

Northwest Vintage & Heritage Club

FRANK BRADY

For many years there has been an enclave of vintage car enthusiasts around Manorhamilton, with Lurganboy being a particular hotbed for such motoring activity. Though this group of vintage car hobbyists was content to indulge their motor passion with clubs in neighbouring counties, they felt deep down that there was a groundswell of interest in the greater Manorhamilton area for collecting, restoring, and preserving all sorts of older mechanically propelled vehicles. Thus the Northwest Vintage and Heritage Club was established in 2009 to promote the interests of the vintage enthusiasts. Initially, about twenty signed up at the inaugural meeting, and now ten years later, the club has mushroomed to

include over two hundred members, thus making it the largest club west of the Shannon.

The club holds its meetings in the Bee Park Centre and it is affiliated with the Irish Veteran and Vintage Car Club which is the voice, the custodian, and facilitator of the historical vehicle movement in Ireland. The word vintage is frequently used as a generic term for any vehicle that is at least thirty years old, and is preserved in a historically correct condition, and is therefore, part of the Irish technical and cultural heritage. Collecting, restoring, and preserving older vehicles has become a passion for many reasons, sometimes for nostalgic purposes, but also for an appreciation of the quality, character,





Alzheimer's Association Presentation

Back Row: Frank Brady, Tommy Taffe, Eugene Kelly, Bernie McGauran, Pauric Travers, Chris Cunningham, Liam McBride & Tommy McPartlan.

Middle Row: John Clancy, Sheila Gilligan, Mary Flynn, Anita Kiernan, Caitriona Charles, Helen O'Neill & Anne Cunningham.

Front Row: Frank McGowan, Tommy McPartlan, Sean Gilligan, Breda McHugh, Fabian White & Tommy Flynn.

beauty, and simplicity of vehicles from the past. The club has a very large array of vintage vehicles as many of the members have several vehicles. This collection presents a very impressive and interesting snapshot of the development and evolution of mechanically propelled vehicles over the last century in Ireland. The collection runs the gamut from Bernie McGauran's 1915 Humber and Tommy Taffe's Rio to the later day 1980's models.

The club organises and participates in a range of activities. Each year the club selects two charities and then the major fundraisers are organised in support of these causes. By any measure the Northwest Vintage and Heritage Club

has done extremely well as it has raised over a hundred thousand euros without huge fuss or fanfare through its core activities such as: vintage runs, raffles, donations and auto-jumbles.

Among the main beneficiaries are very worthy organisations such as: Cancer Care West, M.S. Therapy Centre, Northwest Hospice, Donegal Hospice, Chernobyl Aid Ireland, Epilepsy Ireland, Stop Suicide, Shout, Irish Kidney Association, Our Lady's Children's Hospital — Crumlin, Acquired Brain Injury Association, Alzheimer Association, Spina Bifida, Downs Syndrome, St Vincent De-Paul, and Fr Hughes' Building Fund. Though the charitable efforts have been most commendable, the club

stages and participates in a host of events that allows the owners to drive and display their cars.

This also allows the public the opportunity to appreciate these artefacts of motoring history, while reflecting and reminiscing on other eras. Convoys of vintage cars are a regular feature in the picturesque hills and vales of Leitrim and neighbouring counties during the summer months with scheduled pit stops at various scenic and historical locations. These stops are a welcome respite for driver and car, especially as the older cars may be a little incontinent considering their cooling system lacks a circulation pump. As reenacting old fair days has become a central aspect of





Irish Kidney Association Presentation

Back Row: Frank Brady, Tommy Taffe, Eugene Kelly, Bernie McGauran, Pauric Travers, Chris Cunningham, Liam McBride, Tommy McPartlan & Seamus Gilligan.

Middle Row: John Clancy, Sheila Gilligan, Anita Kiernan, Caitriona Charles, Fabian White, Anne Cunningham & Breda McHugh.

Front Row: Frank McGowan, Tommy McPartlan, Mary Flynn, Kaathleen McTague, Helen O'Neill & Tommy Flynn.

celebrating a town's heritage, the club's vintage cars contribute to the spectacle and add an aura of authenticity to the proceedings. In addition these vintage cars have become part of festivals, debutants' dances and weddings.

Recently, I noticed several men admiring a bevy of vintage cars outside a hotel where a wedding was in progress, indeed the cars, the bride, and her entourage were all beautiful. The club also stages their "ball bearing run", which is an extensive motoring odyssey that traverses nine counties in three provinces. While the convoy returns safely to base after these runs, a few huff and puff and let off a few blackish plumes of smoke along the route.

The club is also a great social outlet for folks who share a common interest or passion for classic or

vintage cars as well as being a great networking system for locating scarce and often rare parts for their prized possessions. Naturally, the members take good care of their vehicles, and they are usually equipped with appropriate spares and that generally includes a set of jump leads or booster cables. Well, what's good for the car can also be good for the driver.

Recently, it was proposed that the club should invest in a defibrillator just in case a driver might conk out. Most seemed to think it would be a good idea, but a few thought that one individual might be a little uncomfortable or conflicted about the idea. He was a funeral undertaker and this could have an impact on his business. Well, there was no need for concern as the member voted for the defibrillator, and anyway, he'd still be the last to let you down.

Thankfully there has been no call for the human booster cables as the club continues to purr like a well-tuned engine with minimal misfiring under the leadership of the following officers: President Johnny Mulreany, Chairperson Tommy Flynn, Vice-Chairperson Bernie McGauran, Secretary Tommy McPartlan, Asst. Secretary PJ Clancy, Treasurer Frank McGowan, Asst. Treasurer Johnny Clancy, PRO Sean Gilligan, Safety Officer Liam McBride.

Overall, the Northwest Vintage and Heritage Club has been a resounding success as it is a great mechanism for vintage vehicle enthusiasts to enjoy their hobby, while providing valuable historical artefacts for the public, as well as generating financial assistance for some very worthy causes.

Long may these drivers and their vehicles keep ticking over smoothly.

