

Wigton Motor Club Ltd

# Start Line

Issue 05/20

[www.wigtonmc.co.uk](http://www.wigtonmc.co.uk)

May 2020

## Over A Hundred Cars “Attend” Virtual Drive It Day



With the “lockdown” meaning no “unnecessary” travel, we had an online version with around 120 cars having their photos added to our Face Book page. Some great cars and several ongoing restorations. Well done all!

# Motorsport for All

# Club Officials

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# *Talking Point*

## *Topical Comment from the world of motoring*

*We are living in dangerous times so I was appalled to read that major sports including football and F1 are wanting to resume in the summer. There is a quote from a football manager of years gone by about football being more important than life and death. I am sure he said it in jest but to me the thought of resuming any activity at this time is appalling. OK, it may be behind closed doors but there will still need to be all the team members plus officials and marshals to be present and at less than two metres distance. If just one person dies of this dreadful virus because there is GP, then that death has to be blamed in Liberty Media and their utter greed. Last weekend should have seen hundreds of us out in our cars for Drive It Day but we stayed at home for the good of our health and those of others. Running a GP or any major event until it is completely safe is totally irresponsible and reflects badly on the sport as a whole. Chase Carey and his associates and the FIA need to forget their lost millions and think of people's lives and safety.*

*I am sure that we were all surprised to discover that virtually all European made cars contained parts made in China. They are usually little bits of trim, knobs, clips etc, so when China shut its factories when the virus first hit, the supply of parts dried up and hit production in Europe. I am sure that the manufacturers will be looking for localise production of those bits even if it's at a high cost.*

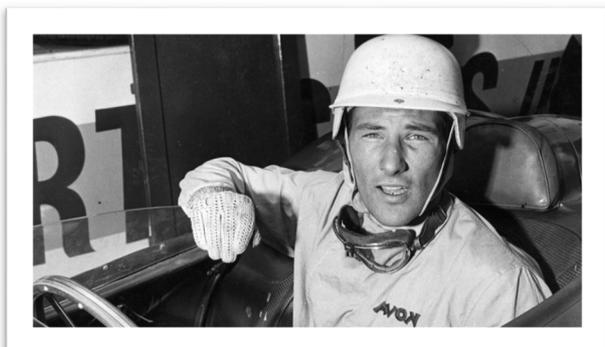
*We can remember the rise of the Japanese electronic, motor cycle and car industry based on low costs. In due course the Japanese economy boomed and living standards increased with wages to the same level as the rest of the world so the cost advantage was lost. I am sure that the same will happen with the Chinese but at a much faster pace. I would also suspect that people will be wary about buying Chinese products and that there could be some trade "punishment" for the Chinese as well.*

*Many thanks to those members who have given me articles this month to fill the bases related to events. There are some excellent ones coming next month as well but please keep them coming! There are lots of restoration projects being undertaken now folk have the time. Let's hear about them!*

*Stay safe*

*GTF*

## Stirling Moss



Sadly a few weeks ago Sir Stirling Moss died at the age of ninety after a three year battle with an infection he picked up while on an Asian cruise. It's perhaps ironic that he died in his bed when so many of his era were killed and he himself survived three serious accidents, the last one putting an end to his professional career.

As a kid I saw Stirling race, and win many times at Silverstone, Snetterton and Crystal Palace. He could jump into any type of car and drive it quicker than anyone else.

At many meetings he would race in several races, and they were not the short sprint events you get now. For example the International Trophy at Silverstone had a 200 mile F1 race, a one hour saloon car race and then a one hour sports car race. At one event at Brands Hatch he won all five races he competed in.

He was famous for his patriotism in trying to always drive a British car and his sportsmanship which in fact led to him losing the 1958 World Championship to his friend Mike Hawthorn who was about to be disqualified from the Portuguese GP for reversing onto the track after a spin and Stirling intervened on his behalf.

Along with navigator Denis Jenkinson he won the 1955 Mille Miglia at an average speed of 100 mph in a Mercedes 300SLR and is credited with inventing pace notes while Denis had on a self made roller system. He also won the British GP at Aintree in a Mercedes and then again with Tony Brooks in a Vanwall which finally proved that the British could out race the Italians.



Two of his finest racers were televised in 1961 when the British cars were well underpowered compared to the Ferraris and Porsches, he used a year old Lotus 18 to win at Monaco and Nürburgring, true drivers circuits where his ability was able to overcome the lack of power.

He may well have been the first professional racing driver in that he made a living from it and gained personal sponsorship and endorsements.

He later did well in historics and joked that he made more money out of being a former racing driver than

he did when he was racing.

He was well known for being polite and gracious to everyone he met whether he you were a ten year old fan as I was, or a potential sponsor. Latterly he raced lower powered cars in historics as he felt being at the front of the field there were too many hot heads who wanted to say they beat Stirling Moss.

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He also had success in rallying coming second in the Monte Carlo Rally in a Talbot Sunbeam and broke several speed records in streamlined MGs

In his retirement he took part in the first Classic Marathon and also did the Tour Auto in an MG B with his wife Suzy navigating.

The last time I saw him race was at Knockhill when he came up for a historic meeting with his Widi, which was a Belgian sports car that was like an early front-engined Lola.

The last time I met him was at one of his last functions prior to going on the unfortunate cruise when we were both guests at a reception at 10, Downing Street to celebrate British motorsport success.

There will never be another Stirling Moss.

GTF



Kendall Bruce sent me this photo of a plaque in the road at Oporto, scene of several GPs when they were on closed public roads.

# Message from an OLD WRECK

Skiddaw House

Fintry

Balfron

Glasgow, G63 0LR

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It is a long time since I prepared anything for a newsletter. At present I am looking east towards Skiddaw basking in brilliant sunshine in a cloudless blue sky. On instructions from the Scottish Government I am locked in – probably until mid June. During these difficult times I should probably be locked in at our original family home Skiddaw House, Back O' Skiddaw, Bassenthwaite. The Cumbrian author, John Martin has recently written a book "The Loneliest House in England - Skiddaw House" which features my Grandfather, Joe Norman – who was shepherd/game keeper there from 1905 to 1925 and also the Norman Family of The Dash, who were reported in the Maryport Advertiser Edition Friday July 21 1882, as Yeomans of the County and Custodians of the Dash Farm for the past 300 years. This is by far the oldest family in the Parish. It is an amazing coincidence that our house in the village of Fintry (half way between Stirling and Loch Lomond) should look onto a 300metre ridge called Skiddaw. At least food supplies will be easier to get with deliveries from the local farm shops here than they will be at Skiddaw House, Bassenthwaite.

Although my wife Hazel and I have lived in Fintry for more than 40 years we remain proud Cumbrians and unless Ms Nicola Sturgeon gets her wicked ways we hope to remain here – makes me think of Graeme's fabulous note to her following a Gallop in The Borders:

(With Graeme's permission)

## Galloping over the Pot Holes!

To: Nicola Sturgeon MSP

First Minister

Holyrood

Edinburgh.

Hi Nic Old Fruit!

We have just returned from an enjoyable three days Classic Car Event in the Borders. It was lovely and the people were very friendly. However the state of the roads was a disgrace and it is not very comfortable in our older cars.

Now I appreciate that you don't drive and go everywhere in your helicopter but I do think you should take a few trips out in a car to see what the problems are.

I would suggest that you go in a Hillman Imp as it has a lot in common with you. The Imp is Scottish, small and the same age as you; it can be rather noisy, it was rather ill conceived and came in almost as many colours as you do! Imps were prone to under steer, particularly to the left and cost a lot of money to keep going. Imps have a loyal if irrational following, they quite often get hot and bothered and are likely to blow a gasket!

Have a great trip  
Yours sincerely,  
Graeme Forrester.

Unfortunately we are unlikely to take part in WMC Events for the foreseeable future. This year's Gallop having been cancelled and the Rose & Thistle and Classic Weekend must be in doubt. At least we have the best newsletter in the country thanks to Graeme, Ron's Elderly Utterances and not forgetting all the other contributors.



the serious competition, the Scottish International Rally and the RAC and most important the personalities of the time – sadly some of whom are no longer with us. I treasure winning the Cumberland Trophy in my 998 Mini Cooper 800 MAO in 1966.

Please keep up the good work, stay safe and stay well.

Joe Norman

We had a trip south to Chester just before the close down to collect a set of

13inch Minilites and tyres for my 10 year project 1959 Sunbeam Rapier Historic Rally Car – the seller was a test driver for Bentley - you do meet interesting good guys selling on ebay. Back on the M6 the dashboard on my Porsche Macan lit up like a Christmas Tree with lots of faults being listed on the screen. A friend of mine had warned me Macan's are prone to Transfer Box failure so forewarned I had purchased an expensive Porsche extended warranty. The Macan is now locked into Porsche, Perth who have offered a courtesy car but as they were unable to provide a GT3 I declined. In fairness they did offer a Cayenne but as I can't go anywhere there is little point them providing me a car.

So one Porsche is locked into Perth and my recently acquired 1984 Porsche 930 Turbo is locked in at Mike Bainbridge at Kendal!!

Please forgive my selfish indulgence, I was introduced to my first motorsport event by David Bell – an Autocross at the Metal Bridge, Carlisle – organised by Stella Blair, 750 MC, in a Fairthorpe Electron (how many people know what a Fairthorpe was). I have such fond memories of Club Motorsport in Cumbria in the early 60's. The Austin 7's then the Mini,

## Sporting Trials

One of the very last motorsport events run in the country before lock down was the BTRDA championship trial that was run superbly at Edenhall near Penrith on 15<sup>th</sup> March by the local Northern Phoenix Trials Car Club or NPTCC as it's known. This club although a relatively small one puts on absolutely top class events and competitors come from far and wide to take part.

Under normal circumstances these take place every 2 or 3 weeks but the way things are it will be a while before there are any more for a while.



If you study the photos of the cars you will see they are a very specialised machine built to do a job and that is to climb hills. All have "fiddle" brakes, ie two brake levers, each of these levers controls one rear brake, the foot pedal controls the front brakes. To get maximum traction these brakes are used to prevent the rear driven wheels spinning so this is where skill comes very much into the equation and it is a real black art but so effective when carried out properly.

No limited slip diffs are allowed and a pre trial test is carried out on a set of rollers to ensure that there is no jiggery pokery going on, cars are also scrutineered to check safety items and that the tyres are those listed as "control" tyres as per the blue book.

Town and Country type tyres are NOT allowed just ordinary road tyres 165/15 size and a minimum pressure of 3psi must be maintained or a higher pressure if the clerk of course decides to raise the pressure, lower pressures mean more grip, raising the pressure to say 5 psi automatically has the effect of reducing grip so it makes it more difficult to climb the sections so if people are finding things a bit easy an instruction will be issued for the next attempts at the hills to raise the pressure. These pressures are checked with a master gauge and the pressure gauges used are very accurate but only read up to 15psi so an ordinary pressure gauge isn't accurate enough. Tyres are glued or security bolted to the rim to prevent tyres being pushed off the rims running with such low pressures.

At this trial there were 9 sections laid out and we did two rounds before lunch and one round after the lunch halt. The clerk of course will often alter a hill slightly after each round and no one else must move any marker posts other than to replace it in exactly the same position if it has been knocked down as the C of C is responsible for the safe running of the event and is ultimately responsible if an accident happens so this rule is strictly adhered to.

Cars have moped or mountain bike wheels at the front and they have a far better turning circle than a London taxi, in fact if a fiddle brake is applied to one rear wheel and the accelerator pressed the car will spin around on the spot, this is the technique used to negotiate tight turns on the hills often around trees as seen in the photos.

The general running of the event starts with scrutineering and drivers briefing, where you are each given a start hill, you then drive to your start hill, all sections start at the same time usually 10.30 am. On subsequent rounds you start the sequence moving on two hills so if you started on hill 5 next round start on hill 7 then next round hill 9 and so on so that conditions are as even as it's possible to get.

Sections are of varying terrain, muddy, steep, twisty so no two sections are the same, you are allowed to walk the hills so it certainly keeps you fit climbing up and down the often very steep slopes.

A lunch halt gives time for a chat with others then out again for the final round before prizegiving, the last competitor to climb each hill helps the marshal to gather the marker posts and numbers, and also a thoughtfully supplied mallet, this is a tool which is essential at times if a post is knocked down. When all the poles are collected they are put in rubber bands made from old inner tubes and put in the trials car and taken to the finish where results are being worked out. The club has its own portaloos on a special trailer as all sites tend to be remote.

After the prizegiving which took place with the usual banter competitors headed off home, some to catch the ferry to Ireland and others back down the motorway, there was quite a contingent from the midlands, Wales and the south of England such is the regard for the events this club puts on competitors are willing to travel great distances to take part .

The clerk of course Martin Grimwood from Lancashire ably assisted by his organising team can be very well satisfied that they put on a top class trial well worthy of its international status and well enjoyed by competitors marshals and spectators alike.



The NPTCC has a tremendous website it shows details of all forthcoming events, maps and instructions of how to get to every trial site, results and even a superb gallery of photos from past events, why not visit the site there is even a section listing cars for sale.

Cars vary greatly in price starting at about £2000 running up to over £20,000 for a top specification car often running on propane gas rather than petrol but for an outlay of 2K or more you can have a full day of motoring, an entry fee is about £35 and about 2 galls of petrol will last the whole day. What are you waiting for go on the website and check out Sporting trials I can heartily recommend it.

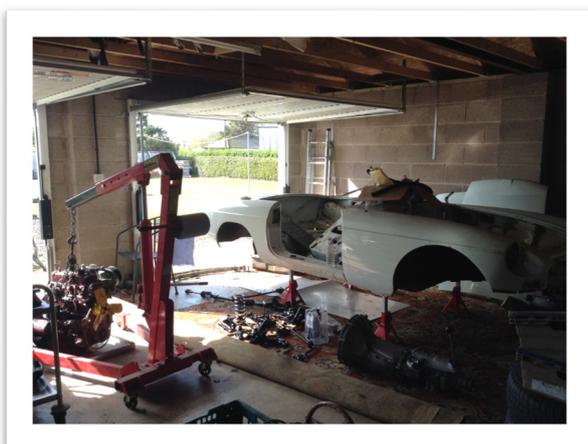
It was great to see quite a number of Wigton motor club people spectating including Clive Kennedy and his wife, Clive actually drove up a long rough bumpy track at lunchtime just to tell me how much he had enjoyed it and how impressed he was watching the level of car control required and how exciting it was for a sport that basically is carried out at walking pace. He was parked on a B road where many of the sections are just over the fence but he enjoyed it so much he took great trouble to go out of his way to come and see me.

The club run a “tester” day each year and it’s a sport that would dovetail very nicely with Wigton motor club as most events tend to be run when there is nor much other motorsport on. Grand Prix racing drivers Stirling Moss, Graham Hill as well as Colin Chapman and other top guys used to trial regularly in the 50s and early 60s and the make of cars most popular then called Cannons built by Mike Cannon now command high prices and Historic trialling started about 10 years ago for these cars is very popular indeed. Its possible to build a car at home and many club members certainly have the required skills, engine size is restricted to 1600 and technical specifications are laid down in the Blue book. Look at the photos, cars are very simple but very unusual.

Its great to see sport and clubs overlapping much more now helping each other run events and as most of the events are based in the Penrith, Melmerby, Alston area its very handy for many Wigton MC members.

Keith Thomas

## Another Restoration Under Way



**From John Ross:** Unfortunately due to the lockdown things have stalled a bit, Richard Clark’s son Simon was to have had it sandblasted by now, but a valve for his equipment has to come from China and at present he is still awaiting, this in turn has put James McWhir on hold to do the necessary welding jobs. Eventually it will get to a paint sprayer and back to me to rebuild. I hope I will be able to remember where all the bits go.

# PG Tips

## Chairman Peter Reflects On His Month

With lockdown in full force and no indication as to when things will return to normality my race car is just a large ornament in the garage that I can tinker with at my leisure. I probably ought to knuckle down and get on with it because what may happen is they'll ease the restrictions and I still won't have sorted all the little bits and bobs that I want to do. I have successfully mounted the rear wing – when I say successfully I mean mounted it, but have had to order some angle aluminium to re-inforce the main struts which have some sideways movement. I've also replaced the very unusual throttle cable set up which had a short cable leading to an odd cast iron joiner that was about 6" in length and weighed several hundred grams and then another short cable that led to the engine. I suspect this was because the Rev Barry only had 2 short cables and decided to create something rather than buying a long one. I need to paint the new nose cone and the odd suspension arm at the back (some of which look a little tired). The problem is, some days I go up to the garage and end up achieving nothing because I have no deadlines to work to – it's quite nice and stress free and the pandemic has definitely changed my spare time. Usually I am fighting a constant battle against when the next event is or when I need to have something working by, but right now none of that exists! Walks and bike rides with the kids, a bit of gardening and chatting to our neighbours at a sensible distance are far more appealing than I'd ever have imagined if anyone had tried to tell me about it a few months back that's for sure. I am lucky though that I still get to go to work so I don't have the real lockdown fever that some people seem to be getting.

The Astra Bertone convertible though is a different story.....I am still battling the engine which started tapping loudly and is currently in bits once more. I have no real deadline for it but I would like to make the most of the fact I still have to go to work (on relatively empty roads) and enjoy driving it as opposed to wallowing along in my massive diesel Citroen! I initially thought the noise was bottom end bearing trouble, but thankfully it's clearly coming from the cam/head area and may be down to the inlet cam pulley which has a damaged keyway which means it's not sitting exactly straight – a new pulley is on the way and then, fingers crossed, I will be out in it going to and from work and shopping.....but not just going for a drive or visiting anyone or anywhere.

The restrictions on normal life have led to an explosion of huge proportions on the internet as most people are trapped in their own houses and seem to be posting a lot more. Apart from a lot of conspiracy lunacy (5G signal is causing Corona Virus, the Chinese made the virus in a lab so they could buy up the rest of the world on the cheap and take over) there is also a lot of car stuff out there and if you are on Facebook there is a great Wigton Motor Club site and a member's area where people can post things up. The more people who join up, the more interesting it will get. It's amazing some of the old rally photos and footage that seem to be turning up now that everything has slowed down and people have time to stop and dig things out. Whilst no one wants what is happening there are some minor positives.

Anyway – as the government would say – stay home, stay safe and fix your bloomin' cars because if everything goes well the Dalemain show might even be on in August!

Peter

# Nicked!

## The UK's most stolen cars are:

- 1 BMW X5
- 2 Mercedes-Benz C-class
- 3 BMW 3 Series
- 4 Mercedes-Benz E-class
- 5 BMW 5 Series
- 6 Range Rover Vogue
- 7 Land Rover Discovery
- 8 Range Rover Sport
- 9 Mercedes S Class
- 10 Mercedes GLE

High price models from BMW and Mercedes-Benz dominate the top 10 most stolen vehicles.

In fact, three BMW models make up the top 10. The BMW 3 and 5 Series rank at third and fifth place respectively.

But the X5 takes the top spot, rising to first from second place in 2017.

However, Mercedes have four of their models in the top 10. Compared to last year, the C-class has dropped from first to second place, with the S Class and GLE coming in at the bottom of the list.

Aside from Mercedes and BMW, Land Rover and Range Rover also make up the rest of the top 10.

## Threat of keyless car theft increasing

According to TRACKER's reports, keyless entry car theft is on the rise. A shocking 88% of the vehicles recovered using TRACKER's device were stolen without the owner's keys.

This is an increase of 8% from 2017 figures but, perhaps more worryingly, an increase of 22% since 2016.

A common method of keyless car theft is a relay attack, which involves manipulating the signal between the owner's key fob and the vehicle.

# What Colour is Yours?

Grey cemented its position as the UK's favourite new car colour in 2019, having hit top spot for the first time in 2018, according to the latest figures released by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT). The number of grey cars registered in the year rose 5.3% to 521,273 and meant an increased market share for the colour, with more than one in five new cars (22.6%) sold painted grey.

Black and white rounded out the top three colours of the paint chart, meaning 60.7% of all new cars joining British roads in 2019 were shades of monochrome, although registrations of black cars were down -2.4% and white cars down -4.1%. The top 10 was largely unaltered year-on-year, save for the reappearance in 10th place of yellow, which was knocked out in 2018 by beige.

# From The Top

## News from UK Motorsport, Regions and the WMC Committee

There is obviously very little to report from the WMC Committee with no events taking place. We do keep in regular touch by email though. We are in healthy state financially and of course progress on the Motor House has come to a stop until the Lock Down has been lifted.

Motorsport UK staff are operating from their homes but they are arranging training modules and retro videos etc on the website : <https://www.motorsportuk.org/>

The current situation is that there will be no events until after June 30th. That is being kept under review and in line with government guidelines. We will make decisions about our events including the Classic Weekend in lines with those guidelines. It is pointless speculating as the situation seems to change from day to day but the Lock Down could last for months and this mean no events.

It does give us all time to look at future plans and different events. If you have any fresh ideas, or know of any suitable venues, please let any committee member know.

## More from Virtual Drive It Day



**Recognised  
Club**

# Classic Column

## News from the Classic and Historic Scene



The Chateau Impney Hotel has closed completely. The hill climb was cancelled at the start of the year only weeks after tickets were put on sale but it seems that the whole complex did not make money. An enthusiast who lives in the Midlands said “wrong thing in the wrong place” about it a couple of years ago. Very sad for the Spollon family who have long been involved with vintage racing.

The current crisis will no doubt have long term repercussions for the classic car market and historic motorsport. Low interest rates and rising values

brought many new businesses into being selling high end classics, many with fairly lavish premises. I certainly would not like to be sitting on a stock of classic Ferraris at the moment! It will be interesting to see how it effects the number of adverts in the classic monthly magazines.



In recent years it's been felt that historic motorsport has “over heated” with large numbers of new enthusiasts coming into the sport at the top end with seemingly unlimited money to spend. This has seen many organisations being created to feed the need and hence rising entry fees and clubman's' events being squeezed out of venues. It may be that when things resume they will revert to a more sensible level.

We also have to remember that motoring heritage employees a lot of people up and down the country

and add to that those that prepare and run cars in historic racing and rallying. Many are one man businesses and with no events taking place their income could dry up. Those who do restorations many do better but only if the owner of the car, who is paying the bills, has not been affected by the virus either by health or income.

It was great that around 120 members posted photos of their cars on the WMC Face Book page for the Virtual Drive It Day. Hopefully we will be back at Dalemian next April.



## Wal Handley

The decision to erect the memorial was made by the Gold Star Owners Club a few years ago, but these things take time. Finding a stone mason, deciding on the design, agreeing the most suitable site, working out costings, etc, etc. The local population of Fingland were extremely helpful and it could not have been done without them.

At 12 noon on the 16th November 2019, Ron May (Past Chairman of the GSOC) gave the following short speech before the unveiling of the memorial:

Walter Leslie Handley was born on 5th April 1902 in Aston, Birmingham. After a hard childhood when his father died of cancer, he had to start work at the age of 12. He tried several jobs and then joined OK Motorcycles as a helper to the junior testers. OK gave him the first chance at the Isle of Man TT. On a wet and foggy first practice day he set off the wrong way along the course! He was flagged down at Governors Bridge and to much ridicule from the press was nick-named 'Comedy of Novice from Birmingham' later changed to 'Unlucky Handley' in respect of his many breakdowns on the TT course.

He had various racing exploits with OK, Rex Acme, AJS & MotoGuzzi motorcycles as well as MG and Riley cars. On 30th June 1937 he won a race at the notorious banked circuit at Brooklands with a fastest lap of 107.57mph earning himself a Brooklands Gold Star. The machine he was riding was a BSA Empire Star running on alcohol as fuel. This achievement spurred BSA on to produce the Gold Star model which went on to be a world leader at all forms of motorcycle competitions.

Wal, as he was known had many successes in racing, he was European Champion on three occasions and world record holder at Arpajon and Montlhery in 1930. At Brooklands in 1926, he broke records on his 350 Rex Acme against more powerful opposition. He contested 13 TT and won 4 between 1922 and 1934. Wal was the first to have two memorials dedicated to him in the Isle of Man. The first at 'Handleys' near the 12th milestone after his only

The memorial stone that the Gold Star Owners Club is unveiling today is a tribute to him for his racing career and also for his work in the Air Transport Auxilliary (ATA). Captain Handley was the commanding officer of ATA Ferry Pool No 3 at Hawarden near Chester. He was killed close to where we are standing today on a flight from Kirkbride airfield on November 15th 1941. Tributes were paid to him after his death – one said: 'We have had riders who were erratic and others who were clumsy, but Handley was always visibly superb'

Walter was one of our greatest aces - as it says on the seat in Douglas, Isle of Man - 'None ever passed this way more bravely'

Capt W.L.Handley was killed on 15th November 1941, while serving with the Air Transport Auxilia-ry. The single seat American fighter Bell Airacobra he was flying crashed shortly after take-off from Kirkbride airfield, Cumberland.

The accident was described by an eyewitness;

"Walter took-off from the aerodrome... and crashed into a ploughed-field within five minutes of being airborne. When he took-off the motor was 'moving' hard with an awful din and when he throttled down, it appeared to cut for a few seconds and then finally died out. Wal side-slipped towards a wood with it seemed the intention of putting his craft into the treetops. He missed the wood by feet. The star-board-wing hit the ground first and the machine immediately exploded."

The crash site was 2 miles (3.2 km) east of RAF Kirkbride near Fingland. The ATA Accident Committee were unsure of the cause of the crash.

## 1921 Austin Sports Twenty AK8684

Austin aficionados will immediately say this title is rubbish as everyone knows that AK 8684 was Felix Scriven's Sergeant Murphy, the famous Brooklands Sports Twenty. They'd be right, but have underestimated the ingenuity of two ardent VSCC Yorkshiremen who sadly are no longer with us. There's no record of how many pints of 1960's Theakston's Old Peculiar it took, but Bob Buttle and Bernie Clifton managed to persuade the Bradford vehicle licencing officer to part with Sergeant Murphy's log book.



They then set about converting a 1921 Austin Twenty saloon into a competitive 2 seater replica of similar appearance to Sgt. Murphy and not too dissimilar performance. The chassis was shortened and the engine modified with guidance in correspondence with Scrivener. I was told the immense fly wheel had been lightened by 70 lbs which I doubted as Scriven claimed he removed 26 lbs albeit from his possibly lighter sports flywheel. The compression was suitably raised and twin SU carburettors fitted. The artillery wheels were retained, but with skilful cutting and welding fitted with !8"

rims giving much improved acceleration. It would probably have been outside their budget to obtain Rudge Whitworth hubs and wire wheels. Excellent retardation resulted from well engineered twin circuit hydraulics employing two compensated master cylinders and early Land Rover wheel cylinders.



Having owned several Austin Sevens including my first in 1957, a 1938 Opal, I spent most of 1967/8 in Siberia commissioning ICI polyethylene plants with temperatures down to minus 52 centigrade, so I treated myself with my hard earned gains to NV316, a 1929 Ulster with a beautiful pressure fed engine and lightened chassis which had been raced by a chap called De Villiers. I replaced the massive downdraught Carter carburettor by an SU to make the VSCC happy and went racing. The Ulster went pretty well and early on remember lapping Oulton Park at around 57 mph average, although this was put in perspective

a few weeks later with Jackie Stewart's fastest lap in the 1970 Oulton Gold Cup in Tyrrell 001 at 117 mph.

I first encountered AK8684 in a VSCC handicap at Oulton Park around this time when Bernie Clifton came thundering past me between Cascades and Esso Bend sounding like a 3 litre Bentley. I undertook low on the hairpin, but he went sailing past again on the straight going down to Knickerbrook and I never saw him again. As I reckoned to be doing around 80 mph at 6,500 revs at the time he was almost in Scriven territory. I remember thinking how nice it must be to have 3,600 rather than 750 cc under the right foot!

About 1972 I spotted AK 8684 being offered for sale by an Ilkley lawyer in Motor Sport for £1,100 and pounced, as apparently, our Yorkshire friends were seeking new challenges. Our children immediately christened the Twenty "Spud" as it is still known today in the ownership of our son David, and we set about trialling, sprinting and hill climbing.



We very soon converted the body to a compact four-seater moving the front seat to the back and adding two Ruby front seats and a primitive hood so that the family could join in the fun. We competed in the Welsh and Lakeland Trials nearly every year from the 1970's until 2004 as well as outings to Curborough, Shelsley Walsh, Harewood. We also rallied when in Cheshire with the Manchester Vintage Car Club and from 1984 with the Wigton Motor Club and MG Cumbria. We won an award at the VSCC Curborough sprint in 1974 having beaten several Vauxhall 30/98's and in the same year won awards at the Welsh Trial and at Oulton Park the

latter admittedly in the Ulster. This meant that for 1974 we won the VSCC Yorkshire Trophy an annual aggregate award. The VSCC trials were our favourites and tankards awarded in 1973,1974,1977,1979, 1980,1994 and 2000.

Like many competitors our favourite section was Drumhouse on the Lakeland Trial at the top of Honister Pass and I can only remember two occasions when we failed to reach the top, one when we burst a rear tyre and the other due to unsynchronised bouncing on very loose slate. We were certainly one of the fastest climbing flat out in second gear and on several occasions reaching the top without engaging first.

The whole family certainly enjoyed the thirty odd years with dear old Spud.

John Meeks

## More Virtual Drive It Day



# Elderly Utterances

## The Voice of Experience!

### Ron Palmer has his say

Because of the current CV restrictions I have little of interest to report and you don't really want to read about my TLC maintenance on the old cars so I have rewritten an earlier article on a memorable RAC in 1977.

When living and working in Whitehaven I got a call from Malcolm Wilson offering me the navigator's seat on the Manx International. I had sat in with Malcolm only once before in 1973 on a local event which ended for us against a tree near Wythop Mill (downhill tightening left hander, slippery in the damp).



Dawson 3<sup>rd</sup> in the first Escort finisher.

I flew from Blackpool to the Island and did a swift preview of the Terry Harryman Pace Notes before a recce of the route in a hire car, which was later returned almost as good as new... We were seeded at 22 surrounded by all the quick Group One guys – Will Sparrow, Pat Ryan, Jimmy McRae, Henry Inurrieta, Graham Elsmore, Gavin Waugh etc. During the event our Escort was plagued with breaking rear shock absorbers caused if I remember rightly by being shorter than required and breaking off the bottom eye and we eventually finished 13<sup>th</sup> overall and 5<sup>th</sup> Group 1. Pentti won overall in the Chevette followed by Brian Culcheth in the TR7 with Andy



finished 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> (Hannu finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Toyota) and had in fact won the RAC now for six consecutive years.

The original orange shell on the RS2000 Mk2 - SOO378R was getting tired by now and it was planned to be rebuilt with a new one after the Manx. Malcolm and his team undertook to do the body swop and its first appearance after the rebuild was on the Lindisfarne on 1<sup>st</sup> October sporting number 15 where we finished 8<sup>th</sup> overall and 2<sup>nd</sup> group 1. One more event, the 'Castrol '77' was fitted in before the RAC and 13th overall was the outcome this time where we were headed in Group 1 by Elsmore, Waugh, and Kaby. There was then an opportunity to prepare the car for the Lombard RAC which started from Wembley on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Historians will be aware that on the 1977 RAC Group 4 Ford Escorts



Of greater interest to us were the Group 1 entries headed by Jimmy McRae (Colin's dad)/Ian Muir SMT/DTV Vauxhall Magnum at 39, Graham Elsmore/Stuart Harrold, Thomas Motors RS2000 at 40, Pat Ryan/Mike Nicholson, Dolomite Sprint at 42 and Malcolm Wilson/Ron Palmer County Garage RS2000 at 43. With us being the meat in the sandwich we were followed by Will Sparrow/Rodney Spokes Chrysler Avenger at 44, Lars Carlsson/Kadett GTE at 46, Terry Kaby Dolomite Sprint at 48, Enrique (Henri) Inurrieta RS2000 at 51 and Gavin Waugh/Peter Handy Avenger GT plus another 30 odd Group 1 cars.

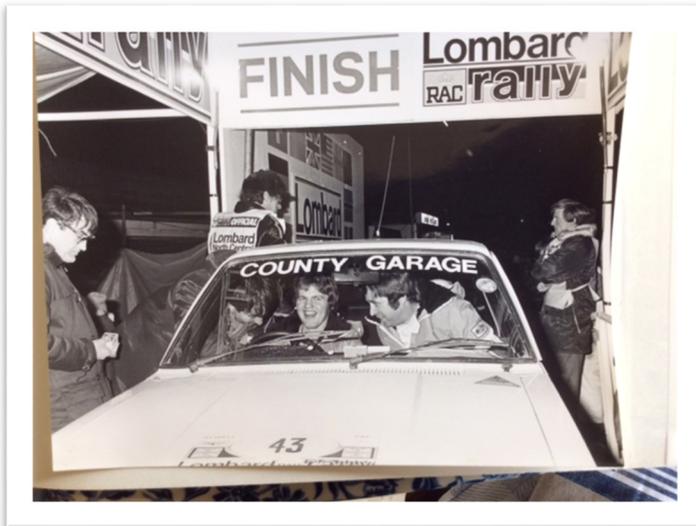
With 1977 being Silver Jubilee year the rally started in London at the Wembley complex where there was plenty of room for competitors' cars, service and back up and of course the public. Starting at 09.00 on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November the first day finished at York after ten short stages in mainly stately homes roads and parks. Positions after day one dictated the restart order for day two so a fast start was important. We had a trouble free day and the car ran like a dream only needing tyres changed from forest to tar to accommodate the individual stages. The first day finished at York race course from 20.00 hours and parc ferme applied until the Tuesday Out control at 09.30.



Here racers were needed for two stages – Oulton Park and Great Orme before the North Wales forests took over. Before the two hour rest halt at Machynlleth at 20.30 we progressed thro stages at Beddgelert, Penmachno North and South, Gartheiniog, Dyfi and Pantpertnog. The night shift restarted at 22.30 and then followed stages in Hafren, Rheidol, Cyneiniog, Taliesin, Llanafan, Brechfa west and east, Gurfynydd, Halfway, Crycuan, Cwmhenog and Nantyrhwch before a two hour breakfast halt at 08.05 at Abernant. And so it went on with another six Welsh stages including three in Clocaenog before heading

across to York for the in control at 19.50. At this point after 37 stages we were in 17<sup>th</sup> place overall and leading Group One with a healthy cushion of almost two minutes ahead of Graham Elsmore followed by Jimmy Macrae. Overall Waldegard was ahead of Hannu, Brookes, Dawson, Salonen and Roger Clark. We had taken 20 minutes more in the stages than Waldegard demonstrating the difference between Group 4 and Group 1 cars - 6 seconds/mile.

The Wednesday/Thursday leg was a busy one with five stages in North Yorkshire including Croft before the field headed west to the Lake District with two in Grisedale after lunch. As darkness crept in there was Hobcarton, Comb, Dodd (be very afraid!) and Greystoke. Heading north across the Border there were Castle O'er, Twiglees, Wellcleuch, White Naze and Glenhill before a welcome two hour break at Moffat before midnight. This short break was welcome as the last of the legs in darkness was very demanding and contained Cardrona, Glentress, Elibank and Yair before a TC and coffee at Jedforest. Moving slightly to the south the last stages in darkness were Waucope, Kielder one, two and



three and lastly Hamsterley before the Teeside two hour breakfast halt. Batteries recharged we headed into the most famous Yorkshire Forests, Ingleby, Crofton, Gayle Hill, Dalby, Staindale, Langdale and finally Wykeham. After a joyous run in to the York finish a bit of shuteye was very welcome.

I realise that the forest names may mean little to none rally people but if you can compare in status say Dalby or Keilder Forest to Silverstone or Goodwood in the racing venues or Prescott or Shelsley Walsh that may better illustrate the awe in which they are held.

Writing a list of stage names doesn't do this fabulous event justice nor does it reflect the skill, tenacity and application that Malcolm brought to this event. In Stage 66 Dalby, only three from the finish, we had a puncture which was quickly changed in stage costing us less than two minutes which meant we stayed ahead of Graham Elsmore. This quick wheel change was only possible because included in the preparations for the event we had practiced wheel changing for an afternoon in the yard at Bannockburn. Had we driven through this 15 mile stage or fumbled the wheel change we could so easily have lost extra time, the category and the class to Graham Elsmore. Malcolm had prepared the car meticulously before hand and the service crews led by Malcolm's dad Ken had performed superbly in doing the necessary maintenance and running repairs in the very limited time available.

The Autosport report said ...'a remarkably mature and impressive drive from 21 year old Malcolm Wilson who fought a personal battle against physical illness and still managed to beat Graham Elsmore in all parts of the country to take Group 1 in conclusive style'

I couldn't agree more. This was a demanding, punishing event the likes of which we will never see again and it was a privilege to be part of it.

Ron.

Some statistics from the event :-

180 starters, 67 finishers.

Five Fords in the first six finishers overall, Mikkola in the Celica finished second.

Ford's sixth consecutive win on the RAC rally 1972 to 1977.

From a seeding number of 43 we finished 12<sup>th</sup> which was Walter Rohrl's start seeding.

Five days of competition over 68 stages and 425 stage miles including 395 forest.

Road mileage 1633, 68 stages finally run with 36 in darkness. 48  
service points by two service teams in Granada (Ken, John, Graham) and Cortina (Les, Mel)

The route was covered by 48 O S maps 1:50,000.

Nineteen cars failed to start on the second day.

Could truly qualify as the Rally of Great Britain. 26 Stages in Wales. 10 in Scotland 6 in Cumbria. 14 in Yorkshire and the others spread throughout England.

# Stirling Moss

The world has lost one of the all time greats, a multi skilled racing driver who won 212 of the 529 races he entered driving F1 cars, open wheel, closed wheel, endurance and rally events.

Sir Stirling was the son of a dentist Alfred Moss - when he was not fixing molars he could be found on the track, even placed 16<sup>th</sup> in the 1924 Indianapolis. His mother, Aileen Craufurd, was also a keen driver entering pre-war hill-climbs in a Singer 9 and a Morgan 3 wheeler. She wanted him to be called Hamish but his father thought that was perhaps too Scottish so he was called Stirling after the town of her birth; Stirling Craufurd Moss.

Sir Stirling, always competitive, had a successful racing career until his crash at Goodwood, leading a full and exciting life. As a young man he remembers Sylvia, his father's receptionist, with great fondness - she first taught him what life was really about. However he also remembers a difficult moment when Mum came home unexpectedly while he was in the middle of one of her lessons!

I first saw Stirling race at the 1961 British Grand Prix at Aintree, a very wet and windy event dominated by the three scarlet Ferrari Sharknose 156 with Stirling Moss being the best of the Brits. After challenging for the lead Moss endured yet more misfortune in a frustrating 1961 season, by lap 45 it was all over pulling his Lotus 18/21 in with a failed brake pipe. Then Stirling was out on the circuit again with the 4 wheel drive experimental P99 Ferguson previously retired by Jack Fairman now with a new set of plugs. Team Walker thought that a few laps with his incredible speed would be impressive. Ferrari immediately pushed for the car to be disqualified and with 56 laps on the board he was out of the race completely despite the perfectly healthy P99 being pushed out of the paddock. I remember the crowd almost going into riot when Stirling was black flagged.

Fortunately my next visit was to the 1961 Oulton Park Gold Cup Meeting when Stirling was victorious in the 4 wheel drive Ferguson P99. The first and only Formula 1 race won by a 4 wheel drive car and the last to be won by a front engine car. (20 years before the arrival of quattro). The Meeting was memorable for the first race win for the iconic Jaguar E Type driven by Graham Hill and Roy Salvadori. The E Type described by Enzo Ferrari as the most beautiful car in the world. 59 years on and many would claim it still is.

One of Stirling's greatest races was winning the arduous Mille Miglia, the gruelling time trial around 1,000 miles of Italian public roads, in a Mercedes 300 SLR Sports Car with journalist Denis Jenkinson as his co-driver. They completed the Course in 10 hours and 7 minutes, at an average speed of 97.95 mph. A record that stands in perpetuity.

In 1961 his virtuosity overcame the limitations of Rob Walker's ageing Lotus

18 outrunning the V6 Sharknose Ferraris of Wolfgang Von Trips, Phil Hill and Richie Ginther at the Monaco Grand Prix which he describes as his favourite race. Sir Stirling was regularly referred to as the best driver never to win the World Championship, even though he defended the case of Mike Hawthorn when threatened with disqualification for apparently pushing his stalled Ferrari against the direction of the track after spinning on his final lap. Hawthorn was reinstated along with his 6 championship points. Three months later, when the season ended, Hawthorn won the title by the margin of a single point from Moss, who was never heard to express regret over his gesture.

Easter Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1962, was the day his professional racing career ended at the Bank Holiday Monday Goodwood Meeting with a major accident in his Lotus 18. He was in a coma for a month and left paralysed in his left side for 6 months. Stirling did return to racing participating in races for historic cars. He also signed a two year deal with Audi in 1980 to race in the British Touring Car Championship. He was not suited to this type of racing, slick tyres seemed to reward fistful driving rather than fingertip driving. He was not used to motor racing being a contact sport but in the 1980's touring cars, clouting the other chap was part of normal racing. The only time he enjoyed it was when it rained, because on a wet track treaded tyres replaced the slicks and sensitive car control got better results.

Apart from Stirling developing a successful property company he designed his new house from scratch in the heart of Mayfair. Like the man himself, the house is small, neat, precise and very well organised. For example if he wanted to run a bath he could push a button on any floor so the bath runs for 5 minutes 20 seconds and it was ready to go. He was always welcoming and courteous to his fans – in the days of telephone directories he was never ex-directory. Google him and his Mayfair address comes up, why not send a condolence card as a member of Wigton Motor Club to Lady Susie Moss, 46 Shepherd Street, London W1J 7JN.

As a longstanding admirer I feel lucky to have met Sir Stirling at Goodwood and the NEC and treasure the signed books and pictures I have obtained.

Sir Stirling was not only one of the true greats of motorsport he was a special

Joe Norman



Dear Joe,

Thank you for your letter.

I enclose a signed picture to last year's winner, Reg Donald. As for another one to auction, I thought you might prefer the enclosed instead of the same one the winners usually get. There is also a book plate for the new book, which you might be able to use.

It is amazing to think it is 10 years since you have been holding your Drive It Day Tour and the money the Rotary Club Of Strathendrick has raised in that time for charity is terrific. I hope this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event goes well and you all enjoy yourselves driving through that beautiful countryside!

I close sending my best wishes.

Ciao,

Sir Jim

**“All British Day” car show at Echunga, South Australia on 7th February**  
**Photos by Bill Sykes**





## Bathurst Plus

Each year Eddie has an idea to go to Australia for a holiday. Usually it involves cricket and never happens because in truth neither of us wants a holiday totally devoted to one thing. This year, however, the plan involved a motor race and a "Big Bash" cricket match. Best of both worlds and a plan.

Thus 22<sup>nd</sup> January saw us fly to Sydney. A steward on our flight listed a few things worth seeing around Sydney. Adopting some of his ideas and some of our own curiosity we began: we explored the city, worked out the tram system; visited Mrs Macquaries Chair and the Opera House. The Opera House had a one woman show in one of the small theatres which was excellent and ticked the box for that venue, Sydney Cricket Ground held the "Big Bash" match (20:20). Sydney won so another box ticked and on to the next chapter.

Three days to Bathurst via Cronulla Beach and the Blue Mountains. In the background to all of this, huge bush fires and a mysterious virus spreading in an area of China and a cruise ship. None of these caused us any trouble.



We have heard a lot about Bathurst and thought it an Aussie meeting similar to Le Mans 24 hours race. So, we were prepared for huge crowds and chaos. To alleviate this we booked accommodation in town and hospitality at the track. (Food and shelter from the sun) The chaos did not happen: having collected our tickets on arrival in town. Qualifying day saw us arrive and park a little before lunch as we are only interested in the main race so there is no rush. Also, we are only really interested in two or three teams containing Brits. M Sport and the two Bentleys in particular. The drivers were Jules Gounon, Maxime Soulet and Jordan Pepper in Car 7 with Alex Buncombe, Oliver Jarvis and

Sebastian Morris in Car 8. Not too long ago Alex Buncombe was racing an E Type Jaguar in Jaguar Challenge mmmm!

Qualifying was manic with much carnage. M Sport were in the thick of this. Car 8 was in pieces, literally and Car 7 had serious engine problems. The sun was shining and all humans were nearly melting. Some had a lot of work to do!

Race day dawned, literally, as we arrived at the track for race start at 5.45am. All cars lined up for the warm up lap. M Sport Car 7 was 11th on the grid. We were not worried, there is a long day ahead. Warm up began, all cars moved off. Then in the darkness an engine started and out from a garage came Car 8 and proceeded to the end of Pit Lane to start its race from there at the back of the field. So far so good. I am ecstatic.

The race is covered on TV so you have several choices: watch in hospitality out of the sun but still melting a bit, venture out on foot, go in the car ( ticket purchase 5\$ aussie) to the top of Mount Panorama and walk to watch (no distance at all). This is the iconic part, like the Corkscrew at Laguna Seca. It really does not disappoint and leads on to the Conrod Straight which passes the track hotel. The real fans camp at the track and have their chairs and "easy ups" around the perimeter. They too can watch tv, powered by a generator or a solar panel!

The race is well documented but from my point of view it just got better and better. Both Bentleys started with No 8 literally coming from the back to almost literally the front. I think they may have been 1-2 for a short while but I may be mistaken. Sadly 8 had a spin which caused no obvious damage but it was not able to continue home itself and so was out. Eventually No 7 is in the lead and hopes are that years of bad luck are all behind M Sport.



It was about now that the winds rose and black clouds appeared: TV commentary was interrupted by a message for people in the area to seek shelter. This happened twice but the rain was holding off-going literally either side of the track miraculously. Teams had tyres ready expecting to change to "wets" at any time. Then, at the end of the straight and just before the pits car 7 had a puncture. They were able to change without significant loss of time. Luck, it seemed was on the side of M Sport

this time.

Finally, car 7 crossed the line victorious: the heavens opened and forgot to close for the rest of our holiday! No matter, it extinguished the fires and was warm rain.

A brilliant holiday. The final week had highlights of feeding Kangaroos and Wallabys and being up close with Koalas and others at Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary in Brisbane. Also we found in the middle of nowhere, the site of the 1949 Australian Grand Prix: it is near a town called Leyburn and on an old WW2 aerodrome.

Bathurst is well worth a visit - a fabulous racetrack, a friendly country and the long flight is worth it. This assumes that the result of that mysterious virus is a temporary thing and we have the courage to board the tube in the sky!!

Susan Farrell

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# Andy's Armchair

## Andy Armstrong takes an irreverent look at motoring and motorsport

Motor Sport magazine recently printed an article about Richard Seaman and his time racing for the Mercedes Benz team in the lead up to the Second World War. The story it covered was interesting enough but knowing the driver's history well anyway I was drawn to another aspect of the team, namely Alfred Neubauer the team manager or put another way the Toto Wolf of his day.

Once that interest was sparked, his auto biography had to of off the shelf where it had sat untouched, at a guess for thirty years or more, and was read from cover to cover in a couple of days. It told some fascinating tales, one of them taking place on 19 Sept 1933, when motor racing suffered a major disaster and believe it or not the spectators were largely to blame.

The track was Monza and preliminary rounds of the Grand Prix were halted after two laps when a large pool of oil was deposited at South bend. Drivers pulled into the pits demanding for safety's sake, it be cleaned up, but the crowd, including Crown Prince Umberto made such a hullabaloo about the delay that the job was only half done before the track was reopened in order to quell the impending riot.

The race began, Campari led into South bend followed by Borzacchini, Castellbarco and Barbieri, Campari skidded on the oil, the car overturned, flew about 50 yards through the air and crashed into some bushes. All three cars following also crashed. When the mayhem stopped Campari was found dead under his car, Borzacchini lived for only a few minutes and Castelbarco was carted off to hospital with serious injuries. Babieri was unscathed.

The rest of the drivers wanted to abandon the race but spectators turned ugly again, storming the track and shouting, demanding a restart. The organisers acquiesced and the grid reformed. Everything progressed well enough for ten laps until Czaykowski crashed into a tree and his car burst into flames. Spectators dragged the driver out but it was too late he too had died.

At the time the casualties were three of the world's top drivers, all lost in one afternoon, largely as a result of crowd disruption. It makes you think!

Another story from the book goes to show that team orders in motorsport are far from a new phenomenon. In 1936 a Grand Prix was taking place in Tripoli which was then a part of the Italian empire. As the race neared it's final laps Auto Unions driven by Stuck and Varzi were first and second comfortably ahead of the opposition. Stuck, leading, was given the signal to slow down which he obeyed while Varzi in second, unbeknown to Stuck was told to speed up. As they approached the finish Varzi accelerated and shot passed to win much to Stuck's disgust.

The logic was that due to the Berlin/ Rome axis of the time it was deemed necessary an Italian driver should win a race held in Italian territory. Unfortunately no one had told the Italian governor of the plan so at the prize giving that evening he made it very clear that in his eyes Stuck was the true victor. Varzi was made to look small, and he stormed out of the room, so upset, he later claimed it was the catalyst which led him to his problems with drug addiction.

Interestingly enough roles were later reversed when it came to team orders effecting results. Varzi was an Italian in a German car and 60 years later similar tactics were used but this time the car was Italian and the driver German, so no matter how much the sport changes, elements of it always remain the same.

Ends

AA.

## The Back Page



## Stirling and MGs

