed it was the first bike that he ever rode. Ian Scott rode it on his return to motorcycling after a 30-year lay-off spent raising his family. Des Behan borrowed it for the National when he came home to Ireland, and it was ridden by Joel Naïve from the USA when his borrowed bike let him down. Clive Jones borrowed it and spent all week keeping up with Paul Meredith on his 7R. That is Clive's story anyway. Pete Vines and Christine borrowed it after a misadventure one year on the Killorglin to Climbers road.

The AJS has now entered a new phase in its life. After 40-odd years in my hands, ownership has passed to another enthusiast who, in the short time since taking over, has undertaken a complete rebuild and restoration and I am confident that both of them are in good hands.



1



2

Always reliable... but just in case, this is how to open the toolbox

1

Streamlined Des Behan with 'old faithful' in 1988

2

With a cushion for a seat, the Ajay carried Pete Vines and Christine

3

Ian Scott, ready for any weather

4



3



4



Watering Holes

Sometimes they're checkpoints, sometimes they're just pubs. Join **Robert Swan** as he visits six over the eight...

Today's views about drinking and driving are very different to that prevalent 50 years ago. Nowadays there is a scientific measurement of your breath, and you either pass or fail. In previous days the issue was more whether you could have consumed one "over the eight". Garda then checked your condition by asking you to walk a straight, steady, path along the white line in the middle of the road. Clearly this change in outlook has been for the good, and is welcomed by all sensible people.

Times were indeed different in the days of the early Nationals, and traffic was less. I am basically a non-drinker, except for an Irish Coffee at Kilmakilloge or Ladies View, and then not on the same day. I would thus consider that I am a reasonably objective witness, and while down the years the drinking might not have always passed today's strict limits, it met the standards of the day. This leads us perhaps to think about some of the various watering holes, pub stops, and on-course maintenance areas frequented by the competitors down the years. This will not be an exhaustive list, and if I have left out your favourite, then you will have to enjoy your private memories. The list is not in any particular order except for the last, but then we all have our favourites.

1 The Sibin, Lauragh

Situated at the north end of the Healy Pass this pub, with its landmark petrol pump topped with a Murphy's Stout globe outside, was a very popular haunt for many years, although now somewhat supplanted by Kilmakilloge. Still we have happy memories of being welcomed to the first check of the day by the sight of the waiting marshal holding a gin and tonic, or maybe a glass of Murphy's.

2 The Mills Inn, Ballyvourney

On the main Cork to Killarney road, but for us this is the stop between Mullaghanish and the wilds of Coolea, leading to Kilgarvan or Inchigeelagh. The Mills is a busy commercial establishment, but retains a rural charm often missing in updated pubs. Food, drink, coffee and a good concreted area to park the bikes. I have a great photo of motorcyclists standing outside holding hot whiskeys in one hand, and ice creams in the other. No accounting for taste.

3 James Ashe, Camp

Well placed either before or after the Scenic Route to Camp, Ashe's is a great stopping place. That is except for the year when they forgot to open up, but after so many happy visits you had to forgive them. A suitably dingy interior, but a warm welcome with coffee and drink helpfully and quickly served. Much sport outside down the years, with a great view across Tralee Bay and the Magharees if you remember to look across the road.

4 Jackie Healy Rae, Kilgarvan

Possibly originally popular for its location rather than its ambience, or level of service. The recently deceased owner was a supremely able politician, and as an independent TD held the balance of power in the Dail (National Parliament). He was thus in a unique position to serve his local constituents to great effect, and summed up his philosophy by saying that he represented the plain people of Ireland, that was "those that ate their dinner in the middle of the day." Never a dull moment in Healy Rae's pub.

5 The Highest Pub

Situated on the crest of the hill at the Top of Coom, this pub has been in the Creedon family since Victorian times. A popular pub, it was much missed when destroyed by fire a number of years ago. The premises have now been rebuilt from the ground up, and are again open for business. Over the years we have seen Eileen's family grow from small children into adults, and it is great to see her back in what is not alone her business premises, but also her home.

6 Ballyfinnane

This is what I call it, but I am open to correction. Situated at the foot of the course where the Hon C.S. Rolls won the hillclimb in 1903, this pub baffles all as to whether it is a new creation or an old pub that has been updated in a unique fashion. Either way the main feature is the gents loo, which is a bath divided down the middle by a sheet of corrugated iron. This is a relatively recent stop for us, and while the décor is unmatched, it misses out as there is no view, or adjacent ice cream parlour. But that loo does need to be seen to be believed.





7 Spillane's Bar

On the road between Sneem and Kenmare. Run by the Spillane family who are famous for their exploits and successes in playing Gaelic Football for Kerry. Until recently the tiles in the gent's loo were the colours of the Dublin team, great rivals of Kerry, what a coincidence. On occasions this has been a final stop on the last day of the National. When we were based in Kenmare in the early years, the Spillane's used to collect us in a Nissan Vanette and ferry us, bouncing around loose in the back, to the pub at night, and back in the early hours.

8 Creedon's of Inchigeelagh

More than just a pub, our host Joe Creedon is a larger than life character who combines serving drinks, cooking meals and singing songs in a style that has welcomed and entertained us for years. He is also a watercolour painter of note. Creedon's is a hotel in its own right, and we used to have lunch there before the number of riders grew too large for Joe to cater. Riders happily abandon their bikes in the village square. Until the closure of the green corrugated iron hardware shop opposite Creedon's, people often marvelled at the range of items on sale there. It was rumoured that someone spotted a dead mouse on a shelf one year, and that the remains were still there next time round. However Mr O'Sullivan was a most helpful man, and many was the bike that journeyed onwards with mudguards, and worse, held in place with a mix of gutter bolts and vice grips bought from him.

9 Fitzpatrick's of Kilcrohane

Now known as Eileen's Bar, this is a popular stop at the southern end of the Goat's Path. This pub has really taken over from Arundel's Pub in Ahakista, which benefited from a fine view and a wall to sit on. However the scale of the welcome given to us by Eileen in Kilcrohane tipped the balance. There will be a turf fire lighting if it is cold or wet, and perhaps an Irish Dancing display if it is a good sunny day. Dave McMahon on the squeeze box, riders sunning themselves against the wall across the road, and ghosts of times and Indians past. Hard to beat, or indeed forget.

10 Dan Murphy's Bar, Sneem

In the village, on the main road of the Ring of Kerry, this can be a bit busy with buses and people on the move. However the pub is well situated facing the village green, with plenty of room to stop. There is a bonus of another quieter pub around the corner, if you were in a hurry to be served. There is a big stone outside the door, making this a great spot for a bit of music, banter and relaxation.

11 The Blue Loo, Glengarriff

Thoughtfully situated at the junction of the roads to the Healy Pass and the Tunnel Road to Kenmare, with an ice cream shop nearby, the Blue Loo is an institution. Eileen runs a great pub, even able to serve up tea at 10.30 in the morning to ease the jaded throats of the hard men recovering from the night before. In spite of the main street being in effect a main road, we always seem to be able to abandon our bikes nearby, and there is a handy hill for easy starting purposes if needed. A home from home indeed.

12 Ladies' View

Not so much a pub, more a tourist trap on the way back to Killarney from Kenmare or Sneem. You are 10 miles from home, it is time to relax and enjoy an Irish Coffee, or hot whiskey. Cakes and buns are available, with tables and chairs outside to enjoy the ambience, take in the great view of Killarney's lakes, and socialise with like-minded people. Ladies' View is a very popular first Monday destination for those too late or lazy to go the whole way to Kilmakilloge, but is always worth a stop regardless of the day.

13 The Climbers Inn

This is in the middle of nowhere, between the Ballaghbeama and Lickeen Bridge. There is usually a checkpoint nearby, so there is no excuse not to stop. Famed for the church pulpit in the back bar, where many of us have held court. There is a fine car park over the road, with seats outside for the lucky, and lots of standing about and talking for the rest of us. The staple business is as a base for climbers and hill walkers, but this is a place where we are always made welcome, and are happy to return to.

14 Teddy O'Sullivan's, Kilmakilloge

Last but not least. Great pub, excellent sea food, pints and Irish Coffees. Add in a super view across the pier to the sea and the mountains, and 150 bikes and their riders joining together in good cheer. Traditionally visited on the Monday before the official start, and the first choice of most for the final stop of the week. As Pa Houlihan rightly said: "The longest road in Ireland is back to the hotel from Kilmakilloge at the end of the National."







アイルランド国立ヴィンテージバイクのラリーで日本人ヴィンテージナッツ

Yuzuru Iwasaki was one of the first Japanese Vintage Nutters in the National

"Wow, this is the place where we got to go!" My friends Ken Yoshimi, Sakae Shirota, Takeomi Iida and I were excited when we found an impressive photo in Phillip-san's article about Irish National vintage motorcycle rally. Having said that, we did not know how to enter, shipping our motorcycles, and anybody in Ireland.

Few months later, we got a letter saying we were accepted to enter the Rally, since then, we started preparing many paperwork, crates, and our motorcycles. We shipped our bikes to Mr John Quirke who kindly organized all shipping matters including keeping our motorcycles in Mr Paddy Guerin's Garage.

Arriving at Cork Airport in August 2002, three of us, Ken Yoshimi, Sakae Shirota and I had a fresh air of Ireland first time. At the parking place in Kenmare hotel, we were surrounded by many entrants because nobody had ever seen any Japanese entrant, and registration number of our motorcycles before.

Phillip Tooth, Sakae Shirota, Yuzuru and Takeomi Iida before another Murphy's

I had been UK for three years, in 1990s so I did not have any problem to ride, but the other guys could not speak English, neither understand traffic signs.

Sakae went to a petrol station before the start, but his 1935 Velo MSS did not fire up. What happened was he gave his Velo diesel, instead of petrol! He could not understand the sign of petrol. The end of second day, Ken's 1926 Sunbeam Model 6 had a magneto failure. We could not do anything with it. So, John Quirke and I drove all the way to Limerick to get the mag rewound in John's friend's garage. The magneto man completed fixing the mag at 3am, and we back in hotel at 6am!

All of us had great time to see beautiful scenery, bumpy roads, and wonderful pubs. Moreover, what I found the best in this rally was a fantastic atmosphere. This is not the place to show off motorcycles, but the place to enjoy riding, and sorting troubles!

I cannot believe the year I did the Irish Rally last time was 10 years ago. This year is 50th anniversary of The Irish National Vintage Motorcycle Assembly. I really wish all of you would have great time to ride on vintage motorcycles, break them, fix them and have pints of Murphy's





Team Building

The best engines are built in the back of a van, claims John Quirke – with some authority!

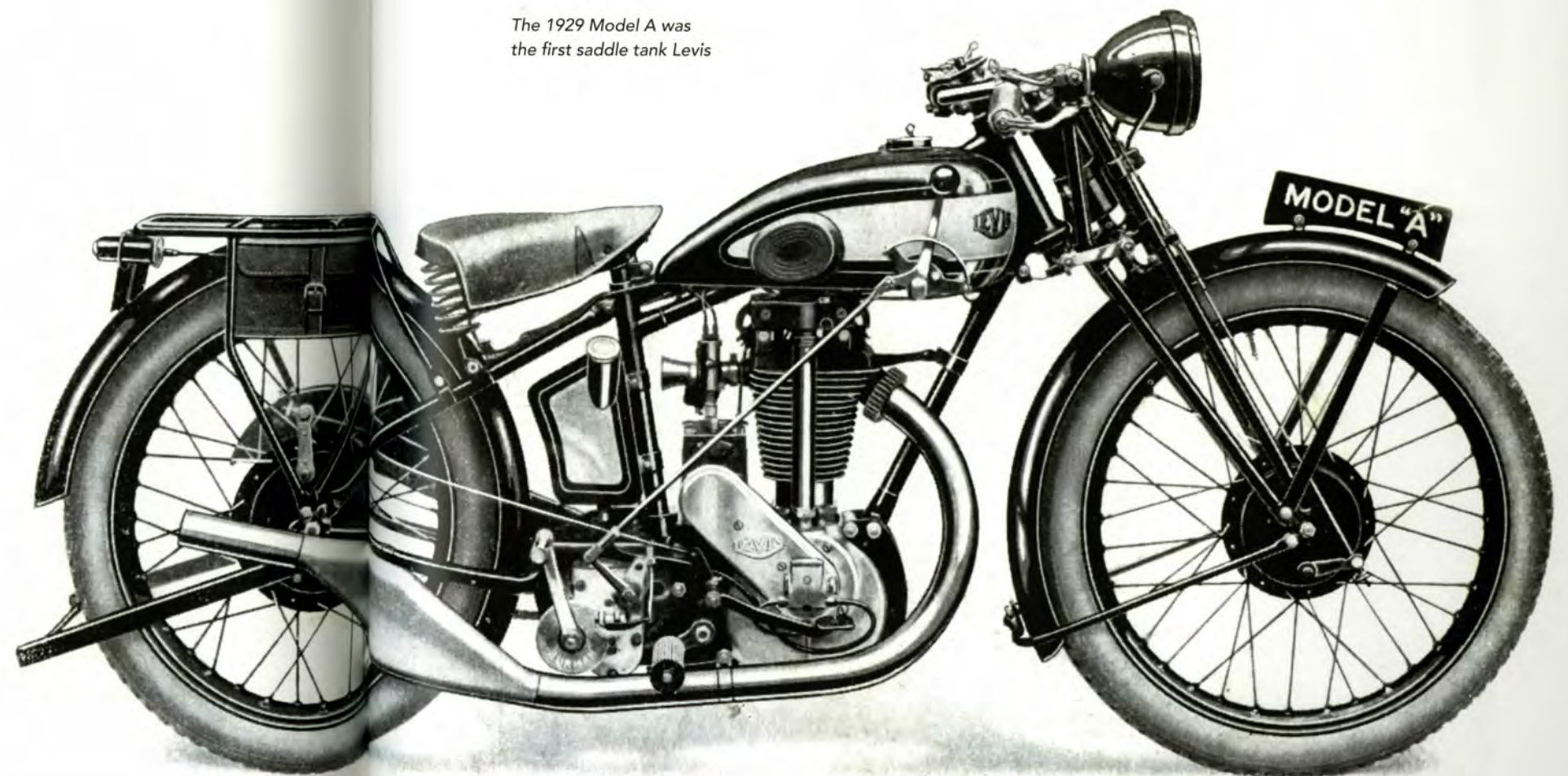
Two Levis motorcycles graced the grounds of The Kenmare Bay Hotel for the 35th National rally. One had taken part the previous year and was not of concern to the core of this narrative. The other was a very recent purchase for the entrant as he had been too busy in the run-up to the event to prepare his own motorcycle, so he saw an advert in a well known motorcycle magazine offering a Levis A2 of 1929 vintage for sale. Following contact with the owner the prospective purchaser was advised that the owner was intending to take part in the West Kent Run over the upcoming weekend. The purchaser was reassured by the owner's intentions and felt confident that a motorcycle that would accomplish the West Kent event would be "National ready" without question.

Following the successful completion of the event the deal was done and the Levis was mounted on the National entrant's trailer in exchange for a bundle of "pictures of The Queen" and remained on the trailer for

the journey to Ireland the following day. It came with a varied selection of spares which were stored within nice woodworm eaten drawers from a once loved chest of drawers. Tuesday dawned and the Levis was dispatched by the starter in regulation order, much to the delight of its rider on its maiden voyage. Sadly the excursion into the Irish countryside was short-lived, as it travelled a little over a mile and expired going over the "concrete" bridge on the outskirts of Kenmare and the day was passed in the company of the "grim reapers", the breakdown crew. News of this nature does not go unnoticed at the National, and by lunch time all and sundry were aware of the short rally enjoyed by the unlucky rider. The sight of a forlorn rider and the invalided motorcycle in the bike park at the end of day one caused some concern to a few of the other entrants. Following some discussions with the owner of the invalid and no small amount of coercion and a large input of "Blarney" it was decided that the possibility of a fellow motorcyclist being sentenced to a week of watching other motorcycles going out each day was not going to happen – especially in Ireland.

A motley crew was assembled and consisted of the expertise of a chainsaw mechanic, a vet, a part-time undertaker's assistant, a retired aerospace technician, a motorcycle enthusiast and anyone else that could be roped in, whether they liked it or not. A large plastic dustbin that was in the centre of the bike park was reduced to a quarter of its height with the help of a Stanley knife, and half-filled with the contents of the Levis's fuel tank. The vet was put in charge of the hi-tech "washing plant", he being knowledgeable in scrubbing and such other hygiene operations.

The 1929 Model A was the first saddle tank Levis



The engine was found to be seized and in a style practiced in the middle ages it was decided to remove the head to inspect the "devil" therein. However it was discovered that the gremlin was hiding in the downstairs compartment. The autopsy team was split in two and one lot went to dinner while the other got on with the ghoulish work of chucking the inners of the engine in no regular order to the outside, on the floor of a Transit. This had been conscripted as a workshop least the gods decided that "anti-dust agent" would be appropriate on an Autumn evening in Kenmare.

The culprit was found to be the nut that had the job of keeping the left hand flywheel in close kissing contact with the crankpin. A second gremlin was found when it was discovered that the right hand gudgeon pin circlip was absent without leave. This allowed the drunken pin to gouge its way to the right and engage in a fight with the cylinder wall, which was no match for the age-hardened pin. The result was the first successful attempt to introduce a transfer port to the inside of the cylinder wall of a four-stroke engine. On the return of the well fed "A team" the "B team" was cast aside to the dining room to gather what scraps were left. The contents of the owner's drawers were inspected and while three pistons and three cylinders were unearthed these were of different unrelated over-sizes, which meant they were of the same use as a rubber nail. A useable crank assembly was pulled from the flotsam and jetsam of the drawers. Some of the crew were then assigned to the gasket-making division while others were lucky enough to be allowed to scrape off the old gaskets. The basement section of the engine was then assembled and reinstalled in the frame.

The devil's work went on into the night and several gallons of midnight oil were burned by the busy beavers. The sarcastic encouragement dispensed by the nonbelievers and passersby, going to and returning from the pub, was rolled up into small balls for use at a later stage. Around one o'clock the referee blew the half time whistle and everyone was dispatched to the recovery rooms of the hotel with strict instructions to report to the officer in charge at seven in the morning, with a breakfast already on board.

After a high level breakfast conference, with all the technical, aviation, undertaking, surgical, timber cutting and engineering expertise available, it was decided to reinstall the internally ported cylinder and piston, as no other was available, and to treat the piston to a new/second-hand circlip found hiding in the corner of a woodworm eaten drawer. By nine o'clock the first bikes were going off and the head had been reinstalled. It had a feed of valve grinding paste the night before to help restore the neglect of years of abuse. By now the spectating crowd had swollen and a lesser body might have been tempted to sell tickets for the show provided by the crew and the lurking jesters. The twin exhaust pipes were fitted and all the cables that could be found were hooked up, the tank was then fitted and the fuel added. Then someone asked the \$64,000 question: would the God damn thing start? The combination of ultra-fine working clearances, the use of unrelated parts and a very short kick-starter quadrant meant kick-starting was a non-runner. The only alternative was to push-start down the hill, but this was a big risk as failure would be followed by large portions of humble pie willingly dished out by the swelling crowd. Final priming of the oil system and a pep talk to the rider was followed by a vigorous push down the hill, only to see the Levis disappear in a cloud of blue smoke as it coughed into life to the applause of the now humbled crowd. When the rider returned we looked for small balls put to one side the night before

but sadly when they were found the targets were nowhere to be seen.

In the evening, when the Levis returned from its day's ride in the countryside, the rider was asked for his opinion of the bike, to which he replied: "It was a hell of a better bike than the one I brought to the rally!" And the epilogue is that this bike built in the back of a van in Kenmare did several other rallies for its owner before it was sold on to a well-known trader who found a new owner to cherish it, and it still performs above the manufacturer's specification. The accuracy of this yarn is best summed up by the maxim "that nothing succeeds in the telling like excess".



*The 1929 Levis has gone,
but John's 1932 A2 SS is
still going strong*



Lady's View

Katrin Böhner is so passionate about the National that she even rode while in the Pudding Club...

My first time, in the early nineties, probably 1991, so long ago – my memory is already fading - I was so young, I even did not have a motorcycle driving licence yet. My partner Werner rode his Matchless G3LS and I was driving the old Mitsubishi L300 from Cork to Kenmare, following the road atlas, via Inchigeelagh, over the mountain roads, passing the highest pub ... an experience which made me to want more. The road from Inchigeelagh to Kilgarvan still is one of my favourites.

So I got my motorcycle driving licence and came back two years later on the 350 Velocette KTS from 1935 to have fun. Probably all the others had more fun than I had when starting the Velo, but I guess that was part of the game.

There were so many spots on the routes I would like to have seen closer, but I mostly took care to stop on top of a hill (to pick some flowers) and start again with the help of the slope. Even at pub stops I now and then preferred to ride past and wave, knowing that a 5 minute stop will cause a 10 minute starting procedure. This seemed to give me the reputation of keeping time.

To be honest, I tried one or two times to keep to the clock, but it was so boring going hours and hours at 20mph, and there were others doing



it so seriously and correctly with making themselves time lists for almost every junction – with a perfection which I never could have dreamt of, as I never had a working speedo on my bike and always had to guess the distances (and the time, as I never wear a watch either). So very soon I did not care about the timing any longer, but I always stopped at the time marshals to give them something to do. I thought it must be frustrating for them, standing there and everybody waves by ...

... and over the years, the more familiar I got with the bike and the roads and the people, the more fun I had! I was looking forward the whole year for the next Irish National. In 1996 I even did not tell anybody before the Rally that I was pregnant, as most people would not have understood my passion for the bumpy Irish roads in this state of life. By the way, 1996 was the wettest Irish National ever, we were flooded in dramatic scenery, and I remember floods and waterfalls everywhere. My daughter Isabella was born in February 1997, infected by the motorcycling virus, and was riding as a first timer in Ireland in 2013 on her little 125 Gilera.

Time goes by, my life changed and needed reorganisation, which caused a break from the Irish National for a few years; unfortunately I had to leave my little Velocette behind with my old life. But now, with my husband Dieter, full of love and respect and confidence, I found a new challenge: riding the Irish National on Veterans.

The first try in 2007 was rather easy. Dieter was used to his 1913 single-speed BSA and my 1914 Calthorpe had two speeds and a free-engine, which allowed me to stop when necessary (which seems to be natural, but is not on a Veteran) and after the Rally we thought: we can do that even better. So in 2008 we entered on the 1908 Triumph and the 1913 BSA, both single-speeders, and we found out: minimum gears, minimum brakes = maximum fun!

Incidentally the Triumph was the first 100 year old bike on the Irish National. Don't bother about the timing; the main aim is getting back in the evening before darkness sets in. And always have a towrope with you!

The Irish National enriched my life, our life. In the meantime we have done many crazy things like riding the Cannonball in America and crossing Australia on our Veterans, but the Irish National always was and still is something unique, something special for us. We try to do our very best to give something back by returning again and again, enjoying ourselves and being part of the spirit of the Irish National.





Top of Coom? Top of the World!

How did two two-wheel World Champions become National three-wheelers? **Jeff Smith** explains

David Bickers, a friend of many years and even more adventures, tried to persuade me that the Irish National Rally was the perfect antidote to long, hot Wisconsin summers. "It do rain!" he said. "But it's warm rain." I handed the phone to my wife, believing that Irene would reject the idea of travelling around the Irish countryside in a sidecar. She thought it was a great idea. Thank goodness I was wrong!

And that's how a man who had hated sidecars from the day that he broke his little finger driving one at age 17, was paired with a 500cc Gold Star outfit which David loaned us. It was the beginning of nine consecutive years of visiting the Rally and enjoying the glorious vistas of south west Ireland. The countryside is wonderful, with its almost Mediterranean flora, great views of mountains and the sea, and country lanes almost empty of traffic.

But there were other elements which drew us back each year. First was the friendliness of club officials and everyone else we met. Irish hospitality and bonhomie are something, while legendary, that have to be experienced to be truly appreciated. The second draw was the gourmet meals at every lunch stop and every evening. How the tiny entry fee ever covers these lavish spreads and the excellent accommodation only a leprechaun could know.

Another reason was to be with my old pal David, at least once a year. We raced all over the world together and as Shakespeare said: "Strive mightily but eat and drink like friends." We always did and David would be the wit at the heart of the party without any help from an alcoholic spark. Not only did he not drink but he mostly avoided meat – a simple egg, chips and beans was his favourite meal. I miss his cheery comments but 'all things come to pass' and I already miss the Irish Rally!

Looking back down the years my favourite events were the Scottish, the Scott and the Bemrose trials; Hawkstone Park and the Experts Grand National scrambles; and the International Six Days Trial. Without need of a moment's reflection I add the Irish National Rally to this list. Congratulations on the first 50 years and long may it flourish.



▲ Jeff and Dave gave no quarter, but were best mates

World Champions on the National

If you thing riding Irish roads can be tough, says **Phillip Tooth**, you should have tried motocross in the Sixties

Jeff Smith

He began his career as a trials rider and was offered a place in the Norton factory team. But it was after moving to BSA that a 19-year-old Jeff Smith won the British Trials Championship in 1953, a feat he repeated the following year. When BSA's team manager asked him to try motocross racing, Jeff never looked back.

He blasted his way to his first 500cc Motocross World Championship in 1964, when he rode a BSA B40 – a 350 punched out to 420cc – to six victories out of 13 rounds, and if he didn't win he still finished on the podium. But it wasn't easy. Sweden's Rolf Tibblin, the reigning two-time champ, fought all the way and the title wasn't decided until the final race. Jeff successfully defended his championship crown in 1965, this time riding a BSA Victor. It was the last occasion that a four-stroke rider would clinch the title.

Jeff claimed four race wins in the Motocross des Nations, bagged a Scottish Six Days Trial win and eight ISDT Gold Medals. He flew to America in 1970 and won the first two Trans-AM races ever held there. Oh, and that year he was also awarded an MBE at Buckingham Palace for services to motorcycling. When he retired from competition, Lancashire-born Jeff was poached by Can-Am, the motorcycle division of Canada's Bombardier organisation, and moved to Minnesota, USA. He tested the motorcycles he developed in the desert mountains around Las Vegas, and he must have got it right because



his bikes took the first three places in the 1974 AMA 250cc motocross national championship. Today he lives in Wausau, Wisconsin. But he misses the National.

Dave Bickers

Two-time European motocross champion Dave Bickers began riding a motorcycle on the fields near his home when he was eight years old, and by the time he was 16 he was scrambling a Dot (the name meant Devoid of Trouble) paid for by the factory. He was good enough to get noticed by Greeves works rider Brian Stonebridge, who encouraged Bert Greeves to sign him in 1958.

He repaid Greeves' faith by winning the 250cc European motocross championships in 1960 and again in 1961. At the time, motocross had yet to develop outside of Europe so it was considered to be the world championship (the 250 title became an official world championship in 1962, a year that Dave did not contest). Dave was also a member of the British team that won the Trophee des Nations in 1961 and in 1962, and the Motocross des Nations in 1966 and 1967. He swapped his Greeves for a Husqvarna before moving to CZ, which he rode to third place in the 1967 500cc world championship.

After retiring from racing in 1976, Dave started up a film and TV stunt action company. He doubled as Roger Moore in the 1983 James Bond film Octopussy, and also provided stunt equipment for The World is Not Enough, Casino Royale and Skyfall, as well as Tomb Raider, Indiana Jones and several Harry Potter movies. He also drove the double-decker bus that made a rapid spin in An American Werewolf in London. He was a hard rider and great stunt man but also a gentleman. And, like his mate Jeff, a really good guy.





Now when was it that...

Scratch your head and try to remember when **Norman Broadbridge, Bill Newton and Terry Martin** wrote about the National down the years in these random extracts

1978 Readers who haven't yet ridden in the Irish Rally must realise that, once the Rally has started, the currency for everything except petrol and booze is the book of tickets, issued by the Accommodation Officer, Mrs. Julia Morrissey, that pay for a bed and breakfast here, a lunch there, etc. This superb umbrella against the rain of insolvency is therefore known as Morrissey money. Like one's virtue, if lost it is irreplaceable.

The whole Rally ran smoothly with no visible hitch anywhere in the organisation, and no evidence of anyone being flustered, angry, or stretched. These were the hallmarks of a highly professional team, who can and do run the best Rally in Europe, year after year. No praise is too high for the work of the team. One of the many reasons for their success is that they listen to what their entrants have to say and don't hesitate to make changes if they think that their Rally can be improved in detail. As a result, the impossible is made possible, and the Rally gets even better each year.

1983 The Munster Motor Cycle and Car Club got their priorities about right when they decided to award a prize to the best flat-tank Sunbeam – you can stand six pints of Murphy's safely on that tank.

1978 Having reported the Irish Rally a number of times before, it is perhaps time for me to lift just one corner of the veil to reveal a few fragments of what goes on that the new hands, and some of the old ones, may have missed. You must remember that the Rally, for five days, is a mobile community which evolves and changes in subtle ways as the years go by. You aren't just riding in an event, you are a privileged member of a society with its own tribal customs and taboos.

The pleasures, however you may find them, are immense, and may the opportunity of enjoying them go on forever. The Munster Club probably doesn't realise that in most VMCC sections there are two distinct social classes – those who have been to an Irish Rally and those who haven't.

1996 Entertainment at Kenmare Bay Hotel is optional: one can go to

the bar upstairs, stroll down to the town, inspect machinery in the car park paddock or watch "urgent repairs" being carried out in the light of the hotel foyer entrance.

1978 Once again, the Rally was made possible by the major sponsors, Duckhams Oils, B & I Line, and Murphy's Brewery. We thank them for their support and for the enthusiasm with which they enter into the spirit of the Rally. Somewhere on their Balance Sheets there should be a great big credit entry marked "Goodwill".

1984 There follows a party political broadcast on behalf of the Irish Rally. I have never in my life enjoyed two days of motorcycling as much as I did that Friday and Saturday. The sun shone, Kerry was at its heavenly best and Michael O'Mahony, our Clerk of the Course, had picked the best conceivable routes for us.

1978 Having admired the adaptability of Dick's luggage in previous years (a plastic fertiliser sack), this year I thought I'd join him in spirit by using an old sail bag. Regrettably, I was all alone, for Dick had commandeered his wife's posh new holdall.

Still on matters Irish... where but in Co. Kerry could I have enjoyed for my breakfast a 'Sea-fresh smoked haddock'?





Now when was it that...

It rained all week or the sun always shone, and after another good lunch there was a second run up the Healy

1996 Many of the riders experiencing their first Irish had learnt to come to terms with the difference between the mileage route card and kilometre signposts... also the full meaning of Irish road signs like 'Caution', 'Unsuitable for Vehicles', 'Slow', 'Slower' and 'Very Slow'.

The weather signed the pledge for Friday's run and Bantry Bay looked quite magnificent under a near cloudless sky.

The morning route tiptoed along the Goats Path, a narrow road that climbs along the lonely mountains that form the southern boundary of Bantry Bay before rising to cross the backbone and drop 1,100 feet to the shores of Dunmanus Bay. The sea looked as beautiful as the coast it scrubbed and the road hereabouts runs to the shore's edge.

1983 The rain continued to fall from the leaden skies that covered the hills of West Cork and the motor cycles were the only life in the paralysed land. A handful of machines threw in the towel after trying to cope with the unequal struggle and limped to the base of the rally at Bantry by the direct route.

Lunch was taken at Killarney before the assault through the swirling mists and rain that smothered MacGillycuddy's Reeks, amongst whose towering ranges lies Carrauntoohil, the highest mountain in Ireland. There was hardly a radiator in the hotel that night that was not covered with steaming gloves and boots.

1996 After a good lunch we again took the coastal road through Allihies in a 28 mile circuit bringing us back again to Castletownbere and then back towards Glengarriff again. But, delight of delights; we were to try the Healy Pass a second time in one day (no doubt to try and improve our individual ascent times!). After descending the Pass we took a genuine Six Days Trials type unmade road, giving us an exciting and exhilarating 2.5 miles before dropping down to the rear of Teddy O'Sullivan's pub at Kilmakilloge Harbour, a section not for the faint hearted or nervous disposition but great fun! Thanks, Morgan.

1984 Today goes well off the beaten track, after a stop at Pearson's Bridge we are directed into a wilderness with unbelievably steep hills that make you wonder how they got a road roller up there to tarmac the road. Your teeth are jolted in their sockets and your spine must be crunched into pieces. You wonder if you'll ever get to Bantry for lunch, and when you do you make a beeline for the bar and anaesthetic.

The final check was at Kate Kearney's Cottage – but I'd only managed to recover about 10 minutes of my wasted time. Never mind – it was the ride of a lifetime and, as the third man to arrive, I could watch the rest of the field come in, looking shattered, triumphant or muddy according to how the fates had treated them.

Thank you, Paddy and Julia and the Munster Club, and especially Mick O'Mahony, for having the courage to give us those last 25 miles of Saturday's route. No English Clerk of the Course, not even Len Ore (where was he?) would have sprung that one and got away with it, but you did.

The weather on the following morning looked uncompromising and although they may tell you the rain is softer there, it is just as wet.





Now when was it that...

The clocks went forward – from analogue to digital – and the Welsh used their rugby heritage to throw a dummy and cause a scrum

1978 It was the year of the silicon chip. Not only were the organisers using synchronised digital clocks but similar electronic gadgetry was increasingly being used by competitors. I suppose it must give some kind of advantage over geriatrics like me, who have to stop and put their reading glasses on to read the time on their wrist-watches, but still not much help in guessing whether the next check-point will be in the centre of the town or on the road going in or the road coming out.

The Rally exists on as many different levels as an onion has skins. The possibilities for gamesmanship are infinite and we all have our pet ploys. On the road, some are openly and honestly doing their best to win an award, but they are not necessarily in the majority. The seriousness with which they dedicate themselves to this worthy aim must give them satisfaction as well as anxiety, but it also affords a source of innocent merriment to their less obviously serious fellow competitors – a pleasure which is immensely enhanced when the trophy-seeker gets late or lost, or is successfully misled, and his chagrin is apparent for all to enjoy.

1984 Up to Molls Gap in the afternoon, stopping briefly to savour the 'Welsh Joke' en route. This comprised a very good forgery of a "Check B" sign that joyfully had two or three people doubling back to warn their riding-mates of the Check's position! Rest easy in your beds, lads—our lips are sealed.

1978 There are many habitués who would not, as a matter of principle, admit to be trying to win. This attitude makes life more challenging. It involves maintaining a consistent pose of disregarding punctuality at time checks and being seen parked prominently at all the favourite bars along the route. The game then is to leave the bar after only one drink, with an air of casual unconcern, at a time nicely calculated just to enable the competitor to scramble along like a startled mountain-goat so as to roar into the next check-point dead on time.

1984 I lingered for 20 minutes, knowing I could make up the time in the final dash back to Killarney. Here I was wrong. First of all there was a secret check where I'd only made up about five minutes. Then the Rally turned into an Enduro over tracks that were completely strange to all of us. Our familiar world turned upside-down—and so did quite a few riders, including the young Ariel enthusiast who blasted his trials "iron" past me on the Gap of Dunloe (for that was where we were), only to go off course and up to its hubs in bog half a mile later. I hope the bovine by-products are beginning to fade from his leathers by now.

1978 Any competition is a three-way contest between the organisers, the competitor, and his fellow-competitors, so games are played by the organisers as well. They know, better than anyone, just what the competitors are up to. Like hiding behind a wall 100 yards from a check-point in order to arrive dead on time. Having watched this activity for a couple of hours, one check-point marshal was, I think, entitled to reply, "Yes, a quarter of an hour ago," to the competitor's shout of: "Did you get my number?"

Some people cleaned their bikes for the Concours, whilst others struggled to get their machinery fit for the run back to Cork.







It's a family affair

Marc and Till Schwarzlose have their uncle to thank for their introduction to the National

Till: Our uncle Gerd Juenger attended the National for the first time in 1978, when he rode his 1928 NSU 501T sidecar outfit from Germany all the way to Kenmare. He must have enjoyed it because Gerd returned to the rally several times during the 1980s. On one hand, our uncle was quite competitive – he would even count wheel turns in order to calculate the exact average speed. But on the other hand he was like a big child, enjoying himself at the rally by making fun of himself and others. No wonder he made so many friends in Ireland. When he died in 1990 and Marc and I inherited the two-wheeled old iron virus from him.

Marc: My first Rally was in 1986. I had just turned 19 and my uncle Gerd gave me his (not so powerful) 1936 Zündapp DB 200 two-stroke. There was no way this bike would get you in trouble. Acceleration was non-existent and it would top out at 50km/h... after three hours and only on Mondays. However, being around a bunch of guys enjoying themselves riding old motorcycles was a real adventure and it was so much fun. Where else would you meet an airline captain who rode like crazy and had a blow-up parrot on his shoulder? Over the years I graduated to my uncle's 1928 NSU thumper, which was a solid piece of iron but it would pull you up the hills

▲ Brothers Marc and Till prove that even a Chief can be a great Irish bike

1 **Monika and Jon** found love on the Emerald Isle

2 **Gerd Juenger (left)** shares his keg of Altbier during the 1988 National

3 **Till rides the NSU 501T** down Moll's Gap in the Silver Anniversary Rally

4 **Big man on a Big Chief: Marc** in 2010

5 **Looking for the way** back to Kenmare, 1988

okay. In 1994 I got my red 1946 Indian Chief, which some people think is totally unsuitable for the Irish. But I love this bike and it has been with me on the Rally for more than 20 years.

Till: In 1991 I rode uncle Gerd's beloved NSU 501T solo during the Silver Anniversary of the Rally. It was the first time that I had entered, I was 20 years old and by far the youngest rider, and I finished third both in the Munster and the National. Not bad for a rookie. It was perfect summer weather all week. I remember that we went swimming during a lunch stop; didn't bother with proper swimwear or a towel. No doubt the Irish liquid sun experience came in later years.

Marc: In 1992 our friend Edmund Panek, a Rudge fanatic from Dresden, entered the Rally with his 1927 four-valve Rudge complete with wet-weather anti-lock braking system (rim brakes). Edmund grew up in East



Germany and with the scarcity of socialism he was truly a mechanical mastermind. It was absolutely normal for him to inspect, for example, his pushrods or his cylinder head by taking them out with just a spanner and a screwdriver during a regular gas stop. Even though his English language skills were limited he would speak "Rudge" with anybody, in particular with Dave McMahon. Edmund had an unbelievable – and because of the Iron Curtain, unknown to many – collection of over 25 rare Rudge motorcycles.

Till: For her 50th birthday, in 1994 we took our mom Monika to the Irish because she was curious to find out why her boys returned year after year. We had no idea of what that would lead to: by 1995 our mom had fallen in love with Jon Hallam, a Norton expert and Irish Rally entrant from Sheffield. Marc and I were already good friends with Jon and his son Vincent. By 1996 my mom got her motorcycle license, and together with Jon she attended the Rally for several years. Marc sold me his black 1937 Indian Chief in 1995, and even though I have brought other bikes to Ireland the rigid-frame Chief has probably seen more than 15 rallies. Still being in our 20s, Marc and I would ride our bikes during the day, drink Hot Toddies with other young riders and the local girls in the evening, and then later we'd go to out on the town in style – in Vincent Hallam's Morgan three-wheeler, which had one broken headlight.

Marc: In 1996 Inga Berner took her then boyfriend H.P. (Hans-Peter) to the Rally. Her BSA might have been a single-seater but that posed no problem to Inga. Solution: buy a cheap pillow at Quills and put the lad on the "passenger seat". Inga always loved Irish food, especially the never-ending varieties of potatoes: mashed, boiled and croquettes. Inga became friends with the staff at the old Kenmare Bay Hotel, especially with Josephine who always looked after her and made sure she had enough to eat.

Till: Well in his 80s, famous Indian Rider Max Bubeck travelled from America to attend the National in 1998 when he rode Wolfgang Schaelte's Indian Four. It might not have been the perfect bike for Irish roads, but after riding Indians for well over 60 years Max handled it easily.

Marc: Wolfgang Schaelte did the "Rollie Free" ride on Inch beach in 1998, lying flat on his Indian and simulating a speed record run. There are different recollections from the time, with some witnesses claiming he was wearing his underwear while others swear that he was bollock-naked on the Indian Four.

Till: In 2006 we pulled Bud Ekins, famous US stunt rider, out of a ditch in Black Valley where he had just crashed as we arrived at the scene. Less than five minutes after his crash and rescue he got out his crumpled cigarettes and lit one up, straighten out his Matchless and ride off again. At the next pub stop, a whiskey already in his hand, he blamed Marc and me for his crash even though we were actually following and rescued him, but the debate was quickly settled with another round of whiskeys. It was always a pleasure talking to Bud about how motorcycles had influenced his life.

Marc & Till: In 2012, Pete and Kim Young from San Francisco attended the Rally for the first time. Pete is a veteran class expert with a beautiful website on pre-1915 bikes. He later posted an article on his website simply calling the Irish "The best rally in the world". Nothing to add, but to thank everybody who has helped to make this event what has been for 50 years, what it is today and what it will be for the next 50 years.

1
The Indian Gang on
Inch Beach in 1998:
Wolfgang Schaelte,
Max Bubeck, Marc
and Till

2
Inga Berner will always
find room for a
friendly pillion

3
Vincent Hallam and
Carola Vogelpoth



Wolfgang Schaelte
does the Rollie Free
ride wearing factor
50 sun block



A possibility of precipitation

It's not all blue skies and azure seas, says **John Quirke**, as he explains the meteorological events enjoyed on The National

Ireland, as all right thinking intellectuals, scientists, clairvoyants, charlatans and soothsayers know, is the ancestral home of all weather on this planet. And the Irish nation is renowned worldwide for their generosity in giving a share of this commodity to all and sundry, whether they want it or not. The primary type of weather that is most freely available in Ireland in general, and in particular the south-west corner wherein reside the counties of Cork and Kerry, is of a type based on the two great building blocks of life, namely hydrogen and oxygen. The combination of these elements always takes the format of two of the former and one of the latter.

This combination is known in the scientific world as 'water' and in Ireland it has the ability to manifest itself as rain, mist, fog, dew, humidity, moisture, precipitation, drizzle, sleet, hail and even snow. No matter what form it takes, it is its ability to defy the laws of physics that causes the greatest grief to a vintage motorcyclist. Rain, which is the most common form of this compound normally encountered, will fall in compliance with gravity. However when riding a vintage motorcycle one quickly discovers that the rules which apply to everyone else in the world become irrelevant. A special set of laws apply to vintage motorcyclists, and these conspire to make one's life miserable as the water manages to permeate most forms of clothing designed by man.

The second weather experience encountered is in the form of the movement of that most abundant commodity on the planet, namely air, or as it is more commonly called, wind. When both the primary and the secondary experiences accompany each other the total weather experience is enjoyed. Wind, unlike water, is not visible to the naked eye but it will extract water from a naked eye. When blowing from the rear it makes a paltry contribution to the rate of forward progress; when it comes from straight ahead it has the same effect as using the brake pedal as a

footrest. Its unannounced arrival from the left or the right has the same effect as dropping a front wheel in a gully at a roundabout, always bringing about over-correction and a relaxation of the large intestine.

When wind and rain combine a funnelling effect often occurs, with most of the moisture happily landing on the front of the motorcyclist even if the original direction was from the rear. We have all too often discovered that damp sensation as moisture manages to find a way of permeating one's outer layers of protection and enters into one's nether regions. This is usually followed by a bout of denial, quickly followed by the utterance of a string of expletives that one would never hear in genteel company. Following this there is a period of realisation that although the water has come in through the tiniest aperture, it is not possible using any means known to man or god to reverse the process and make the dampness disappear. Even the invocation of the assistance of saints or daemons is a futile exercise as, although the laws of physics have been suspended to allow the ingress, there follows then a period in which all is corrected and reversal of the process is not possible. Following the initial sensation of the dampness there is a time when every sensory organ of the human body detects the phenomenon of 'The Latent Heat of Evaporation', which manifests itself in a rapid cooling of those intimate parts of the anatomy that are comfortable when maintained at blood temperature.

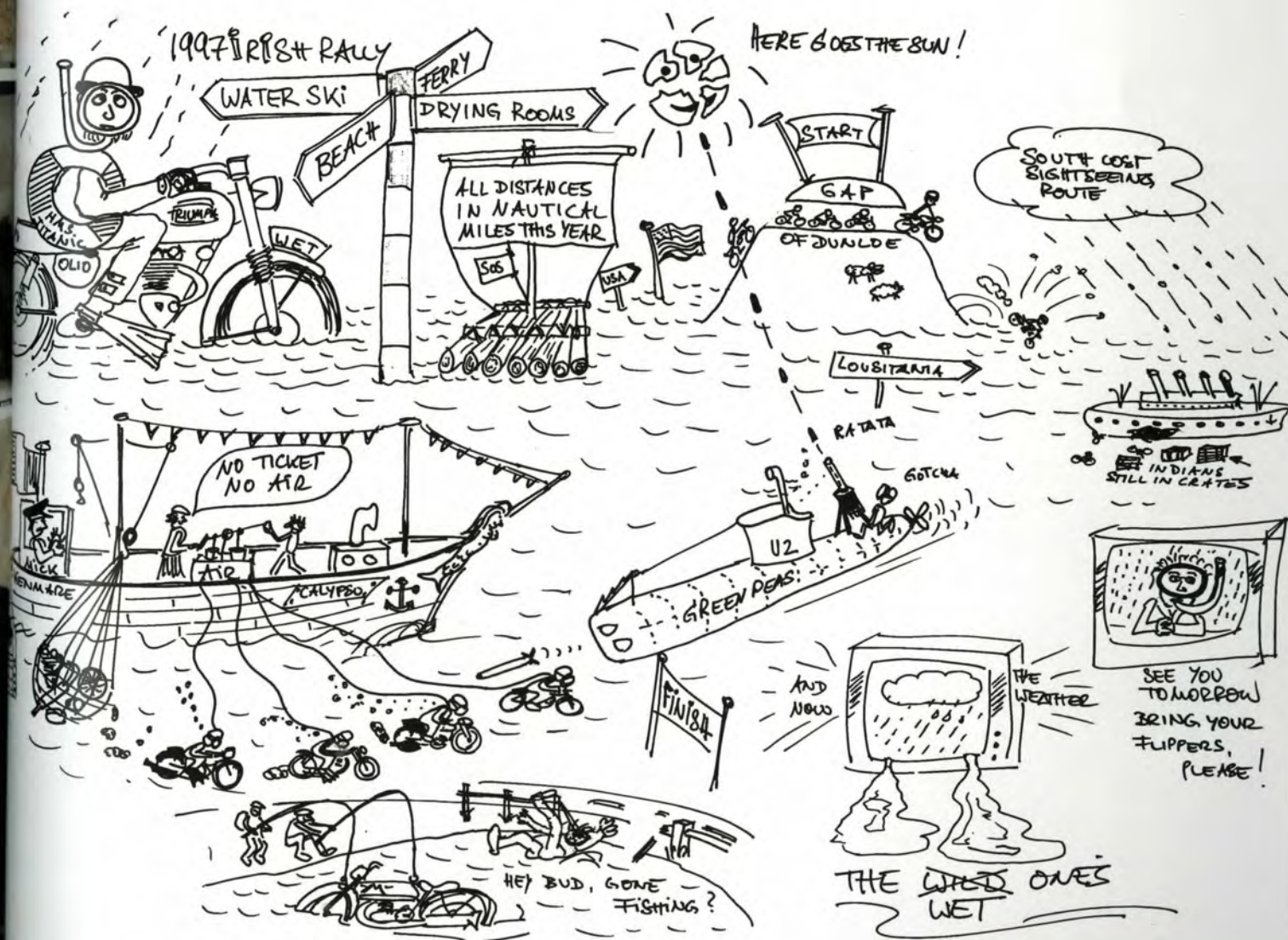
If it is possible to immediately disrobe, followed by a period of drying with warm towelling, no ill effects will follow. However it is well known that no such facilities exist in the bleak open expanses of the rural areas of counties Cork and Kerry and as a result all that can be done is to grit one's teeth and press on in the hope that some refuge can be sought in a warm hostelry, which is invariably located at the greatest distance imaginable from one's current location. In these circumstances further movement of one's body in the presence of the moisture causes an abrasion of sensitive skin areas and creates an embarrassing discomfort akin to salt in a wound. In fact the mechanical vibrations of the motorcycle alone can bring about a phenomenon where man and machine become one. When this occurs pressure applied to the machine is intimately acknowledged by the rider, usually accompanied by verbal utterances.





To avoid the possibility of any such unpleasantness occurring, many riders in the weeks preceding The Assembly will visit the elite of motorcycle apparel purveyors to acquire the ultimate weather protection. Others will rely on the outfit that has failed in the past but now may be self corrected following a period of undisturbed suspension on the back door of the shed. Some will be innovative and bring to the event technologies from other disciplines to confound the sceptics. Such items as surgical gloves worn inside moisture absorbing leather mitts may stop the ingress of water but they will also prevent human skin from breathing and create as much moisture inside as outside and so help bring on the numbing white finger syndrome. The use of luminous Marigold kitchen gloves may keep out the water but they do nothing to improve the grip of the brake lever in a tight corner. At the other end the plastic shopping bags secured by elastic bands will protect the Hushpuppies from water stains but will bring on the fingers of ridicule from both locals and fellow travellers.

Nobody has so far come up with the universal solution that works year in year out and in all conditions but one thing is clear: if out there in the big wide world there is a clothing specialist who believes he has the answer to all that the weather can throw at the vintage motorcyclist in Ireland, he should field test it in the last week of August over the Cork and Kerry terrain. Oh, and there's one final item that should always be packed in your luggage before heading to the National: Factor 50 sun screen. Just in case...







They made it possible

Robert Swan salutes the men and women who made the National an International success

As we say in Ireland, "no Mun, no Fun", but in reality it is "no Organiser, no Run". The National Rally came about because of the interest, foresight and dedication of Paddy Morrissey, ably assisted by other enthusiasts in the Munster Motorcycle and Car Club. The organising Committee assembled by Paddy included Tom Murphy, Jim Hennessy, Archie Canty and Reggie Tilson, all active in the Club, and this team remained in place for a number of years.

Since then many different people have been involved, and if individuals are omitted we trust that they will forgive us. It should be remembered that all this work is voluntary, and that the organising team give up their spare time, weekends and evenings so that we can enjoy ourselves.

As years passed Paddy's wife Julia took charge of the hotel arrangements and meals, and this function became more important as the Munster Rally grew in size, and the rally was for many years run in more

than one centre. She and Paddy developed the famous Morrissey Money to regulate the meals, with the clarion call of "No Ticket No Dinner". In due course their daughter Barbara very ably took over these responsibilities, welcomed us to the event, and also helped out with the checkpoints, while her husband Noel looked after the recovery.

In Paddy's original team of helpers, Jim Hennessy was Clerk of the Course, responsible for preparing the routes. Unfortunately one year he was taken ill shortly before the event, and before the routes were finalised. Archie Canty's son-in-law was leaned on to help, and Mick O'Mahony became the Clerk of the Course for the next quarter of a century or more.

Year after year, Mick produced great routes and dealt with us all in his own affable and unflappable way. Bear in mind that for most of this time all four days of the event were run in a timed format, but this was no bother to Mick. He always managed to promptly get his marshals out to the Checkpoints, with the Chinese alarm clocks set to Rally Time, and added in many secret checks to catch the unwary. I wonder how many of us then realised how much we owed to him for the great roads, views and bumps that we experienced on our motorcycles. Protocol was relaxed in 1991 when Mick was given a day off to ride a bike, but he was back on duty the next morning.

Sean O'Sullivan was in charge of results for many years, before handing over to Arthur Mortimer. Arthur was from Cheltenham, and competed in the early Nationals. He then joined the Organising Team, and assisted Mick with checkpoints, timing and results. He was also available as backup and helper to Paddy during the week, and acted as MC for the Prize Giving. Arthur had been both VMCC Editor and President, and his experience was an invaluable help as the event increased in size and popularity.

The checkpoints were manned by Jim Hennessy, Reggie Tilson and Archie Canty in the early years. However Brendan O'Reilly was an enthusiastic rider but most years his bike failed on the first day, and he got into the habit of helping for the rest of the week doing checkpoints. After



Dollars, euros, pounds or
bitcoins won't buy you dinner -
you need Morrissey Money

a few years of this it made sense to leave the bike at home, and Brendan and Bridget made us welcome at stops and checks for nearly 30 years. Brendan's untimely and early death was made worse by the loss of Bridget a short time later. For the last good few years the checkpoints have been run by the Ladies of the Top Table, so thanks to Miriam, Kazi, Anne and Bernice, not alone for that but also for supporting their other halves in the running of the event. The Vicious Sisters were often put in charge of secret checks, while Dick O'Brien now looks after the start and finish controls, helped by Alan Cavanagh if needed.

Even the best prepared motorcycles break down occasionally, and we have been well served with help to recover those who fell by the wayside. Punch Breckenridge provided cover in the early days, and then Paddy Bassett took over, and not alone collected us but also gave us the benefit of his skills and equipment to help with the repairs. Noel O'Donovan looked after Recovery for many years, but as the entries increased so the size of the task grew, we now have to thank Ken Kelleher and Alan Cavanagh's Recovery Team for following us around in their vans. Paddy Guerin kindly brings along his mobile workshop and his skill as an engineer to help keep us on the road, and of course there are the Oil Men, Noel O'Sullivan and Martin Canty who keep the machines well lubricated.

Paddy Morrissey's failing health was apparent to us all, but nevertheless his loss came as an awful shock. A lovely man, whose vision, organising skills and hard work gave so many of us such fun, fellowship and good sport that we are forever in his debt. Mick O'Mahony gave a touching oration at the funeral, and stepped into Paddy's place as Secretary and chief organiser. Morgan O'Regan took over as Clerk of the Course, aided by other Club members. Mick was like Paddy, hardworking, pleasant, organised and unflappable. His sudden death in 2002, at a young age immediately after his retirement, was utterly unexpected, and an appalling loss to his Family.

The loss of Mick O'Mahony meant that the younger generation had to take over at short notice. It should be recognised that they were not obliged to do this, but luckily for us they chose to take on the task. Morgan O'Regan had already been doing the routes and had done a fine job, with lovely roads and the route cards prepared to the same high standard that we had come to expect from Mick. Morgan then took on the additional burden of Event Co-ordinator. Chris O'Mahony took over the Secretarial role, and cracked the results with the aid of his computer skills. Barbara Morrissey continued in the footsteps of Julia in looking after the accommodation, meals and tickets. Joe Dwyer is an integral part of the organising team, and John O'Regan is there to help with the routes and signposting. Barry O'Mahony, Alan Cavanagh and Dick O'Brien help Morgan with the checkpoints and timing, while Paddy Guerin hovers in the background to take up the slack if needed.

The current Committee have developed their own way of managing the National, helped and given leave by their ladies. They have continued to run a most successful Rally which has grown in popularity and numbers. They have managed to do this by running an event which is organised enough to have a shape, while at the same time giving freedom for individuals to enjoy themselves within reason. This speaks volumes for the vision, hard work and planning of the Committee – the same qualities which have brought success right from the beginning of the National.

Paddy Morrissey at Kenmare, 1991 **1**

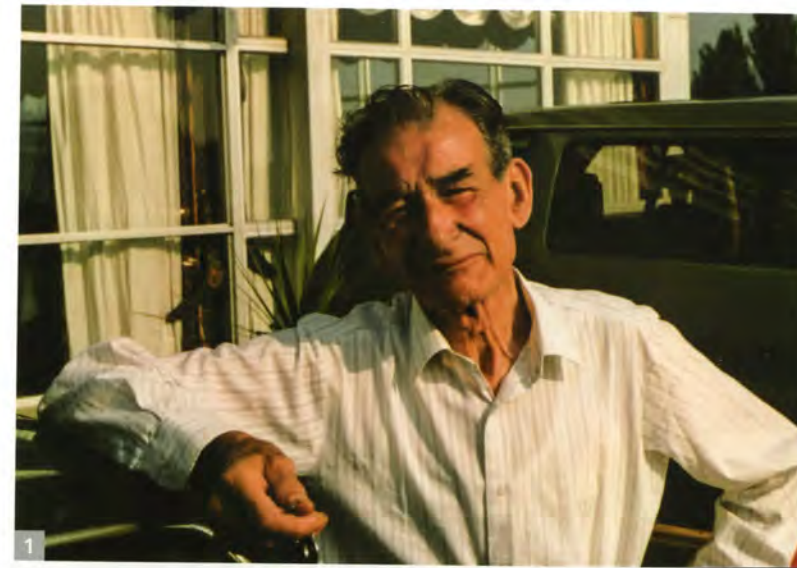
Brendan and Bridget – classic pose, 1992 **2**

Reggie Tilson, Norman Young and Jim Hennessy **3**

Organisers at Tralee, 1981 **4**

The A Team, 1991 **5**

Arthur and Mick – Master and Pupil, 1981 **6**



he forgot that the room was booked for a children's party. Undaunted, Danny arranged for white sheets to be hung from the ceiling of the gym and we got our photos. Thanks again, Danny!

were painted daffodil yellow. We needed white. "No problem," said Danny. "I'll tell the maintenance man to paint it." And he did. But

Even The Committee has to hand over Morrissey Money to get into the restaurant (from right): Barbara O'Donovan • Paddy Guerin • Morgan O'Regan • Chris O'Mahony • Martin Canty • Miriam Winters • John O'Regan • Clare O'Sullivan • Dick O'Brien • Bernice



O'Regan • Joe Dwyer • Noel O'Sullivan • Anne O'Mahony • Kazi Dwyer • Ken Kelleher • Barry O'Mahony • Noel O'Donovan • Alan Cavanagh • Roma Huffe • When we told Danny Bowe, manager

of the Castlerosse Hotel, that we needed a quiet room to photograph the committee, he showed us to an upstairs ballroom. But the walls



Ladies and gentlemen: start your engines

To celebrate 50 years of the National we are going to ride some of our favourite roads, which combine stunning scenery and challenging climbs. **Morgan O'Regan KOB** reveals the secrets of a Route Master

It all started when Mick O'Mahony called a meeting early in 1996. A few years previously he had inherited the duties of Rally Secretary from Paddy Morrissey; he was already Clerk of the Course, and for a few years had carried on and acted in both capacities.

Mick outlined that the workload was now too much for him on his own. He said that he would continue as Secretary, but declared in no uncertain terms that he wanted "absolutely nothing" to do with the route, organising the marshals, or working out the results of the timed competition. For a few years, I had organised the Inchigeelagh Run and the Social Run for the National, and so the duties of Clerk of the Course landed on my lap, with Joe Dwyer, Chris O'Mahony and John O'Regan as my assistants.

Up to 1995 the first day's route was from Cork to Kerry, while the following three days' routes were all in West Cork and Kerry. That changed in 1996, when the Rally moved in its entirety to Kenmare. Now four days' routes had to be found, each day different and without traversing too much of the other days' routes.

Twenty years on and Clerk of the Course is still my remit. So here is an outline of how routes are selected, and some of the considerations that need to be addressed. The Ideal Route should consist of one third Scenic, one third Easy Riding, and one third Nadgery! However, the terrain does not always cooperate with readymade slices, so compromise is required.

Joe Dwyer, Chris O'Mahony and Morgan O'Regan explain to Dave McMahon where he went wrong on the morning route...

When selecting a Route the first requirement is to look at possible hotels for the lunch stop, check their availability, and then see what Route can be built around that. I then try to avoid main roads and multiple use of the same stretch of road over the four days of the event. This is not always possible, particularly with Killarney as the base. Kenmare was a more rider-friendly location in this regard, with a greater choice of Routes in and out each day. This is one of the big compromises that I am faced with since our move to the Castlerosse Hotel, fortunately offset by the popularity of the venue.

I try to use roads and tracks where there is reasonable signposting at junctions to aid navigation, and always try to introduce a surprise section on what regular entrants might have considered to be a repeat of a previous year's route. Recently this has become a new challenge to entertain me, particularly since I started riding a veteran Triumph on John Quirke's Golden Vale Rally. Inevitably John will have a challenging hill on his route. The severity of the incline he has chosen, and my success in mounting the summit, will determine if I seek to extract revenge with a National Route. Another challenge is to find a new bit of road that Chris Harvey has neither traversed, nor, even better, knew existed!

More recent considerations, particularly with the high number of entrants, are not to overuse a stretch of road, to avoid upsetting local residents, and to minimise inconvenience to other road users – especially on the timed days. We share the roads with people who live and work here all year, and our acceptance and welcome in the area is dependent on the good behaviour of our entrants.

So to celebrate 50 years of the National we are going to ride some of our favourite routes, which combine stunning scenery, lovely challenging roads, plenty of history, and for many of us the added bonus of lots of memories.



Tuesday

Over Fuhiry to Ballingearry, and on to Creedon's Hotel, Inchigeelagh for the morning break. Then to Togher, Meelagh Valley and the West Lodge Hotel in Bantry for lunch.

The afternoon route will be to Durrus, Kilcrohane, and over the Goat's Path. There is a car park and viewing area at the crest of the path. If you stop and look south across Dunmanus Bay and the West Cork Peninsula, on a clear day you can see the Fastnet Rock standing proud in the Atlantic Ocean. Famous as a turning point for the Fastnet Yacht Races, it is hard to visualise the tragedy, turmoil and loss of life caused by a freak storm on a summer's day during the 1979 event. We continue down from the Goat's Path to Bantry, and then it's over the Borlin Valley to Kilgarvan, and the main road back to Killarney.

Wednesday

From the Castlerosse we head north towards Firies, and through Ballyfinnane. This is an historic motoring site. In the weeks immediately following the 1903 Gordon Bennett Trophy race, a series of other motor sporting events were organised by enthusiasts throughout the country. These included a hill climb that took place near the village of Ballyfinnane. The event was won by Charles Stewart Rolls, of Rolls Royce fame, driving an 80hp Mors. In 1993 the Kerry Vintage and Veteran Car Club erected a commemorative plaque at the top of the climb. From Ballyfinnane we travel on to Toonevane Cross and then to James Ashe's in Camp for the morning break. Then Inch, Annascaul and the Dingle Skellig Hotel for lunch.

The afternoon route will be around Sleah Head, back to Dingle, and over the Connor Pass to Camp for the afternoon stop. Then we'll enjoy the scenic route to Inch, to Castlemaine and back to the Castlerosse Hotel.

Thursday

Over Fuhiry to Ballingearry, stopping at Cronin's Hotel in Gougaune Barra which is where we'll find the source of the River Lee that flows through Cork City. During the 6th century Saint Finbarr built a monastery on an island in the nearby lake. He later moved to Cork City and founded a monastery and school there. Today the motto of University College Cork is 'Where Finbarr taught, let Munster learn'. From Gougaune Barra we go through the Pass of Keimaneigh to Coomhola Bridge, and then over Priest's Leap to the Kenmare Bay Hotel for lunch.

After lunch it will be over the Tunnel Road to Glengarriffe, to Adrigole and the Healy Pass to Helen's Bar in Kilmakilloge; from there back to Kenmare, over Moll's Gap, passing Ladies View on the way back to Killarney.

Friday

The morning Route takes us to the Climber's Inn, around Caragh Lake to Killorglin, and on to lunch in the Earl of Desmond Hotel, Tralee.

For the afternoon route we will be heading to Castleisland and following the "Butter Road" to Rathmore and Millstreet. In the 18th century one of the main exports from Ireland was butter, and roads were built around the country to bring the produce to the Butter Exchange in Cork for auction. One of the main butter roads ran in an almost straight line from Castleisland, Kerry to the Cork Butter Exchange, and our Route runs along part of this today. From Millstreet we go over Mullaghanish to the Mill's Inn, Ballyvourney. Then it's back to the Castlerosse for the Prizegiving, farewell banquet and the start of the next 50 years!

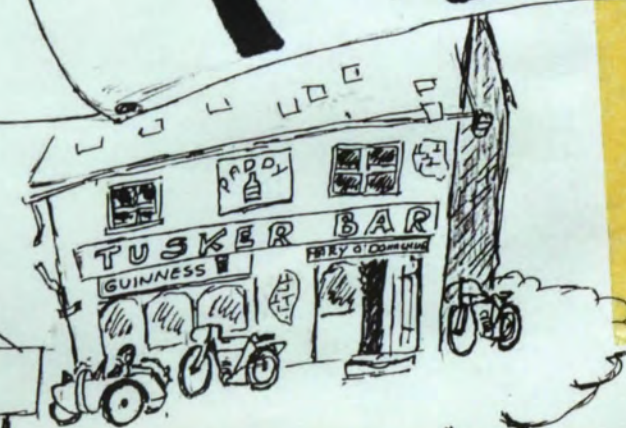






BY COURTESY OF GOD & JOHN
THE
SUNBEAM
BY COURTESY OF GOD & JOHN
THE
SUNBEAM

FINNISH



IAN THOMPSON

IAN THOMPSON 1981-7-51

€15
where sold

