

May 2017

The

Magazine



Ulster



Centre

Ulster Centre Magazine Editorial

Simon Johnston

My goodness, these publication deadlines do come around quickly, but once again we've got lots of Ulster Centre activities to report on and plenty of plans for the coming months.


One of the most important events in any Club's year is the Annual General Meeting as this is when the membership gets the opportunity to have their say and elect the officers and Committee members. In our case, it was more-or-less business as usual as the entire Committee, including the Officers, were re-elected, but with the addition of Gordon Buckley who was persuaded to return to the Committee as Competition Secretary.


The Committee for 2017-2018 is therefore as follows:

Chairman	John Clarke
Secretary	Carol Willis
Treasurer	Garth Maxwell
Competition Sec.	Gordon Buckley
Committee members	Stephen Dawson George McMillan Malcolm McQueen

Since this was our fiftieth AGM I thought it would be interesting to list all the office bearers since 1968 and this can be found on page 3. It actually took quite a bit of digging to compile the list as it hadn't been done in recent times, and we had to trawl back through old Newsletters to get the reports of the AGMs to be sure who was elected and when. It makes interesting reading for a number of reasons, not least because there are a few names of old friends no longer with us. As we approach our Golden Jubilee Year we hope to do some articles on some of the late members (and not just office bearers) who contributed so much to the Ulster Centre and who should not be forgotten.

In fact Mike Wilson's reminiscences (starting on page 16) about the 1970s, and in particular about Leslie Ardill who was Chairman from 1975 to 1977, prompted a resurgence of interest amongst the


older hands in the Leslie Ardill Championship which was instigated after Leslie's death in 1977. You can read all about it, and how it's awarded, on page 9. When I were a lad, winning this Championship was something all  folks aspired to and I well remember navigating Will Corry's TF on a snowy New Year's Day Run (or was it Boxing Day?) just to get the extra points to clinch the Championship. (That'd be Will Snr, by the way - Will Jnr wasn't even a twinkle in his Dad's eye back in 1979!)

The Leslie Ardill Championship, of course, is exclusively for  cars and therefore most of the competitors who were active in our autotest rounds in March and April wouldn't be eligible. But this didn't stop some serious competition in the ANICC Championship round at TTS at Nutts Corner nor in the regular Ulster Centre Championship round at Delamont, both of which Gordon Buckley reports on for us, starting on page 4.

Gordon really has been active for us this month as not only has he covered the autotests, he has also written reports on the two more socially oriented events in March and April, namely the Nosh 'n' Natter and the Drive it Day run. These reports can be found on pages 11 and 12.



Looking ahead to what is planned for the coming months, on the competitive side we have our next autotest on 16 May – see page 7 for details - and then of course we have *MG Live!* at Silverstone. Gordon Buckley tells us more about that and Mike Wilson recounts some of the stirring Silverstone achievements that the Ulster Centre had in the 70s with, in 1973, a clean sweep of all the major autotest trophies.

On the non-competitive side, the next major event coming up is the Tour of [Greyabbey House](#) on Sunday 21 May. We will start with a run from Killyleagh Castle to Strangford for lunch, then across on the ferry and up the Ards Peninsula to Greyabbey. This will be a fabulous opportunity to see a unique family house that has been called one of the finest Georgian country houses in Ireland.


The estate has been in the possession of the Montgomery family since 1607 and we will be hosted on our tour of the house by Daphne Montgomery. Don't miss it! This really is going to be a terrific event and full details are in the flyer that accompanied this azine

On Sunday 9 July, we have added another Social Run, this time heading to Sentry Hill House and onwards to Portglenone for a bite to eat. More information is in the *Dates for Your Diary* section by Mike Armstrong on pages 13, 14 & 15.


Looking even further ahead, we have scheduled a Hog Roast on Sunday 13 August when our hosts will be Gordon and Ruth Buckley. More info in our July issue but put the date in your diary now.

And of course, don't forget our **MG Day** at Cultra on Sunday 3 September. We're working hard to make this the largest gathering possible of  cars and thanks to Mark Kennedy, Curator of Road and Rail Transport at the Museum, anyone coming in an  will not only get free admission to the Show but will also get free admission on the day to the Transport Museum.

Mike Armstrong has been busy with his My MGenes reminiscences and the third episode starts on page 19. I've known Mike a long time and a lot of this is new to me so I hope you're all enjoying it as much as I am. Great stuff!

In the Jubilee Committee we are trying hard to develop non-competitive events that will appeal to owners and drivers and our Nosh 'n' Natter and Drive it Day Run brought some modest success in that direction. It is a bit discouraging, however, that we can only muster three or four  cars


at an MG Car Club event and the Ulster Vintage Car Club managed to entice eight out for their navigation rally last weekend and ten are entered for their touring rally later this month.

It was also a bit discouraging that we only received two responses from members saying what model of  car they own – two responses out of a membership of almost one hundred and fifty!

So, do please take the time to send an email to membership@mgculstercentre.co.uk and let us know what cars you have. Believe it or not, even when new members join, the main Club don't advise us of what cars they have!

On a more positive note, it has been encouraging to see a number of former members returning to the fold as well as new members joining for the first time, all of whom will hopefully find something of interest to them in the range of events and activities we put on. So this seems like a good opportunity to welcome:

Brian Glenn
Brinn Lewis
Alex Lyttle
Trevor McIlroy
Fel McIlroy
Jackie Pauley
Trevor Mann
Nathan Mann
Gary Milligan
Douglas Lavery
Hugh Warwick

We look forward to seeing you at some of our upcoming events, hopefully in an .

Front Cover: Stephen Dawson in his MGB at Cultra Hill Climb, 2016

Back Cover: Mike Armstrong in his TC at an Ulster Centre Production Car Trial on 11 December 1971

The First Fifty Years!

	Chairman	Secretary	Treasurer
1968	Mike Wilson	Mike Armstrong	Terry Chambers
1969	Mike Wilson	Mike Armstrong	Terry Chambers
1970	Mike Wilson	Karl Murray	Terry Chambers
1971	Mike Armstrong	Karl Murray	Terry Chambers
1972	Mike Armstrong	Linda Ingles	Terry Chambers
1973	Karl Murray	Linda Ingles	Terry Chambers
1974	Karl Murray	Trevor Moffett	John Moore
1975	Leslie Ardill	Trevor Moffett	John Moore
1976	Leslie Ardill	Mike Wilson	John Moore
1977	Trevor Moffett	Mike Wilson	John Moore
1978	Trevor Moffett	Simon Johnston	John Moore
1979	Will Corry	Simon Johnston	John Moore
1980	Will Corry	Nicholas Gomersall	John Moore
1981	John Moore	Simon Johnston	Kevin Black
1982	John Moore	Ian Moore	Kevin Black
1983	Jenny Armstrong	Ian Moore	Kevin Black
1984	Jenny Armstrong	Ian Moore	Kevin Black
1985	Derek Walker	Jenny Armstrong	Kevin Black
1986	Derek Walker	Jenny Armstrong	Kevin Black
1987	Will Corry	Michael Cox	Kevin Black
1988	Will Corry	Michael Cox	Terry Chambers
1989	Simon Johnston	Robin Greer	Terry Chambers
1990	Simon Johnston/Michael Cox	Robin Greer	Terry Chambers
1991	Michael Cox	Geoff Rawlings	Terry Chambers
1992	Michael Cox	Geoff Rawlings	Terry Chambers
1993	Michael Cox	Geoff Rawlings	Terry Chambers
1994	Michael Cox	Geoff Rawlings	Terry Chambers
1995	Michael Cox	Geoff Rawlings	Terry Chambers
1996	Terry Chambers	Laurence Allan	Mike Cox
1997	Terry Chambers	Laurence Allan	Mike Cox
1998	Mike Armstrong	Laurence Allan	Mike Cox
1999	Mike Armstrong	Laurence Allan	Mike Cox
2000	Mike Armstrong	Laurence Allan	Mike Cox
2001	Laurence Allan	Gordon Buckley	Mike Cox
2002	Laurence Allan	Carol Willis	Mike Cox
2003	Trevor Faulkner	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2004	Trevor Faulkner	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2005	Bryan Mutch	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2006	Bryan Mutch	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2007	Bryan Mutch	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2008	Alison Mutch	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2009	Alison Mutch	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2010	Alison Mutch	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2011	Noel Cochrane	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2012	Noel Cochrane	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2013	Noel Cochrane	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2014	Gordon Buckley	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2015	Gordon Buckley	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2016	John Clarke	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell
2017	John Clarke	Carol Willis	Garth Maxwell

Competition Corner

Gordon Buckley

The Ulster Centre is one of a number of Northern Ireland car clubs running autotests as part of the overall Association of Northern Ireland Car Clubs (ANICC) Autotest Championship. In addition to the overall ANICC Championship, there is a separate Clubman's championship which takes place in parallel with the main event. It is for those drivers who want to make the leap to Championship level but maybe aren't quite ready. Alternatively some of the more mature competitors who haven't competed in a while might want to brush up their skills at a challenging level but short of that demanded by the intense and very specialist NI Championship. It has two Classes, one for specials and another for road going cars, each with separate Classes for FWD and RWD. The competitors complete fewer tests and a simplified version of the championship tests. It is new this year and is proving to be quite popular with around 12 additional entries per round. Inevitably at this specialised level of competition, MGs are few and far between but this year has seen myself and Michael Reid compete in the Clubman Class in Midgets along with Noel Cochrane in his Toyota-engined Midget.

The Ulster Centre runs two autotest championships: The Leslie Porter Championship, for MGs only ; and the Vivian Scott Championship, for other makes of cars. The scoring systems are as follows.

Leslie Porter Autotest Championship

This championship is for MGs only and the best three events out of the series will count towards the Trophy. The points awarded depend on the number of MGs in the Class. Thus if there are three or more MGs in the Class, the points awarded are as follows:

5 points for 1st MG in Class
3 points for 2nd MG in Class
2 points for 3rd MG in Class
1 point for 4th MG in Class

If there are only two MGs:

4 points for 1st MG in Class
2 points for 2nd MG in Class

If there is only one MG in the Class it scores 3 points

Vivian Scott Trophy

The Vivian Scott Trophy was introduced in 1978 to provide an overall Autotest Champion, irrespective of the type of car. All events are counted and points are awarded on an overall basis with 15 points for 1st, 14 points for 2nd, 13 points for 3rd, etc., down to 4 points for 12th or lower.

We'll have the up-to-date positions in both these Championships in the next issue.

Reports

Autotest, 11 March 2017, at Delamont Country Park

It was good to be back to Delamont. Such good people who help us out time and again. The Park is developing but, hopefully, this won't be a problem with availability in years to come. A new building has magically appeared and we were originally not going to be able to use the Heron's

Nest for sign-on etc., but, as things worked out, it suddenly became available and we were back in our second home. Also, luckily, the rain that threatened never materialised and the overnight rain slowly dried as the event went on.

There were essentially two tests, one in each of the large car parks, and what superb tests they proved to be. Round the islands as always but with some nice tail throws and fun slaloms. We completed these four times before joining them up and running our almost traditional mega test to see if we had learned how to do it all without mishap. Very rewarding, even if there is always some room for docking off a little more time.

Getting it absolutely right was Jeremy Tomalin in his home-made Ford Special, now after all these years resplendent in white livery with a smart stripe instead of the bare aluminium panels. What a terrific comeback by Jeremy who hasn't driven the car for several years.

Runner-up with four seconds between them was brother Tim in the Mini Special. Tim must be regretting picking up 15 penalty seconds and giving the bragging rights to Jeremy, but that is the name of the game.

Third and with an excellent showing and punching above his weight was Richard Earney in the Mini beating Gareth Dillon to the podium, Gareth having picked up a fail at Test 2 and opening the door. Behind Gareth was Andrew Earney in another superb showing in the standard Toyota Yaris.

First MG and driving neatly, as always, was Michael Reid followed by David Cochrane in the Toyota engined Midget who suffered with a fail at

Test 1. The top ten was completed by Gordon Buckley, who lost two places with a pylon fault, Alex Lyttle and Jimmy Dougan.

Class winners were as follows:

Class 4 – Michael Reid (Midget)

Class 5 – Richard Earney (Mini)

Class 6 – Rodney McCready (Mazda MX5)

Class 7 – Tim Tomalin (Mini Special) (o/a winner, Jeremy Tomalin, forfeiting class place)

Class 9 – Redmond McNamee (Micra)

It was nice to see Kevin McNamee getting a drive when Ian McCann generously offered him a dual drive. Also good to see John Gardner out again in the Pinto engined Special and getting to grips with it. We were also treated to the first outing of a Nova Special that has been built by Michael Workman and Sam Lyle. It is a remarkable vehicle but, sadly, its first outing was short lived when a gear lever snapped. James Mansfield, who came a long way, had a clevis pin fall out and a replacement could not be found. Very bad luck indeed. Brendan Mullan was also forced to retire.

All in all, a terrific event with the tests pitched at a perfect level for a club autotest and enjoyed by all. Well done COC Stephen Dawson and all marshals and officials who came along and gave up their time.

Full results can be found here: [Delamont Results 11 March 2017](#) and photos [here](#)

Autotest, 1 April 2017, at Transport Training Services, Nutts Corner

This was always going to be a difficult driving day, with the weather forecast showing April showers all through the day. And, sure enough, the road surfaces were slightly wet in patches as the first cars started each of the three tests. The surfaces soon dried though, that is until the next downpour of which there were three during the afternoon. The tests were completed four times each but three times only for the Clubman Challenge.

And what a terrific display of driving skill we were treated to from a very large field that again got great support from the Clubmen.

Paul Mooney (Mini Vauxhall Special) had a problem right from the start, with brake fluid leaking into the servo where it was sucked in and burnt by the engine. Although creating a personal cloud of white smoke, it didn't seem to impair

performance as Paul drove faultlessly all day to win the Championship event outright.

Also in superb form was Ashley Lamont whose development work on the handling of the Westfield paid handsome dividends. In spite of giving away 100 horsepower after changing from the Cosworth engine, the car got fantastic traction, and braked and turned in perfectly, beating longtime rival Paul Blair (Stryker) and claiming both runner-up overall and first in class. Paul's drive was also terrific and he took third overall. On Test 2, there was only 0.1 second separated the times of Paul and Ashley. There is almost nothing between them.

Silky smooth drivers Peter Grimes (Mini Special) and Robin Lyons (Mini Saloon) (winner class C) were fourth and fifth and then came the fantastic battle of the Novas. Mark King was slightly off-form

and the close battle was between Peter Falvey and Jamie McMillen. In the end, only 1.6 seconds separated them, Peter coming out on top and taking the class and 6th overall. A much improved drive was apparent from Scottish visitor, Willie Keaning (Nova).

The Clubman Autotest Challenge was again won overall by David Jenkins (Westfield), from an outstanding Richard Earney in the roadgoing Mini, with James Mansfield (Mini Saloon) third and Noel Cochrane (Toyota Midget) in fourth position.

Class places were as follows:

Class 1 (FWD Specials) – Brendan Mooney (Nova)

Class 2 (RWD Specials) – David Jenkins (Westfield)

Class 3 (FWD Roadgoing) – Richard Earney (Mini Saloon)

Class 4 (RWD Roadgoing) – Noel Cochrane (Toyota Midget).

Being a MG event, I have to mention the Midget of Michael Reid who came second in Class 4.

Unfortunately for Richard McCracken, his front right trunnion snapped in the middle of Test 2 and he was consigned to the trailer home. Happily there didn't seem to be any other damage to the gorgeous blue Frogeye Sprite.

And another mishap for Michael Workman and Sam Lyle in the Corsa Special. Poor Sam always seems to attract bad luck - last week a plastic portion of the gearstick broke off in his hand. This week, the splines on the steering column slipped, running Sam up a kerb. Happily, they were both back in action soon afterwards to continue the

'development programme'.

Also in the latter stages of Test 2, Sam Wilson, who was going well and about to carry out a fast tail throw, found himself an unexpected passenger when the brake master cylinder burst. The pristine red Mini mounted the kerb backwards but, happily, came to an abrupt halt before it could come to any more harm. It put paid to Sam's day but hopefully there has been no serious damage to the rear suspension after such a heavy impact.

And so, a tricky driving day that tested everyone's skills. The Clubmen had a difficult job completing some tight tests but everyone acquitted themselves admirably.

All in all, a terrific day's motorsport organised by the MG Ulster Centre. It was a treat to witness such driving precision by the Championship masters and also by the Clubmen. Feedback for the event from competitors has been very positive.

Congratulations to Paul Mooney and David Jenkins, overall winners, and to all our Class winners. Thank you also to the marshals who got a three-time soaking throughout the day, to Carol Willis for the entries and very welcome catering, to Elaine Lynn for results and, last but not least, to Malcolm McQueen, Clerk of the Course.

Finally, a special word of thanks to our Chairman, John Clarke, and his company, Systems Controls, for generously sponsoring the event and providing all the trophies. The Centre is enormously grateful for this kind gesture.

Full results can be found [here](#) and photos can be found in the Gallery Page on our web site - see [NI Autotest Championship 2017](#)

Autotest Demonstration, 9 April 2017, at Dubshed Car Show

The Ulster Centre had a terrific afternoon's fun recently, being involved in a demonstration tandem autotest at the Dubshed Car Show at the Eikon Centre, Balmoral Park, Sprucefield, on Sunday 9 April.

On the Saturday it was the turn of the championship competitors to show how it's done. On Sunday, it was more of a mix of championship experts and clubmen. All in all, it was a great display of skills that drew large crowds once the tyre squeal started. Thanks to all who came and

gave up their fuel and tyre rubber to put on such a good show. Thanks also to Malcolm McQueen and George McMillen for setting it up and to Mark King who also helped out on the microphone.

In our 'Gallery' page on our web site, there are a number of fairly random photos of the action on the Sunday, showing some of the competitors in action and, of course, some of the display vehicles at Dubshed. Have a look at the file entitled '[Dubshed Autotest Demo](#)' (it is not in chronological order).

Upcoming Events

Autotest, 16 May 2017, at Morrow Contracts, Rocky Road, Gilnahirk

Our next autotest is an evening one at Morrow Contracts, Rocky Road, Gilnahirk. Entries close on 14 May so you might still have time to get an entry in if you haven't already done so. Regs and entry form can be downloaded from our web site – see [here](#)

(As an aside, Rocky Road was one of the routes used in the Reliability Trials organised by the Ulster Automobile Club in the 1930s but unfortunately the trial route through to the Upper Braniel Road is no longer passable in a motor car. SJ)

MG Live!, 17-18 June 2017, Silverstone



Photo – Ray Brown Photography

Bryan Mutch (Midget)

The premier MG event worldwide is, of course, ***MG Live!*** at Silverstone and it offers a veritable cornucopia of MGs and MG related activities upon which to feast your eyes.

The Ulster Centre will be fielding a team for the California Cup which is the inter-Centre autotest competition. As you will have read in Mike Wilson's reflections on the Ulster Centre in the 1970s, the

Centre has been pretty successful in bringing home the silverware from the Silverstone autotests for many years and let's hope that this year is no different.

Our team comprises Stephen Dawson (MGB), who features on our front cover, Bryan Mutch (Midget), above, and myself (Midget) opposite.

Wish us luck!



Gordon Buckley (Midget)

FOR SALE M.G. NB MAGNETTE 1935

This four-seat tourer, exported to Australia in 1975, has had a meticulous body off restoration, including a new body frame and full mechanical rebuild. It is finished in Dublin and Ulster Green with a Collingburn interior and weather equipment. Particular attention to detailing has been paramount. The original English registration number, AKW 67 was re-allocated by DVLA when the car returned to the UK in 2015. A new set of Blockley tyres was fitted in 2016.



For sale due the owner having too many birthdays and too many cars.

Offers in region of £68,500.

Contact: Bill Clarke wclarke136@gmail.com Tel. No. (028) 2587 1910



LESLIE ARDILL MEMORIAL TROPHY

The Leslie Ardill Championship

Leslie Ardill was one of the first people I met when I joined the Ulster Centre in January 1973 and attended the Noggin 'n' Natter at the former Windsor Hotel on Knocknagoney Road in Belfast. When Leslie heard that I had acquired my father's J2 (a restoration project that took nearly 40 years to complete!) he immediately offered his help and advice. We lived quite close to each other and he made me welcome in his home, and especially in his garage, as I sought to learn more about these pre-war MGs. At that time he was working on the rebuild of his TC (with a J2 and various others waiting in line) and the meticulous standard of his work was what you would have expected from someone whose day job was as a consultant surgeon in the RVH.

Leslie served as Chairman of the Ulster Centre from 1975-1977 but sadly died in September 1977 without seeing any of his cars completed. In his memory the Club commissioned the beautiful Tyrone crystal trophy with an engraving of a TC on it and after much debate in the Committee it was decided to award it to the car, not the driver, which had been the most successful during the year. I was the Ulster Centre secretary at the time and came up with the rather complex scoring system (overleaf) that survives to this day with only minor changes and which takes account of the number and type of events entered as well as the placings achieved. I can't claim that the system is entirely original, however, as it was based on the Car of the Year award of the MGCC Triple-M Register for pre-war overhead cam MGs.

Simon Johnston

The Leslie Ardill Championship is for MGs only and the ten best events throughout the year are counted. Points can be scored from events which are not run by the MG Car Club, but no more than three non-MGCC events can be counted towards the final score.

For every event entered and finished 2 points

If classed as a non-finisher 1 point

Additional points for MGCC events are:

5 points for 1st MG in Class

4 points for 2nd MG in Class

3 points for 3rd MG in Class

2 points for 4th MG in Class

1 point for 5th MG in Class

Marshals who use their MGs to and from a meeting 2 points

Additional points will only be awarded for non-MGCC events which are run under MSA or Motorsport Ireland permits when the points system will be for overall placing in the Class, i.e.

5 points for 1st in Class

4 points for 2nd in Class

3 points for 3rd in Class

2 points for 4th in Class

1 point for 5th in Class

Five bonus points will be awarded for each different type of event entered and the event types are:

- Rallies
- Concours d'Elegance
- MGCC events run under an MSA Certificate of Exemption, e.g. gymkhanas, touring assemblies, etc., as well as MGCC Social Runs
- Autotests
- Trials
- Slaloms and Sprints
- Races
- Hill Climbs

An additional five points will be awarded to any MG competing at Silverstone.

The Committee may also give extra points to any MG which puts up a particularly meritorious performance in any sort of motoring event.

Finally, the onus is on the driver to make sure that his or her scores have been noted although the scorer will do his/her best to record them automatically. We'll provide regular updates on placings so that people will know where they stand but this is how it's looking at the moment after our three autotests and the UVCC Spring Rally.

Leslie Ardill Championship Scores as at 12 May 2017

Midget	(TBC)	Michael Reid	19 pts
TD	PZ 1167	Mike Armstrong	13 pts
TF	LMR 148	Des McDowell	12 pts
Midget	JRB 829D	Gordon Buckley	11 pts
Midget	(TBC)	Alex Lyttle	10 pts
TF	BSK 923	Hugh Warwick	10 pts
Midget	(TBC)	Mark Lemon	8 pts
MGA	XZ 9831	Mike Wilson	7 pts
MGC	TMH 157F	Robert Holmes	7 pts
MGB	(TBC)	Colin Reid	7 pts
M Type	GF 7895	Roger Corry	7 pts
TF	OYG 879	Mike Wilson	6 pts
J2	IL 2151	Simon Johnston	6 pts

It is great to see such a variety of MGs and the reintroduction of the proper scoring system is already showing its worth with Mike Armstrong in the TD and Des McDowell in the TF mixing it with the autotest Midgets by dint of more event types (Mike Armstrong) and a solid Class win for Des McDowell on the UVCC Spring Rally. If Mike Wilson had taken the TF on the Drive it Day run he'd be up there too. So plenty to play for in the coming months.



Sixty years of MGs (R to L)
J2 (1933)
MGB (1971)
TF 160 (1993)

Nosh 'n' Natter, Hilden Brewery

Gordon Buckley

The Noggin n' Natter has now become a relic of the past because of the drink/driving laws and the application of some common sense and social responsibility. Quite right too but, in another way, a bit of a pity because they were certainly good fun events and now just part of MGCC history.

The good news is that some resourceful person has come up with a modern, alcohol-free alternative for the driver, the Nosh 'n' Natter. A good excuse for meeting up with like-minded friends and acquaintances to discuss anything ranging from MG cars and Donald Trump to Brexit, Theresa May's legs and maybe even Donald Trump's legs.

We met at the Hilden Brewery, Lisburn, at lunchtime on Wednesday 29 March 2017. From the very start, there was a terrific buzz in the Tap Room of the Hilden Brewery with no shortage of chat and it was great to catch up with a number of MG friends whom we do not get the chance to see very often.

After lunch, a group took the Brewery tour. We learned about the different types of barley and the quantity of hops used to create variable flavours, colours and strength of beers brewed at Hilden. It's a small brewery that has invested heavily in modern equipment to produce beers

(mostly bottled) of a quantity, quality and consistency to be able to compete with the brewing giants. The tour included a free pint of beer and this led to a decision between Belfast Blonde, Headless Dog, Bucks Head or Twisted Hop. The Dog won and very nice it was too.

There was, undoubtedly, a palpable common bond between those present. Yes, most were of a certain age-group with many decades of experience in common, and, yes, we all love MG cars. But there is something else: we share MG values, an intangible belief in doing the right thing and helping each other. In other words, the Marque of Friendship. May it always continue.



Liz Patterson, Linda and Mike Wilson, Brian Patterson

Drive it Day

Gordon Buckley

Sunday 23 April 2017 was national **Drive It Day** when owners of all kinds of classic cars are encouraged to get them dusted off and out on the roads: in other words to make use of them the way their manufacturers intended.

And so a number of MGs and their owners turned up at the B&Q car park at Sprucefield in their glorious MGs (although there were a couple of stowaways in not-very-British cars). Oldest of these was a 1930 M Type Midget of Sam Christie, the howl of which was magnificent at full throttle on the open road.

Mike and Jenny Armstrong had brought their faithful TD and Mike and Linda Wilson their elegant MGA. Others present included lovely examples of MGBs as well as the mint condition MGC of Robert and Lyn Holmes. (We'll not mention the errant silver machine that had more to do with Munich than Abingdon.)



Mike and Linda Wilson - MGA

The weather could not have been kinder and most were able to enjoy the top down and the delightful sunshine that showed up the spectacular County Down scenery at its very best.

The route took us around Hillsborough and through the Dromore and Banbridge areas taking in Rathfriland and Hilltown. Along the way we stopped at Corbet Lake near Banbridge which was a real eye opener with its beauty and plentiful number of resident swans. Then we made our way up the Spelga Hill Climb and came down the Trassey Road (the starting point for a hike to Hare's Gap), one of the most beautiful areas in our country with its quaint bridges and unspoilt rivers.



Robert and Lyn Holmes's MGC

Then on to Castlewellan for some very welcome fish and chips at Zebedees and a communal sigh of relief that no-one had broken down.



A terrific afternoon's entertainment thanks largely to Mike Dowey who set the route and kept us on smooth and interesting roads. He really is the master of the Sunday Run. Thanks also to Mike Armstrong for getting us started and keeping us in some kind of order. It was lovely to see MG owners using and enjoying their cars.



Dates for Your Diary


Mike Armstrong

Just to make sure that you don't just idle your summer days away, we have arranged a couple of extra things for you to enjoy and, perhaps, even to educate you a little.

Sunday 21 May 2017

Greyabbey House (Rosemount) and Gardens

We will gather outside the gates of Killyleagh Castle at 11 am (don't be late) and then proceed to Strangford to have a light lunch at Cuan's. We will be in time to catch the 1.30 ferry to Portaferry (remember to bring your "Travel Pass" if you have one) to drive to Greyabbey for 2.30. Mrs. Montgomery (owner of the house) will conduct us on a private tour of this magnificent house and priceless contents. There will be time to visit the lovely gardens and afternoon tea will be served after the house tour.

Come in your  – you might win a prize – or otherwise come in any form of transport you can muster. If you want to skip lunch and come direct, please be there at 2.30 pm.

Entry Fee to the House and gardens, including afternoon tea, is £15 per person and payable **BEFOREHAND**. Please send a cheque made payable to M J Armstrong to me at

32 Clogher Road
Lisburn
BT27 5PQ

and I will settle the account with Mrs Montgomery.

It will not be possible simply to turn up on the day if you haven't pre-booked and pre-paid!

MG LIVE! 17-18 June 2017, Silverstone

There are half a dozen or so Ulster Centre members going and there will be a California Cup Autotest team (see details on page 7) – so give them your support if you will be there.

NEW! Sunday 9 July 2017

Visit to Sentry Hill House, Carnmoney and the "Wild Duck".

We will gather at Hazelbank Car Park (just at the end of the M5) at 12 noon to drive direct to the historic Sentry Hill House for a tour lasting about 90 minutes, and then at about 2.30 we will go for a drive to the "Wild Duck" restaurant at Portglenone for a meal at about 5.00 pm. Cost for 2 courses is £14.95 pp.

It is, once again, very important that we know how many are going so please contact Mike Dowey at mikedowey@talktalk.net or by phone on (028) 9303 8909. See page 15 for more info.


NEW! Sunday 13 August

"Hog Roast" at Gordon and Ruth Buckley's home at Ardmillan.

Put the date in your Diary and there will be more details in the July MaGazine and on the website at mgcculstercentre.co.uk

Sunday 3 September 2017

MG DAY and Picnic at the Ulster Transport Museum, Cultra.

We want as many  cars as possible from all over Ulster and we are going to need a few marshals on the day. Let me know if you can help.

Put the date in your Diary. More details in the July MaGazine

NEW! Nosh 'n' Natter on an evening in October

Following on our successful lunchtime Nosh 'n' Natter at Hilden Brewery we will have an evening one for those who can't get during the day (and also for those that CAN) – at a date and venue TBA.

Finally – don't forget the BIG ones next year.

**20-24 MAY 2018.
GOLDEN JUBILEE TOUR**

There is a maximum limit of 70 cars. Prior expression of interest has reserved 45 places already. Please don't wait until next year to express

And finally, finally from our Jubilee Secretary, Mike Armstrong:

“COULD I MAKE A PLEA TO EVERYONE TO REPLY TO THE ORGANISER OF EVENTS AS SOON AS YOU CAN. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE KNOW HOW MANY ARE GOING TO ATTEND AND WE ARE NOT MIND READERS! THANK YOU.

an interest and risk being disappointed. HQ will be at the lovely Roe Park Resort in Limavady. You don't have to make a commitment now but do express an interest for a priority entry to mike.a@mgcculstercentre.co.uk

Once the entry is full – that's it. Don't be disappointed.

**Saturday 29 September
2018
GOLDEN JUBILEE GALA DINNER
AND DANCE** at the Stormont Hotel



Mike Armstrong (Jubilee Secretary) and Noel Cochrane at the Nosh 'n' Natter at Hilden Brewery

Visit to Sentry Hill Historic House and Visitor Centre, Newtownabbey

Sunday 9 July 2017



Sentry Hill is a nineteenth century farmhouse in Carnmoney, Co Antrim. It has been associated with the McKinney family since construction in 1835 and most of the contents, amassed down the years, have survived intact. This provides a rare insight into the working lives, social activities, beliefs and values of rural families during this period. We will meet at Hazelbank Park, Newtownabbey (just off the roundabout at the end of the M5) at 12 noon for a 12.30 pm drive off. We will head straight to Sentry Hill for the visit which starts at 1pm sharp and should last around 90 minutes. Admission cost is £3.00 per person.

The House has a small catering area for light refreshments and we have organised for tea and biscuits to be available upon arrival. Cost is a very reasonable £1.00 per person.

We expect to be leaving Sentry Hill at around 2.30pm for a scenic and interesting drive around the countryside arriving at The Wild Duck, Portglenone, at around 5pm for the evening meal. Two course meal £14.95.

It will be a great day out with plenty to see and do, so why not join us?

Animals are not permitted at Sentry Hill except for guide dogs.

To book a place on the run contact Mike Dowey on 028 9303 8909 or email mikedowey@talktalk.net.

Please note that we have to give the final numbers to the Wild Duck by Monday 3 July at the latest. We'll send out a reminder nearer the time but why not let Mike know NOW that you're coming?

The Early Days

Mike Wilson

Part 3: More fun from the '70s

While the motorsport scene in Ulster was affected by outside events, the social scene in the Centre continued at full steam. Some of these events are worth reporting ...

The Annual Dinner Dance in March 1972 was a formal affair in the Windsor Hotel, Knocknagoney and over 80 enthusiasts attended this event. So many tickets were sold that a free glass of sherry was given to each attendee. This went down (literally) very well and set the tone for the evening. I am sure all of you sherry drinkers would appreciate this gesture at our dinner in 2018.

The Chairman, Mike Armstrong, gave a medical type speech and included some of his vast collection of jokes. This also went down well. During the prize giving, we were able to have the priceless Nuffield Gold Cup and California Cup here to re-present them to our two winning teams – changed days indeed, when, today, these cups spend their time securely locked up in a bank vault.



Mike and Jen Armstrong, Mike Wilson and Karl Murray with the Nuffield Gold Cup

The Achilles Trophy for hard luck was presented for the first time to George McCrea who broke his gearbox at Silverstone. Getting George home involved towing the Midget for 360 miles.

I seem to recall three or four towropes breaking with various tow cars, who were other competitors, and being VERY late for the ferry.

Karl Murray's report on the Dinner dance contains some very embarrassing accounts of my behavior during the evening which I will leave untold. The evening concluded with a Conga dance, led enthusiastically by the Hon Sec.

The Annual Wine and Cheese Party followed this unforgettable Dinner Dance and was equally unforgettable. For 80 pence it was possible to eat and drink as much as you wanted – and some people did just that! There were over a 100 members and friends at the event, and so many that we made a profit of over £20, mainly by raffling off all the leftover cheese and wine.

In September 1972 an event titled the 'Ulster Centre MG Festival' was held. This comprised a Gymkhana, a Concours d'Elegance and a Barbeque. The Gymkhana involved some devilish tests with blindfolded drivers, ducking for apples, and bursting balloons.



Roger Corry ducking for an apple

A noted winner of the Pre-1955 MG Class was Roger Corry's TC, a car still owned by Roger and used regularly for holiday touring, rallies, driving tests and other competitive events.



Carol and Roger Corry with their Class winning TC



Colin Black – how to impress your girlfriend

The evening concluded with a Barbeque at Yvonne and Norman Sheals's garden, and on the menu was a whole roast lamb, salad, french bread and cheese plus unlimited beer. What a night.

In 1973 we had a clean sweep of all the main trophies at the Silverstone driving tests (as they were known as in the 1970s), with Mike Ford-Hutchinson, David Bell and Terry Chambers winning the California Cup and Ivan Wallace, Mike Armstrong and Mike Wilson winning the Register Trophy. Mike Ford-Hutchinson won the Magnette Trophy for the fastest MG overall and Colin Black won the BMC Trophy for non-MGs in his Mini Cooper S.

There were plenty of high-jinks at the team hotel that evening (we had given up camping by that time!) with tales of leather and wardrobes to the fore. Probably better left untold – we were a lot younger then!



Mike Ford-Hutchinson with his Magnette Trophy winning Midget

In 1974 a tragic episode took place – one of our very enthusiastic members, who had a few MG models awaiting restoration, came home from work one evening and was checking over his prized collection when he discovered one of his cars was missing. He was on his way to the phone to report this heinous crime to the RUC when his mother asked him why he was so upset. When he explained about the missing car his mother told him that she gave 'that heap of junk' to the binmen. Unfortunately, it is not reported whether the binmen received a tip or whether the conversation between the member and his mother was cordial. The member was justifiably awarded the Achilles Trophy.

At our Annual Dinner Dance in 1974 our Guest of Honour was Ronnie Trouton, MBE, from the ANICC, who made a very polished speech outlining Motor Sport in Northern Ireland and complementing our Centre on its progress. He then demonstrated his versatility by standing on his head and drinking a half pint of beer. A fitting end to a popular speech.

Competition was hampered by local unrest but our social events continued unabated. The next few years showed a steady increase in membership, and we reached the magic 100 in 1977. We rested on our laurels and much to the disappointment of the rest of the UK Centres, we did not send teams to Silverstone.

In 1977, Leslie Ardill, the recently retired Chairman, sadly died, having been seriously ill for some time. A new trophy was established in his memory – The Leslie Ardill Memorial Trophy. This trophy consists of a block of Tyrone Crystal engraved with an MG TC. This is a much sought-after trophy, being awarded to the MG that is most used in events in the year.



Leslie Ardill (Chairman 1975-77) at the maps in the Table Top Rally, October 1973, with Hon. Sec. Linda Ingles looking on.

In 1979 a work party 'renovated' a henhouse, with the intention of turning it into 'An Ulster Centre Clubhouse'. This proved to be a roaring success, with all sorts of shenanigans taking place over the next few years. If you can imagine a sophisticated wine and cheese evening taking place in a henhouse without the hens (but with a lot of eejits) you are probably on the right track.

I will leave it to the next contributor to give you some more details about the goings-on at the infamous henhouse.

The 1970s could also be seen as a period when the Ulster Centre was becoming increasingly involved in local motorsport. Not content with developing a wide range of non-competitive events that attracted the participation of a lot of members in their MGs, by the end of the decade we were also running five or six autotests each year along with three Production Car Trials (as they were called then) and co-promoting sprints and races at Kirkistown with the 500 Motor Racing Club of Ireland. The Centre was also making its presence felt among the wider MG Car Club with its numerous, and successful, forays to Silverstone.

The Ulster Centre had matured well in these first ten years in the face of a difficult local situation and entered the 1980s in high spirits.

Editor's note: the Newsletters from the 1970s are available online [here](#)



Gordon Jackson
TF OLY 165

Tom Patterson
TD HZ 6527

Ivan Wallace
TD 1900 IL

Malcolm MacHenry
TC KZ 710

Mike Armstrong
TA FZ 1835

My MGenes

Mike Armstrong

Part 3: Enjoying MG motoring in a TC

In the previous episode I had at last obtained my first MG - a red 1936 TA, FZ1835 - from my neighbour in Lambeg. This was in exchange for my trusty 1934 Morris Minor and took place sometime in 1966. It was in reasonable 'nick' except for a severe oil leak from the oil pump in the Morris 10 engine, which is very similar to the TA MPJG engine which should have been in it.

While extracting the oil pump to fix it, one thing had led to another and I ended up rebuilding one side of the car. Thereafter the car ran quite well. The Bishop Cam steering was somewhat vague and basically you had to 'aim' the car rather than steer it. I got to hear of the 'Ulster T Owners Club' and promptly joined. I also joined the MG Car Club as an 'Unattached Overseas Member'.

The only photo of the car while in my possession was taken when with the T Owners Club in 1967 at Meghaberry as shown above.

On the grapevine I heard of a TC, ZH 914, for sale from a guy in Ulsterville Avenue and for about £20-£30 it became mine. It briefly went to live in Lambeg but, as number three son had arrived in May 1967, we moved to Locksley Park in Finaghy where there was more room and, importantly, a

larger garage. In my limited spare time I set about a rebuild of the car. In January 1968 I was considered fit to become a locum Consultant in ... Enniskillen! 'D-day' to go was 3 days away.

The TC was in bits and the only other transport - a Mini - was required to ferry children to and from school. By dint of working late nights in the garage the car was fired up for the first time at about 6pm on D -1. Various body panels were fitted, headlights fitted, hood fitted and at D-6 hours I filled the car with petrol, lay down on a newspaper on the lounge floor, and had a quick 'kip'.

At 9.00 am, having cleaned up, I became a Consultant (temporarily) but the only problem was that I was some 90 miles from where I was supposed to be. The journey to Enniskillen took 3 hours at a running-in speed of 30 mph, and there was no motorway in those days. On arrival at lunchtime I dived in at the deep-end. The next day I discovered that there was no oil in the engine as the oil pipe to the pressure gauge has fractured. I must have only just made it to Enniskillen.

The Enniskillen trip continued at fortnightly intervals until the end of July. By this time both the TC and I were "run-in".

Worse was to come. From 1 August 1969 I was appointed to do Consultant "holiday relief" for a year in peripheral hospitals all round Ulster. This was really tedious as one might arrive home of an evening after two weeks away to be told to be miles away by the next morning and sometimes this meant missing events.



ZH 914 in 1969

The TC and I survived the year and in between times I managed to get some motorsport in the newly formed Ulster Centre of the MG Car Club of which I was Secretary.

Over the next few years we managed several trips to Silverstone for the big MG meetings and we managed to bring home some of the silverware. Most times these trips were uneventful and we would break our journey at my parents' house in Ilkley. You will have read of these trips in Mike Wilson's articles in the MaGazine.

On one occasion – after leaving Silverstone in the TC – there was a clicking sound from the rear of the car. This became louder as we travelled North. A quick inspection on our overnight stop in Ilkley revealed no obvious cause and we proceeded.

By Carlisle the noise was getting very loud. As it didn't seem too bad on the overrun it was decided to tow the car. A rather short tow rope was hitched to Terry Chambers's Midget, the back end of which seemed dreadfully close at speeds of up to 60 mph.

Eventually I ran over the tow rope which immediately melted and parted. It was not long enough to tie a knot and in a fit of desperation I put the car into gear and set off to cover the remaining

30 miles to Stranraer in 35 minutes. The noise was appalling but we reached the ferry just in time. On limping home you could hear me coming for miles around.



Ulster Centre Production Car Trial



TC at scrutiny Silverstone 1970 - Barbara & Roger Nethercot, John McBride, and Ivan Wallace



An Ulster Team Pit Stop in Ilkley, Yorkshire

Removal of the differential revealed three teeth completely missing from the crown wheel and one from the pinion. I will never know how it ran but we got home. The upshot was a new TA crown wheel and pinion with a higher ratio.

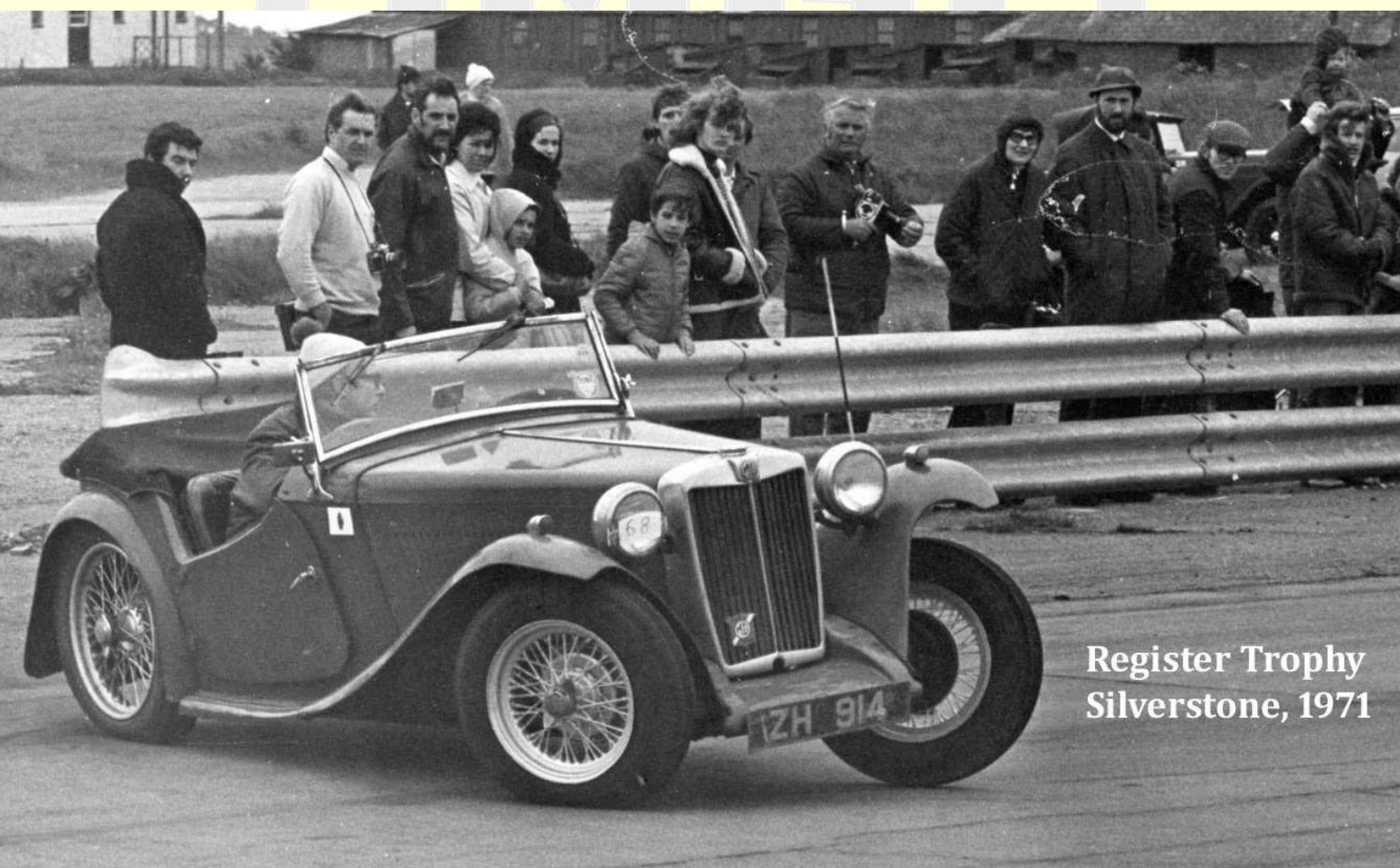
I used the car as my daily transport and for competition for the next several years. As we were in the throes of "The Troubles" we were frequently stopped at checkpoints – more to look at the car than the passenger. One Christmas Eve I had received a "come quick" call at 1.00 am from the Ulster Hospital. Fortunately the roads were clear except for an Army checkpoint on the Knock dual carriageway. We flew past at 60 mph – waking them up – and after jumping several more red lights I saw an Army Land Rover rounding the corner on two wheels as I rushed through the

doors into the Maternity Unit. The nurses gave them some tea and they left satisfied. The patient survived.

ZH 914 was a Dublin registration and the TC may have been assembled in the South at Booth-Poole from a CKD (Completely Knocked Down) state. This was quite common as a means of avoiding heavy import duties in the South.

The wee car had a hard life and very sadly in 1978 had to go to pay for school fees (shades of my father's quandary many years earlier with his beloved TC). The £800 that I got for it allowed me to purchase an MGC, 4838 WZ.

And thus began many more MG sagas with MG TD, MGB and Midgets, and others. But that's for next time.



Register Trophy
Silverstone, 1971

Footnote: FZ 1835 was sold and came into the hands of Ulster Centre members Peter Minnis and Carolyn McDevitte. It had managed to escape a bomb in a Dunmurry Garage opposite the RUC station. They replaced the leaky Morris 10 engine with a 1500cc MG Magnette one and painted the car yellow. "Miss Primrose" carried them off on their honeymoon and, if they read this, may be able to tell of her escapades. Eventually the car ended up with 'Kenny' Ruddell of Holywood. He did a beautiful restoration and briefly used it before it went, I believe, for auction. Where it is now I know not. The chassis number was TA 2399 and it was first registered on the 1st June 1938 (when I was only 5 months old!!)



FZ 1835 after restoration

ZH 914 was built on 4th September 1946 – Chassis number TC1326 and engine XPAG 1936. After I sold it, it went first to Ballymena where it was re-registered with a Northern Ireland number (felt to be more suitable for the area at the time) and was eventually sold on to Switzerland where I suspect it still resides. It was a great car and gave me much enjoyment.



Oh yes, the joys ...!

Parting Shot ...

