

March 2017

The

Magazine



Photo by Ray Brown Photography

Ulster



Centre

From the Chairman

John Clarke

As is now somewhat customary it falls to me as Chairman to pen a few words to start this next edition of our MaGazine on its merry way. But first I must congratulate the Editorial Team on the success of their first edition and hope it continues with the enthusiasm and verve shown thus far.

I hope all are finding the MaGazine a good read and a means to find out about our Centre - then and now - what it is all about and who is in it!

In this edition we have articles as wide ranging as the 1970s, Golden Jubilee Festival News,

MGenes and recent events such as the Derek Walker Trial and our Prize Giving Dinner.

Big congratulations are due to all our prize winners and thank you to all of you who so generously supported our Charity Ballot and recent Film Night.

The content of this MaGazine relies on your input, so if you're working on a project, or have something to sell or to say get in touch – it's your Club.

Remember the AGM on 23 March – come and let us know your thoughts, and if you can help on one of the committees even better.

MG Car Club Ulster Centre Annual General Meeting at Shandon Park Golf Club Thursday 23 March at 8.00 pm

Our fiftieth, yes fiftieth, Ulster Centre AGM will be taking place on Thursday 23 March, 2017 at 8.00 pm at Shandon Park Golf Club. AGMs are generally not very well attended but this is **the one chance you get each year to have a real say in the running of your Club so why not come along and join in?**

Years ago, we used to take nominations for Committee from the floor on the night but nowadays we're obliged to seek nominations in advance. To that end the Secretary, Carol Willis, has sent out nomination forms and, of course, the Agenda for the meeting.

With our GOLDEN JUBILEE coming up WE NEED:

- **YOUR PRESENCE**
- **YOUR VOTES**
- **YOUR OPINIONS.**



We want to see as many Members as possible come along and take the opportunity to have their say in the running of the Ulster Centre.

SEE YOU THERE!

*Front Cover: Will Corry and Peter Moreland-Moore on their way to winning the Derek Walker Trial.
Photo by Ray Brown Photography.*

Ulster Centre Magazine Editorial

Simon Johnston

It seems no time since we emailed out the January edition of the  Magazine but there has been plenty of  activity since then, even in the gloomy months of winter, so lots to report. The Derek Walker Trial is our premier competitive event and Gordon Buckley has given us a 'ring-side' account of it which really does capture the flavour of the event (and I don't mean the cooked breakfast laid on by the DWT 'Dinner Ladies'). Stephen Dawson has also managed to squeeze in a quick account of the autotest held at Moore Concrete on 25 February. In both cases, more photos are available on the web site photo gallery [here](#).

The social highlight of the year, however, is the Dinner and Prize Giving which was held on 18 March. This was when we got to find out who had come out on top of the many and varied competitions that the Ulster Centre runs each year. We have a full list of the Prize Winners together with a few photos from the night and, of course, more photos on the web site gallery. We're grateful to Vanessa Eakin not only for taking the photographs but also for making them available for our web site.


We were delighted to have not one, but two, guests of honour to present the prizes: John Day, President of the MG Car Club, and Martin Hutchinson, Managing Director of Transport Training Services, whose facilities he makes available to us for a number of our events. Thank you to both of them for their support.


We didn't have room in this issue to report on the Film Night (which your Editor unfortunately missed) but over 50 members and friends turned out for a terrific evening of motoring films gathered together by Gordon Buckley.


Looking ahead to upcoming events, we have our **fiftieth** (can you believe it?) **Annual General Meeting** on 23 March at Shandon Park Golf Club. As you'll see from Mike Armstrong's exhortations in his *Dates for Your Diary* column, this really is an important event in the running of the Ulster Centre so do please try and come along and join in the discussions.

So far, the events I've mentioned have all been regular Ulster Centre activities, so what has the Jubilee Committee been up to, you might ask? Well, we've been thinking a lot! And talking a lot! And reminiscing about the good ol' days! But we've also been busy planning some non-competitive events that we hope will appeal to everyone.


In the "good ol' days", we used to run what was called a Noggin 'n' Natter where we'd meet in a pub for a few beers, a chat and then drive home! That just wouldn't work in this day and age, so we've decided to try something a little more socially responsible with less of a focus on drinking.

First up is a lunch-time **Nosh 'n' Natter** on Wednesday 29 March, at Hilden Brewery, Hilden, near Lisburn. (Yes, I know it's a brewery, but you don't have to drink!) Now we know that not everyone can easily make it to a lunch-time get together but for those who can, this a good opportunity to get your  out, blow away the cobwebs, and come and join like-minded enthusiasts for a bite to eat and a bit of crack. You can even take in a tour of the brewery for a small fee. (*See advert overleaf for more info.*)


Social get-togethers like this are a great way to get to know other  people. If you don't take part in the many competitive events that we run, it's hard to find out who else, perhaps, has a car like yours. So why not come along and see who you might meet?



Looking a little bit further ahead, on Sunday 21 May we are planning a truly splendid day of  motoring combined with enjoying the grandeur of Greyabbey House, one of the finest Georgian Houses in Ireland. Most people won't be aware of this magnificent Georgian residence which is right on our doorstep, and we have arranged for a private tour of the house and gardens followed by afternoon tea. How grand is that?

We're going to make a full day of it and will meet mid-morning at Killyleagh Castle for a short drive to Strangford for lunch and then across on the ferry to Portaferry and up the peninsula to Greyabbey.


There will also be an  'Pride of Ownership' competition at Greyabbey House. What more could you ask for?



Naturally enough, places will be limited so do get in touch with Mike Armstrong to reserve yours.

I mentioned above that it's not easy to find out who has an  the same as yours, or indeed who has one at all. Believe it or not, the Ulster Centre doesn't actually know what cars members own. This is because there is no systematic method of updating the main Club database with information about members' cars and thus no way for the main Club to advise the Centres. You can of course tell the Club, but who does?

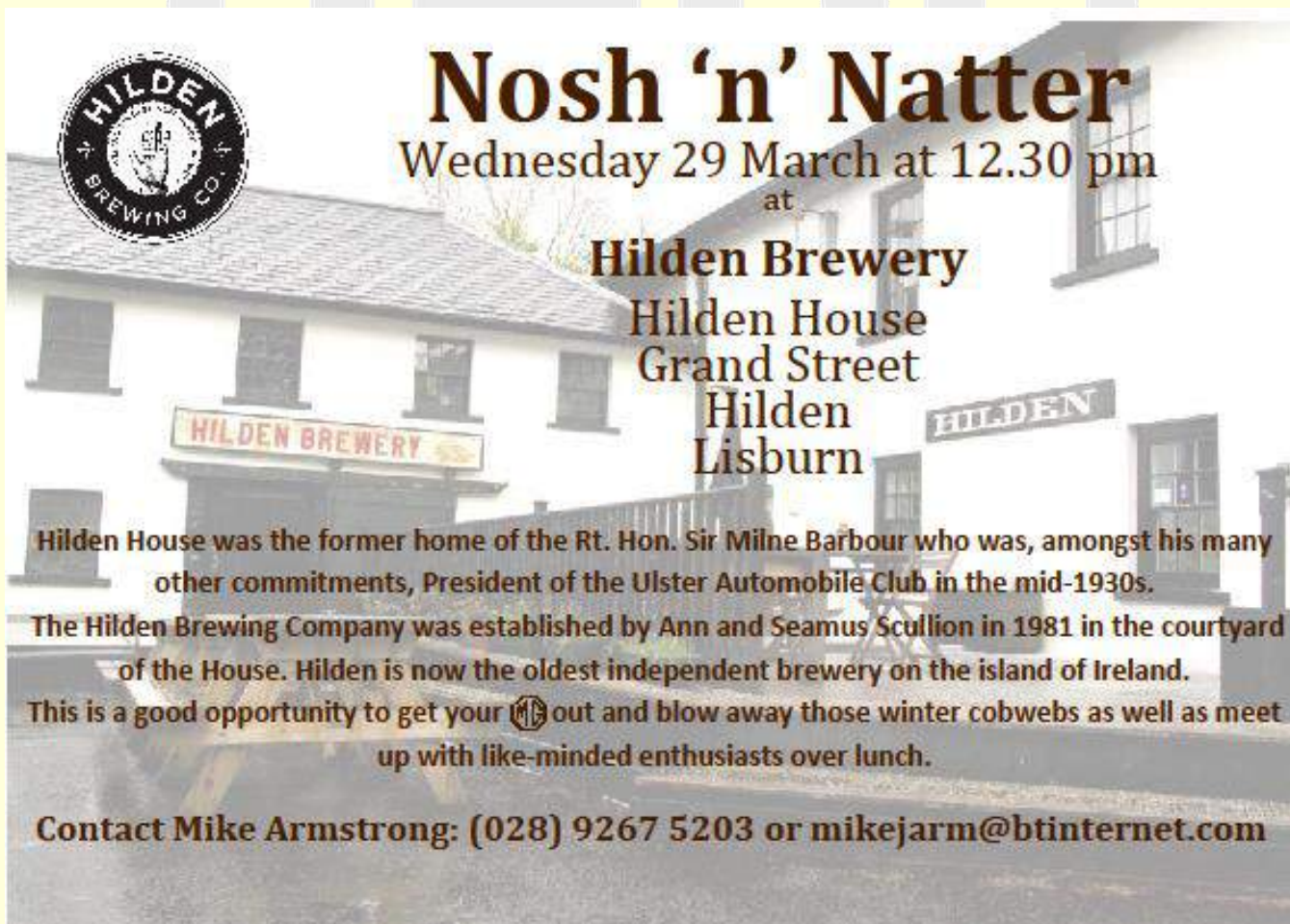
So a plea to all  owning members – please let us know what cars you have. There are two easy ways you can do this. First you can simply 'Reply To' the email that brought you this  and tell us what cars you have.

Or, second, you can click on this email link and send an email with your car details to us at: membership@mgculstercentre.co.uk


Either way, this will greatly help us to know what  cars are out there, and that in turn will help us try and plan events that will appeal to you.

So the Jubilee Committee really hasn't been sitting idly by, gossiping. We really have been working on new, non-competitive events that will appeal to  owners and drivers. We hope you will bring your  out and enjoy these events with us.

And finally, some of you might be interested in the *Cars and Coffee* events that the Thoroughbred Sports Car Club run. These are informal get-togethers on a Sunday morning at Down Royal Racecourse and there's always a good variety of interesting cars there. The next one is on Sunday 2 April and kicks off at 10.00 am. See you there!



Nosh 'n' Natter
Wednesday 29 March at 12.30 pm
at
Hilden Brewery
Hilden House
Grand Street
Hilden
Lisburn

Hilden House was the former home of the Rt. Hon. Sir Milne Barbour who was, amongst his many other commitments, President of the Ulster Automobile Club in the mid-1930s.
The Hilden Brewing Company was established by Ann and Seamus Scullion in 1981 in the courtyard of the House. Hilden is now the oldest independent brewery on the island of Ireland.
This is a good opportunity to get your  out and blow away those winter cobwebs as well as meet up with like-minded enthusiasts over lunch.

Contact Mike Armstrong: (028) 9267 5203 or mikejarm@btinternet.com

Jubilee News & Dates for Your Diary

Mike Armstrong

Thursday 23 March 2017

Our 50th Annual General Meeting 8.0 pm Shandon Golf Club

This is one of the most important events in the Ulster Centre calendar and yet seems to attract only relatively few members.

I urge you **ALL** – this is **YOUR** Club – it has to be run efficiently – **YOU** have to vote for the various Office Bearers **EACH** year and also for the other members of Committee whose job it is to **HELP TO RUN** all the many events.

With our **GOLDEN JUBILEE** coming up **WE NEED**

- **YOUR PRESENCE**
- **YOUR VOTES**
- **YOUR OPINIONS.**

DON'T FORGET!

THURSDAY 23 MARCH 8.00 pm sharp


SHANDON GOLF CLUB

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Wednesday 29 March 2017

Nosh 'n' Natter Hilden Brewery

I have arranged Lunch at Hilden Brewery on Wednesday 29th March – start 12.30. So far only 16 people are booked.

Come on – we need more. This is a good opportunity to get your  out and blow away those winter cobwebs as well as meet up with like-minded enthusiasts over lunch.

Your last chance to reserve a place is **MONDAY 20th MARCH.**

Ring Mike Armstrong at 07894 037215 or 028 9267 5023 or email: mikejarm@btinternet.com

For those already booked I will be in touch before the event to offer you a menu choice.

GET IN TOUCH NOW TO BOOK!!

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Sunday 21 May 2017


Sunday Run and Visit to Greyabbey House and Gardens

Noel Cochrane has arranged this visit to a beautiful property rarely open to the public. We will meet at Killyleagh Castle at 11.00 am on Sunday 21 May and will head to Strangford for Lunch. We will then catch the 1.30 Ferry to Portaferry and enjoy a run to Greyabbey House. There will be a tour of the house and gardens and afternoon tea will be served. To book a place contact Mike Armstrong – see above for details.

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Sunday 3 September 2017

MG Day at Cultra

This new venture is planned to have a display of as many  cars as possible: old and new and of any model and whether or not they belong to members of the MG Car Club. Details are still being worked out but **WATCH THIS SPACE!**


PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW.

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2018

20 – 24 May, GOLDEN JUBILEE TOUR.

Roe Park Resort, Limavady

Details of this are not finalised yet BUT priority booking has started. There are only 70 places available for  cars (only) and ALREADY we have 39 places reserved for priority entry.

Don't leave it too late – Register your interest now to get a priority entry at:

jubileetour@mgcculstercentre.co.uk

You have been warned – once 70 reservations are reached there will be no more. Arrangements for Entry and Hotel Booking will be announced in the Autumn to those who have registered.

The Derek Walker Trial 2017

A Fast Run in the Country

Gordon Buckley

Anxious weather watching is a normal preoccupation of motorsport competitors. Following the weather patterns normally starts the week before an event and follows through until the flag drops. Barra Best was never so interesting. Well, the week before this year's Derek Walker Trial in County Antrim was pretty horrendous and fields were left sodden. The prospect of Trials (no longer called Production Car Trials or PCTs) vanished early on and the event this time around was clearly going to be a multi-venue autotest without a muddy fields element.

On Saturday 4 January, however, we woke up to a beautiful sunrise and, although cold, there was no sign of rain, and so it continued throughout the day. We were very lucky.

Scrutineering started on time at 8.00 am and with three scrutineers the backlog of eager competitors quickly eased but, with everyone arriving at once, a queue soon formed at signing-on and the event started to run a bit behind time. Happily, though, the short road miles between tests helped to get things back on track later on. Those who were signed-on enjoyed a terrific hot breakfast thanks to our magnificent dinner ladies whose number has increased. Sharon Carson and Lucinda McKee are now helped by Wendy Faulkner, Maire McLaughlin, Isobelle Clarke, Sue Fagg and Sandra Fleming (of TTS), most, if not all, proudly sporting MG polo shirts - very smart. A very sincere 'thank you' to all of them and to Martin Hutchinson for the use of the amazing TTS premises.

Soon the chirpy figure of COC/Chairman John Clarke, standing on a table, towered over us for a drivers' briefing and competitors and marshals were dispatched to the tests. The sound of rorty engines broke the silence at TTS as cars began to warm up and proceed either to the first test or out of the premises as two different roadbooks split the entry in order to speed up the running of the event and minimise queueing.

The tests around TTS were occasionally technical and on a grippy dry surface, with the key 'memo to self' to keep away from those unforgiving kerbs.

Drivers enjoyed the test around the CITB buildings and then down a loose lane before turning back and through the buildings again. Quite a rush! The Pits at Dundrod is always fun with a mixture of tarmac and loose surfaces. There were a few particularly dodgy items to avoid, notably a sewage pipe and an electricity box that would have brightly lit up any car that failed to avoid it. Then there is the 'Tony Post' reserved exclusively for a reversing Mr McLaughlin at Test 9. The car was always going to bend before the robust steel post would, but Tony got off light with minimal damage.

After the regroup in the afternoon, it was off to Ladyhill Quarry for a blast around the natural features. Although there was a large queue at the entrance, things soon cleared and the tests were completed via a one-way system through the quarry before emerging at the exit gate. One of the tests in the quarry basin had suffered badly from the deluge of rain throughout the week and getting traction was a major problem. But overall, the drivers thoroughly enjoyed being a bit sideways although one or two were caught out by the simplicity of the tests, lost their focus and promptly failed them.

Then came the final test at Stirling's Farm, a tight run through farm buildings that included completing a 360 turn in front of an audience of cattle feeding through the bars of their shed. They really didn't seem that impressed! The finale was a technical tail throw to separate the men from the boys before another 360 to the finish. Indeed, a worthy true autotest finish to scrub off the mud of the quarry from the tyres.

Back to TTS and a cup of hot soup and bread & cheese. Unfortunately, a few glitches delayed the results so many competitors, including a number from the Republic, could not stay for the provisional results.

The winners overall were Will Corry/Pete Moreland-Moore who 'borrowed back' the gorgeous light blue K Series engined Midget for a day and showed everyone else the way. Second was Sam Wilson, partnered by Simon Brewster, in

a Mini and, in third place were Eddie Petersen and Craig O'Rourke in a Mini Cooper. Very well done to them and to the class winners.

Feedback for the Trial has been terrific with the new sites proving a huge success. Some lessons have been learned and hopefully we will return soon to have another run at those tests.

Thanks to John Clarke and his team, in particular Stephen Dawson, Carol Willis, Trevor Reid and Noel Cochrane who spent a lot of their time devising,

setting up and clearing up tests. Thanks also to our good friends in the TSCC, UAC and Peak Performance clubs for their invaluable help and to our other marshals. Finally, another round of applause must go to those redoubtable Dinner Ladies who kept us well fed throughout the day. What would we do without you?

The final results can be found on the Ulster Centre web site [here](#) and more photographs [here](#).

Autotest at Moore Concrete

Stephen Dawson

On Saturday 25 February, the Ulster Centre held its first Club championship autotest of the season. 'M' for Moore's must equal 'M' for Monsoon as the heavens opened up just prior to the tests starting – just like in November when we were last at Moore Concrete's premises near Broughshane. However, the clouds soon broke up, the rain moderated and 25 competitors were treated to three quick tests on flat, and very slippery, wet concrete trying to avoid the concrete products in close proximity. Several very fast

men from the Autotest Drivers' Club NI came along to warm up for the forthcoming March ADC NI test the following Saturday. Fastest time of the day went to Paul Blair in his Stryker closely followed by Ashley Lamont in his Caterham. Fastest MG of the day was Midget Atlantis driver, Simon Brien, who just pipped his son Jack in the same car.

The full results can be found on our web site [here](#) with photos to follow in the Gallery [here](#).



Overall winners of the Derek Walker Trial, Will Corry and Peter Moreland-Moore (Midget)



Mark Lemon, Derek Walker Trial




Mark Brien, Derek Walker Trial

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Visit to Greyabbey House and Gardens

Sunday 21 May 2017

Grey Abbey has been in the possession of the Montgomery family since 1607 and the present Greyabbey House is considered to be one of the finest Georgian country houses in Ireland. Our visit will include a private tour of this magnificent residence and (weather permitting) the gardens, followed by afternoon tea. The cost is £15 per person. With such a fabulous venue available to us, we're also going to indulge ourselves by having a 'Pride of Ownership' *Concours* for our  cars.

We'll start our day by meeting up at Killyleagh Castle at 11.00 am and from there we'll head to Strangford for lunch. Then across on the ferry to Portaferry, arriving at Greyabbey House at approximately 2.30 pm. Even if you can't make lunch, come along and join us at Greyabbey House for a really special afternoon.

This is going to be one of the highlights of the year and numbers will be limited so reserve your place now by contacting Mike Armstrong by phone on (028) 9267 5023 or by email at

mikejarm@btinternet.com

www.mgcculstercentre.co.uk

Annual Dinner and Prizegiving

Carol Willis

This year we had our Annual Dinner and Prizegiving at the recently re-furbished Ivanhoe Hotel. As Mike Wilson noted in his column last month, this used to be a regular spot for Ulster Centre members to meet back in the '60s and '70s so there was a sense of *déjà vue* for some of the old hands there.

John Clarke, our Chairman, welcomed the over seventy members and their guests and thanked them for coming along. He also thanked all those who had helped in any way to make our events so successful. He then invited the 'Dinner Ladies' from the Derek Walker Trial to sell tickets for our ballot which raised an excellent £330 for The Alzheimer's Society.



The DWT 'Dinner Ladies'. L to R: Sharon Carson, Marie McLaughlin, Isabelle Clarke and Lucinda McKee

Vanessa Eakin, one of our younger members, was our official photographer for the evening and



L to R: Bryan Mutch, Trevor Faulkner and Stephen Dawson

took lots of shots of the prize-winners which can be found on our web site [here](#).

Carol Willis had put together a slide show which covered several decades of past and present events and held the attention of many who recognised themselves in an earlier life. It was great fun. On each table was a pot of Tête-à-Tête daffodils for each lady which proved to be a very welcome finishing touch to the night. The bar closed at 11.30 but we were still there well after 12.30 enjoying the chat and friendship which said it all.

One of our Guests of Honour was John Day, the President of the MG Car Club, who made a short speech in which he congratulated the Centre on their activities and said he was delighted to be able to attend the Dinner. He said that he was always pleased to be able to come to Northern Ireland and looked forward to coming again. He emphasized that the making of a successful Club was the enthusiasm of its members. Our other Guest of Honour was Martin Hutchinson, Managing Director of Transport Training Services (TTS). He briefly described the function of TTS and thanked us for using their facilities for some of our competitive events.



L to R: Trevor Reid, Martin Hutchinson and Noel Cochrane

After dinner, the Prizegiving started with Martin Hutchinson presenting the awards for the Derek Walker Trial which had been based this year at the TTS site. Then followed presentation of a

splendid array of trophies by both Martin and John Day for the many events held during the year. (The list of prize winners can be found overleaf.) At the end, John congratulated Jenny and Mike Armstrong for over 50 years of MGCC membership.

Some of the awards go back a long way, even, in some cases, to the very beginnings of the Ulster

Centre and you can find more information about their history [here](#) on our web site. We also felt that this was an appropriate occasion to re-run the appreciation of Derek Walker that Garth Maxwell wrote some years ago. It explains just why he was so highly regarded by all who knew him and why the eponymous Trial is named after him: it follows the list of Award winners.

John Day, President of the MG Car Club, with some of the Award winners



Ruth Buckley - Lady Enthusiast Award



Stephen Dawson - MGB/C/V8 Award



Richard Earney - Vivian Scott Award



Gordon Buckley - Leslie Porter Award

Ulster Centre Awards 2016-2017

The 28th Derek Walker Classic Trial

Overall Winner		Will Corry & Peter Moreland-Moore (MG Midget)
Class 3	1 st	Mervyn Getty & Richard McFaul (Austin Healey Sprite)
Class 4	1 st	Angus Johnson & John Ward (Austin Healey Sprite)
	2 nd	Mark Lemon & Katie Lemon (MG Midget)
Class 5	1 st	Noel Cochrane & Trevor Reid (MG Midget)
	2 nd	Jack Brien & John Kelly (MG Midget)
Class 6	1 st	Sam Wilson & Simon Brewster (Mini)
	2 nd	Eddie Peterson & Craig O'Rourke (Mini Cooper)
	3 rd	Robert Dickson & Catherine Dickson (Mini)
Class 8	1 st	Frank Lenehan & Tim Faulkner (Toyota Starlet)
	2 nd	Piers MacFheorais & Ian McCulloch (Mazda MX5)
	3 rd	Richard Meeke & Aileen Mooney (Mazda MX5)

Ulster Classic Trial

Overall Winner (John Trimble Trophy)		Will Corry & Jay Colville (MG Midget)
Class A	1 st	Andy Johnson & Leslie Murray (Austin 7)
Class B	1 st	Mervyn Williamson & Marcus Morrow (VW Beetle)
Class C	1 st	David Cochrane & Ruth Steele (MG Midget)
	2 nd	Alex Lyttle & Roy Lyttle (MG Midget)
	3 rd	Michael Reid & Erin Reid (MG Midget)
Class D	1 st	Robert Dickson & Catherine Dickson (Mini)
	2 nd	James Wilson & Roisin Boyd (Mini)
	3 rd	Conn Williamson & Tony McLaughlin (BMW 2002 Tii)

AutoSOLO

Overall Winner		John Kelly (MG Midget)
Class 2	1 st	Stephen Dawson (MGB)
Class 4	1 st	Mark Lemon (MG Midget)
Class 5	1 st	Andrew Earney (Toyota Yaris)
	2 nd	Richard Meeke (Toyota Starlet)
	3 rd	Raymond Wilson (Mini)
Class 6	1 st	Liam Shaw (Mazda MX5)
	2 nd	Darren Fleck (BMW)
	3 rd	Michael Workman (Mazda MX5)
Class 7	1 st	Noel Cochrane (MG Midget)
	2 nd	David Mutch (MG Midget)
	3 rd	Simon Brien (MG Midget)

Slalom Trophy

Overall Winner

Will Thompson (Vauxhall Corsa)

PCT Championship

Overall Winner

Will Thompson (Vauxhall Corsa)

Class 1 1st Terence Bradley (Austin Seven)

Class 4 1st Richard McCracken (Austin Healey Sprite)

Class 5 1st Bailie Thompson (Vauxhall Corsa)

Class 6 1st Bryan Mutch (Mazda MX5)

Autotest Championship

Leslie Porter Trophy

Gordon Buckley (MG Midget)

Vivian Scott Trophy

Richard Earney (Mini Cooper)

Class 2 1st Stephen Dawson (MGB)

Class 4 1st Mark Lemon (MG Midget)
2nd Richard McCracken (Austin Healey Sprite)

Class 5 1st Andrew Earney (Toyota Yaris)

Class 6 1st David Mutch (Mazda MX5)
2nd Bryan Mutch (Mazda MX5)
3rd Malcolm McQueen (Mazda MX5)

Class 7 1st Paul Lowther (Stryker)

Class 9 1st Kevin McNamee (Nissan Micra)
2nd Johnny McNamee (Nissan Micra)

Perpetual Awards for 2016-2017

Chairman's Awards

Noel Cochrane
Wilson Carson

Enthusiast Trophy

Mike Adair

Lady Enthusiast Trophy

Ruth Buckley

Marshals Trophy

Mike Adair, Trevor Reid,
Alan & Lyn Cree

MG B/C/V8 Trophy

Stephen Dawson

MG Race Trophy

Garth Maxwell

Leslie Ardill Trophy

Mark Lemon 1973 MG Midget

Adrian Watters Trophy

Johnny McNamee

Driver of the Year

Mark Lemon

Abingdon Trophy

Gordon Buckley

Derek Walker - An Appreciation

Garth Maxwell

[Derek Walker, Chairman of the Ulster Centre in 1985 and 1986, first became involved in the Ulster Centre in the early 1980s driving his red MGA Coupe. This was replaced by a number of Midgets, perhaps the best known of which was the white one with which he was most readily associated, and they were regular participants in just about every type of event you could imagine – races, Production Car Trials, autotests, gymkhanas, rallies; you name it and Derek and his Midget were there. He had an irrepressible enthusiasm for MG motor sport in all its forms and gave unstintingly of his time as Committee member, Competition Secretary and ultimately as Chairman. Derek died in 1995 and the Committee decided that a fitting tribute to him and his contribution to the Ulster Centre would be to put his name to the winter trial that we all know today as the Derek Walker Trial. Its combination of autotests and trials was one that Derek revelled in and there could be no more appropriate tribute to his memory. Garth Maxwell penned this appreciation of Derek in 2006. SJ]

Why is our annual multi-venue trial called the 'Derek Walker Trial'? Who was "Derek Walker"?

Well, let me tell you about Derek (or "Derry"). In a nutshell, he was one of the stalwarts of Northern Ireland motor sport and of the MG Car Club in particular.

Derek hailed from Monaghan, born in 1925 into a family who ran the local Bedford agency. Whilst working in the business he showed an early interest in the sporting side of motoring and 'borrowed' his mother's Morris Minor to compete in his first autotests. By 1952 he had graduated to a Hillman Minx and he competed in the Circuit of Ireland Rally for the next 3 years as part of the official Rootes team.

Derek married Joan in 1955 and moved to Belfast in 1957 where he proceeded to set up his own motor business and they started their family. This caused a pause in his motor sport but as Karen and Elizabeth grew up he was able to start again.

He took part in every aspect of the sport: racing, sprints, hill climbs, production car trials, autotests and rallies, usually in one of a series of MG Midgets but later in a Caterham 7 and a Ginetta G15.

Derek was not just a great enthusiastic competitor, he also contributed greatly to the clubs he was in, the MGCC and the Thoroughbred Sports Car Club, and helped instigate the Metro championship in which he shone. In one race, he broke the lap record in 3 successive laps and the stewards sealed his engine. When it was stripped and inspected it was found to be 'bog standard' and even had broken rings.

One of Derek's attributes was his ability to talk to and encourage younger people to participate in the sport and there are many who can verify this. He willingly discussed regulations and gave useful tips on circuits regarding the approach to corners, braking points, etc. I well remember he and I walking Croft and Craigantlet and as we progressed he would ask 'where does this corner start?' You would make a suggestion – 'no keep walking'. Then he would shoot up the bank and bend a branch out of the hedge or place a bundle of grass: 'that's where it starts; leave your braking to here'. This advice reduced my previous best time by about 2 seconds on my first run up the hill.

On the other hand, in my early days of racing I was catching him quite steadily at Kirkistown

but didn't manage it before the race ended. Back in the paddock I mentioned this and he agreed readily but quickly retorted 'I hope you don't think you would have got past me'. He could make a Midget very wide.

Derek and I travelled together to many events all over Ireland – hill climbs in the Wicklow mountains and races at Phoenix Park and Mondello Park, plus all the Northern Ireland venues.

We also went to Silverstone in his Midget in about 1985. No car transporter then, and the trip was not without its problems as pre-event preparation wasn't one of Derek's strongest points. We had our first puncture before reaching Larne and then two more punctures plus a stuck float and flooding carbs before Carlisle. I was ready to hitch a lift home by then, but we went on; after all,

things could only get better, and the wee car never missed a beat after that.

We got to Silverstone later in the day and on Saturday he qualified for the race in which he did very well, and then on Sunday he took part in the autotests with the rest of the Ulster Centre team. I think they came home with both major trophies that year.

Derek enjoyed his motor sport, and his life, to the full. Most Saturdays saw us at an event during the day and then at the country club, or a motor sport function in the evening, where he showed his fine dancing skills. All the ladies in our group appreciated this as he made the rest of us guys look as if we had two left feet.

Derek died in 1995 after an illness lasting 7 or 8 months. Those of us who had the privilege to know or work with him miss him greatly and I know that the older members of the Ulster Centre will agree with me in this.



Derek Walker in typical pose, i.e. with the silverware, having won the Wynn's Racing Championship in 1987

L to R: Mike Cox, John McShannon, Mike Armstrong, Derek Walker, Billy McFarland, Will Corry, Victor Leonard (sponsor)

THE EARLY DAYS

Mike Wilson

Part 2: Into the '70s

We had an interesting variety of events in November and December 1969. We had FOUR Noggin and Natters! Seems to me a lot of drinking and/or talking was going on! On the other hand, there were a lot of events to organise.

We had a very successful Wine and Cheese event in the Imperial Hotel, Donaghadee (is that establishment still there?). Eighty people were there and consumed a lot of wine and a lot of cheese. The evening STILL made a profit. Maybe we should have some more of these evenings.

Another interesting event followed in November. This was an Indoor (or tabletop) Rally in which competitors are given instructions to plot a route on a map, the times to clock in at various controls and the average speed required.

In the results, one pair of competitors got lost and retired. They are still happily married.

In December, our very first competitive event held under R.A.C Competition Rules was held. It was a Production Car Trial in the Craigtantlet Hills. The farmer who owned the field was later asked who had approached him and replied "I am not sure of his name but he looked like someone from the Bible". (This was the era when long hair was very fashionable.) Out of 12 entries, 10 were MGs of various types and vintages. Some entries were double entries with wives and husbands having a personal competition. This arrangement became VERY personal at times with one partner becoming a bit vocal!

The year finished with a Touring Assembly on the Ards Peninsula. The route directions were given in the reverse order and the mileages given bore no resemblance to the mileages on the ground. It may come as no surprise to report that some competitors were still hopelessly lost after dark!

A perfect end to the Year.

In January 1970, we held a "practice" autotest under R.A.C regulations at Maghaberry Airfield. The usual Ulster Centre weather prevailed (heavy rain all afternoon) but the event went well for a first try. It was the first win for an MG Midget.

Our first film show was held in February with a very good turnout of members but our Annual Dinner Dance and Prizegiving had a disappointing attendance. The Enthusiast's Trophy was awarded for the first time to Bill Sherwood and it is worth noting that 61 Centre members gained points towards this trophy.

The remainder of the year continued with a total of – wait for it! – THIRTEEN events! This total did not include a visit to Silverstone and the AGM.

A mixture of competitive and social events provided something for everyone and gymkhanas, a mystery tour finishing in a Bar b Que, and a picnic run to Castleward, complemented our, by now serious, autotesters.

There were some sort of alcohol restrictions around in Belfast, so we changed our monthly Noggin 'n Natters from the Stormont Hotel to the Windsor Hotel (the nice brick building behind a wall beside Tesco at Knocknagoney).

This proved to be a popular choice and we remained there for some years.

At Silverstone we made our initial attack on the California Cup. The team was a bit of a mixture, with Roger Nethercot driving Mike Armstrong's TC, Mike himself driving his father's MG1300 and Mike Wilson driving Ivan Wallace's TD. We did not bring home any silverware but a warning had been sounded to the other Centres!

A 'deputation' attended the Annual MG Car Club Showtime Dinner and we were delighted to be awarded the prestigious Nuffield Gold Cup. We stayed in the very expensive 5 star Hyde Park Hotel and our escapades are better left untold!

We even brought the priceless Gold Cup in its wooden box home as hand baggage on the flight home! In 1971, a motley crew set off for Silverstone. We decided to camp at the circuit and acquired an old army tent and one from the local scouts. We sampled the delights of the Silverstone latrines and burger bar. At dawn we were awakened by a nearby racing car warming up for the racing.

In spite of these experiences, we won both the California Cup and the Register Trophy!

In October 1971 we held an event which was entitled 'Stew-b-que'. I believe this involved a helping of stew instead of the usual burger thingies

and included a discoteque. All for £1.00! Perhaps an idea for the future?

(The Newsletters from the '70s will be available in the Downloads section of the Ulster Centre web site very shortly. SJ)



The 1971 Silverstone California Cup and Register Teams. L to R: Mike Wilson (TF 1500), Ivan Wallace (TD), Mike Armstrong (TC), Terry Chambers (Midget), Terry Ingles (Midget), David Bell (Midget). Note the Red Hand of Ulster (Centre) badges!



The 1971 Register Trophy winning team: L to R, Ivan Wallace, Mike Armstrong, Mike Wilson

Silverstone 1971



Ivan Wallace (TD)



Mike Armstrong (TC)



Mike Wilson (TF 1500)

*Terry Chambers and Terry Ingles
(Midgets) with the California Cup*



My MGenes

Mike Armstrong

Part 2: My First MG

In the first part of this saga I introduced some of my ancestry from whom I acquired my MGenes, and I also introduced my first car – a 1934 2-seater Morris Minor Tourer of which only just over 1500 of this model were made. The earlier models formed the basis of the MG M Type but in 1934 the engine had a less fussy side-valve replacement instead of the M Type overhead cam. The cable brakes were replaced by new-fangled hydraulic brakes.

I moved to Northern Ireland in March 1955 to sit my Matriculation exam for entrance to Queen's University to study Medicine. I stayed in Ballymena with my grandfather, Dr John, and my father's younger brother, Dr Sidney. I travelled by train up and down to Belfast every weekday (19 shillings and one penny in old money for a weekly ticket!). My lectures finished at lunchtime and I got back to Ballymena just after 3 pm. Uncle Sidney was finishing his afternoon surgery about this time and preparing to do his afternoon rounds. Sidney had purchased a new MG TD (KZ 7905) in 1953 and I got to drive him around his Practice which extended as far as Antrim and Slemish.



With Sydney and the TD, Ballymena, 1955

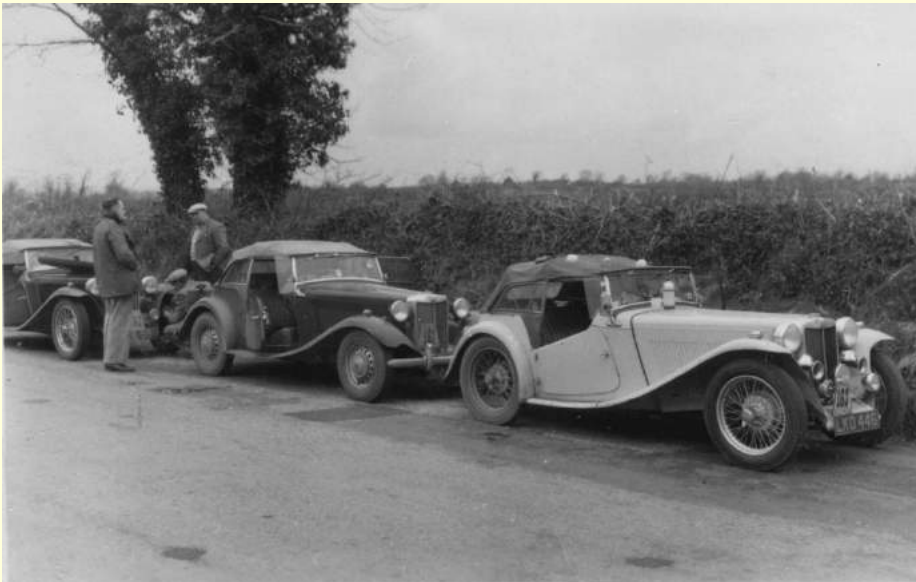
Over the weeks I got plenty of driving. Sidney joined the Mid-Antrim Motor Club, the Larne Motor Club and was already a member of the Ulster Automobile Club. We entered numerous rallies with me navigating and we gradually became more proficient.



Every young lad's dream in the 1950s

After passing my Matriculation Exam, I spent the summer at home in Yorkshire. My brave father allowed me unrestricted use of his lovely cream MG TC. (LKO 446) I drove it all summer long and explored the Yorkshire Dales. It was truly a dream for a 17-year-old. How lucky was I?

My Dad had travelled over with the TC to do the Circuit of Ireland on several occasions and had gained a creditable 3rd overall in 1953. In 1954 I had travelled with him to do the Circuit as his navigator when I was 16. We were in a team with Sidney and my Uncle Arthur in the TD, and Harry Reilly from Omagh in his TC, and ran as 'Reilly's Rogues'. We didn't do awfully well but the experience was invaluable. I will never forget when out with my Dad for a run down the Glens after the Rally, he stopped the car at the top of Glenarriff, got out and said 'you drive'.



'Reilly's Rogues' stop for a break, 1954 Circuit of Ireland

At 16 I had no license but I wasn't going to refuse. We changed back again at the bottom of the Glen at Waterfoot in a lather of sweat.

In 1955 I was already in Northern Ireland and I navigated Sidney in his TD in the Circuit of Ireland and we were teamed with John Howe of Ballymena in a red Morgan and Roy Moore, of Moore's

Garages in Randalstown, in his new red MGA. We were the 'Red Devils'! We were up against a 'works' sponsored team of white MGAs who won the team prize. Again, honours eluded us, but it was fabulous fun.

In those days, the Circuit started with an overnight drive and navigation section on the Friday and continued all day Saturday to Killarney. There was a Sunday run around Killarney followed by

a run all day Monday and overnight to finish on the Tuesday in Bangor. It was difficult enough to stay awake for two nights out of four. The secret was Drinamyl – later known as 'purple hearts' - which kept you awake for a while and made you 'happy'! It worked well until about 3pm the following day when a sudden overwhelming desire to sleep would overtake you. Nasty stuff!



The 'Red Devils' alongside the 'works' sponsored MGAs

In 1956 Sidney had upgraded to an MGA 1500 which was much quicker than the TD and was more comfortable and roomier, with room to fold your maps. We teamed up once more with Roy Moore, and with Billy Reid from Bangor in a TR2, but again, no honours. Sidney and I did numerous local rallies and autotests and enjoyed driving around the countryside.

In 1957 the Circuit of Ireland was cancelled because of a shortage of fuel associated with the 'Suez Crisis' when the Suez Canal was blocked by sunken shipping. As a result, there was rationing and motor sport was banned.

In 1957 the Morris Minor was finished and shipped via Heyham to live outside my digs in Ravenhill

Avenue and was used daily to and from the Royal and City Hospitals, about which, more later.

Its arrival in Belfast allowed me much more freedom. For a couple of years before that I had been using a Corgi scooter as my daily transport. My father had purchased this from the local hospital in Yorkshire where it had been used by the hospital gardener. It was a postwar development of a similar model that had been parachuted into battle during WW2. It had a 90 cc 2-stroke engine, a single gear, a maximum speed of 30 mph and was quite fun to ride. JWY 771 had its own foibles, particularly with the ignition system, and usually ended up once a week or so being dismantled in my wonderful landlady's kitchen. Fortunately, having raised several sons who were motor-cycle mad, she was used to this. I rarely managed to achieve a round trip from Belfast to Ballymena without ending with thumbing a lift on the back of a flatbed.



1934 Morris Minor just arrived!

It had just about come to the end of its useful life when the "Buggy" arrived. It did however survive in dusty sheds, and even a coal cellar, for many years and was eventually passed on to a motor-cycle enthusiast who restored it to working condition only recently.

I still travelled up and down to Ballymena in the "Buggy" and for the 1959 Circuit Sidney had upgraded further to a MGA 1600 which had disc brakes and even more power.

We finally got into the class placings in 1960 with a 3rd in Class for which the MG Company sent £100 which nearly paid for the whole event.

In the 1961 Circuit, we had a *tête à tête* with a large sheep which jumped off the ditch onto the near side front mudguard causing some

damage. Unfortunately, the sheep was killed instantly; fortunately, it didn't land in the cockpit on my lap. Nevertheless, we managed a 2nd in class and this time received £200 from the MG Company.



MGA 1600 and "Buggy", Ballymena

It is apparent that the "MGenes" were in my father's blood and in Sidney's also, and both of them had at least one MG on the go until well into their 80's when they stopped driving.

The "Buggy" was a great wee car and served me well for several years. One of its several weaknesses was the universal joint 'system' at each end of the propshaft. This consisted of a circular flexible fibre disc which had a tendency, if abused, to break up with teeth shattering vibrations. I always carried a spare.

While at Queen's I joined the very young Motor Club and took part in numerous runs and small rallies – usually with my sister Maureen as my



Repairs to the sheep-ravaged MGA

navigator. We were up against stiff opposition in the form of the likes of Denis Bell in a Dellow, Chris Gibson in a nice white MG TA, and Terry Harriman in his tatty Austin A40 Devon. All were subsequently prominent members of the Ulster Automobile Club and Terry went on to become a World Championship Co-Driver.

In 1958 Sidney and I missed the Circuit as I was rowing at Queen's and training hard for the British Empire and Commonwealth Games. I drove the "Buggy" over to Henley for the Regatta there and foolishly over-revved the engine – it only had a 2-bearing crankshaft running in white-metal bearings – with the inevitable result that one of the big-end bearings 'ran' resulting in an uncomfortable clatter.

This occurred the day before I had to drive to Bangor, North Wales, where we were staying for the Games. There was no engine clatter at 26 mph but the noise started at 27 mph so it seemed only sensible to drive at the lower speed. With a willing crew member, we drove the length of the A5 – some 240 miles. At best this was going to take some 10 hours and actually it took 12 hours driving, with an overnight stop in Shrewsbury.



On the A5 'en route' from Henley to Bangor

In those days, the A5 was the major route from London to North Wales with many heavy lorries and no dual carriageways, so numerous rest stops were required.

While in Bangor – between training sessions – I took off the sump, extracted the offending connecting rod and took it to a local garage. Obviously (to them) they wanted the whole engine. With the help of the whole crew, the car was pushed to the top of a hill leading to the garage which was on the opposite side of the main A5. I free-wheeled down the hill, 2 crew stopped the

traffic on the A5, and I thundered across the road and up a steep ramp into the garage. Within 2 days the big end had new metal poured and the engine reassembled, all at a very low cost. As some of us were rowing in Portugal straight after the Games I left the car at Bootle Docks and for about £4 had it shipped to Belfast where I picked it up about 2 weeks later. Try that today!

Travelling back from Dublin in that car was always eventful. One time I noticed a black line following behind me only to realise that an oil pipe had burst. On another occasion, we were caught in really thick fog and were only able to proceed with our heads stuck out on each side to see where the road edge was. The final insult, for my poor by-then fiancée, came when I drove through a long and deep puddle just north of Dundalk. The resultant forceful jets of muddy water issuing through the many holes in the wooden floorboards found their way up Jen's skirt. She was NOT amused!

In 1961 Jen and I were married and, recently qualified and allowed loose on an unsuspecting public, I started work in the Belfast City Hospital. I used the 'Buggy' as my daily transport and for the occasional run when I was able to get off-duty. In 1962 I moved to Ards Hospital, and by then we had acquired a new Mini and a son. The poor 'Buggy' was hidden away in a shed for several months. Back to Belfast, and Musgrave Park Hospital, in 1963 and with the arrival of a second son the Morris Minor was hastily put back into action for me to get to and from work. We bought our first house in Lambeg (twelve pounds and ten shillings per month mortgage) and in the house opposite was a guy with **TWO** MG TAs! The temptation was too great. The trusty old Morris Minor crossed the road and a red 1936 MG TA, FZ 1835, crossed the other way. I HAD MY OWN AND FIRST MG!

The car was beautiful to the eye of its new owner. It was forgiven the fact that it had an unquenchable thirst for oil which it deposited everywhere. It was also forgiven the fact that it had a willing but oily Morris 10 engine (very similar to the genuine MG engine).

Eventually, fed up with the oil loss which seemed to be issuing mainly out of the oil pump, I boldly felt capable of removing and fettling said pump. On a week-end off, in my garage, I lifted the bonnet and loosened the eight long bolts holding the

pump to the block only to find that the inside edge of the front wing prevented their removal. Nothing daunted, I jacked the engine up after removing the front engine bolts – no luck. Removal of the offending wing seemed feasible so off with the headlamp, followed by removal of as many bolts as I could find that seemed to be holding the wing to the chassis only to find it was necessary to detach the wing from the running board. Oh-Oh! Most of the end of the wing disintegrated where it was attached to the running board. When all was removed an almost total absence of a major piece of ash below the door was revealed. This

necessitated a major rebuild of the whole nearside of the car. Oh, and the engine had to be lifted right up to get the oil pump out. It took several weeks. I became less enamoured with my TA, but, every cloud.....!

Soon I discovered a TC in Ulsterville Avenue for sale at a price I could just about afford. I started to tow it home but chanced putting it in gear and it actually started. Thus started a long association with ZH 914.

Next time – joining an MG Club and motoring fun.



Trying out the 'Buggy' for size

For Sale and Wanted

For Sale - 1978 MG Midget

1500 cc rubber bumper Midget for sale. Comes with fabric soft top, fibreglass hard top and knock-on wire wheels. Although purchased new in England, it has been a local car for much of its life. I have a brand new V5C NI log book in my name. The car is currently SORNed but it does start, stop and drive fine. Cosmetic condition is good. The door has been resprayed and is not a perfect colour match. Small crack on leading edge of bonnet. Underneath it needs a small amount of welding to one wheelarch and some previous welding to the sill tidied up. The interior is generally good but could do with new carpets. Electrics- the indicators in the bumpers need rewiring as do some of the dashboard instruments. Brand new battery just fitted. Engine has been leaking a bit of oil and might benefit from a new timing chain. Reason for sale - moving to a new house with no garage so it has to go. Price £1,250 ono. Car available to view in Bangor anytime. Telephone Mark Kennedy (028) 9127 5674, or email: Debra.Wenlock@virgin.net



Wanted

Long-time member, Maurice Lindsay, is looking for a pair of seats from a 1967 or 1968 Midget in any condition, or even just the frames. (Maurice reckons that the seat from that era of Midget is the most comfortable!). Failing that, he'd consider any bucket-type seat that would fit a Midget. If you can help, call Maurice on (028) 9185 3264

From the Archives

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The official organ of the MG Car Club

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