

IRISH
VINTAGE
Scene

From
the **Archives**

Issue 4 - 2020

A FAMILY *Affair*





PAGE 4-8 A FAMILY AFFAIR

They may not have owned this 1978 Opel Kadett C from new, but a tough service at the hands of the Byrne family during the 1990s has been finally rewarded with a painstaking nut-and-bolt restoration to better-than-new condition today.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 125 OCTOBER 2016

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PAGE 10-14 COPPR FASTENED

Only built for a twelve-month period between 1956 and 1957, the Ferguson FE35, better known to most as the 'Copper Belly', is highly sought-after by classic tractor collectors today. This particular example has been in the same Limerick family since 1982, and has recently been restored to an impeccable standard.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 69 FEBRUARY 2012

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PAGE 20-24 YELLOW ALERT

This AA BSA outfit provided a lifeline to motorists in the Dundalk area throughout the early sixties, when driving was an altogether different proposition to what it is today.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 21 FEBRUARY 2008

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PAGE 24-28 A VERY IMPORTANT PROJECT

Surviving commercial variants of the Morris Minor are few and far between these days, so this stunning teal blue example tends to stand out at the events it attends. Of course, that could also have something to do with that great Kilkenny registration number!

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 72 MAY 2012

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PAGE 30-33 SHAKEN NOT STIRRED

Martini and Porsche are a classic combination, and this newly-revamped matt-black wrapped 911 2.7 is looking sharp for its next season of racing.

**RETRO
CLASSICS
Magazine**

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 15 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2015

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to Irish Vintage Scene's dip into the archives. In this free online magazine we go back in time to pick out some of our readers' favourite features from our fourteen-year history, as well as looking at a fondly-remembered event from the past, and a competition too. We will notify you every time each new 'From the Archives' becomes available, and will email you a convenient link to this free read, so you'll never miss an issue. Thanks for reading,

Thomas Heavey

Thomas Heavey, Managing Editor.

ALSO

PAGE 3 COMPETITION

PAGE 16-17 NORTH EAST VINTAGE AND CLASSIC CAR SHOW - MOSNEY

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UNIT D, GROUND FLOOR,
CARRAIG LAIR SHOPPING CENTER,
ORANMORE, CO. GALWAY, H91 KV8K

EMAIL:

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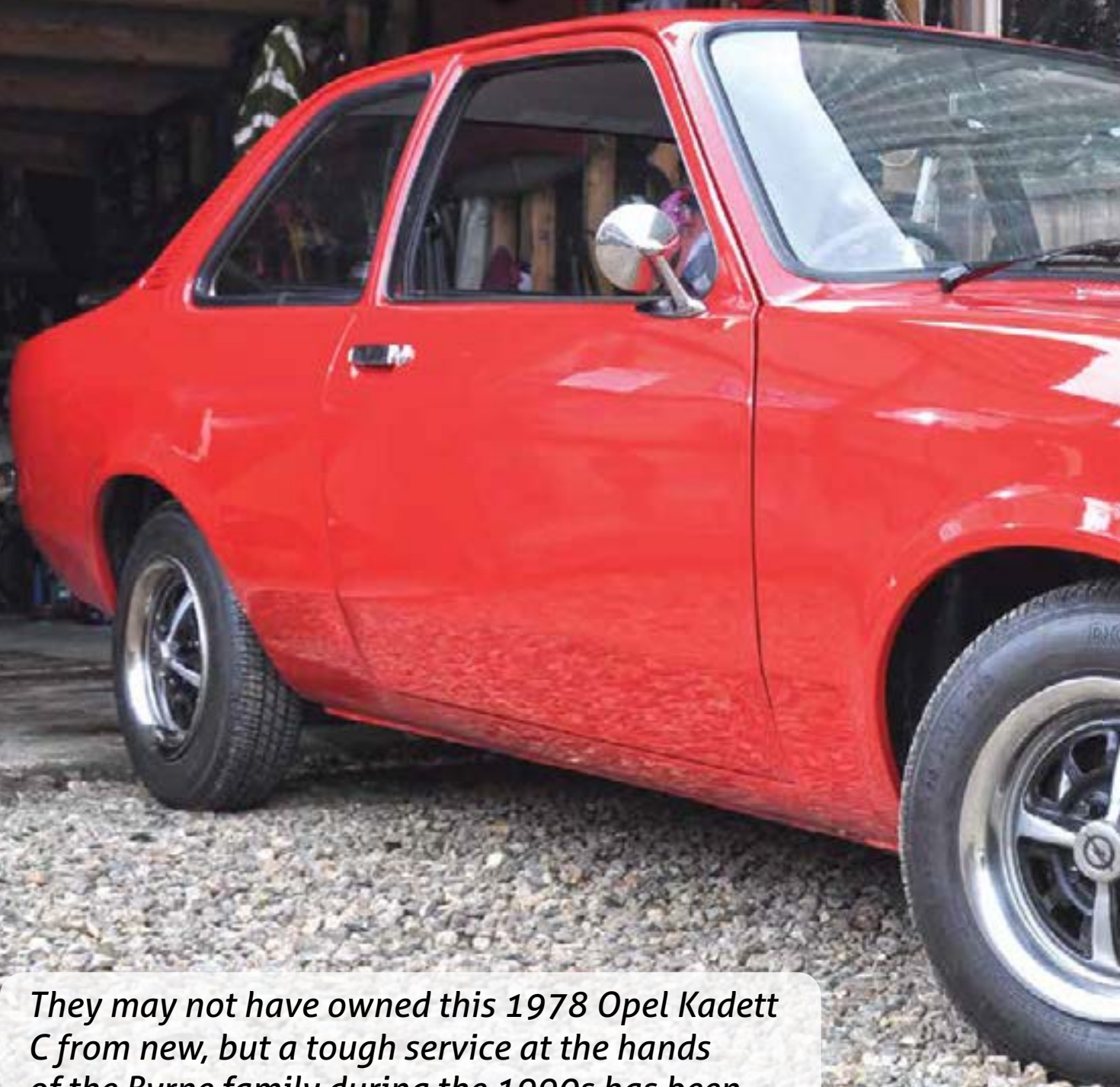
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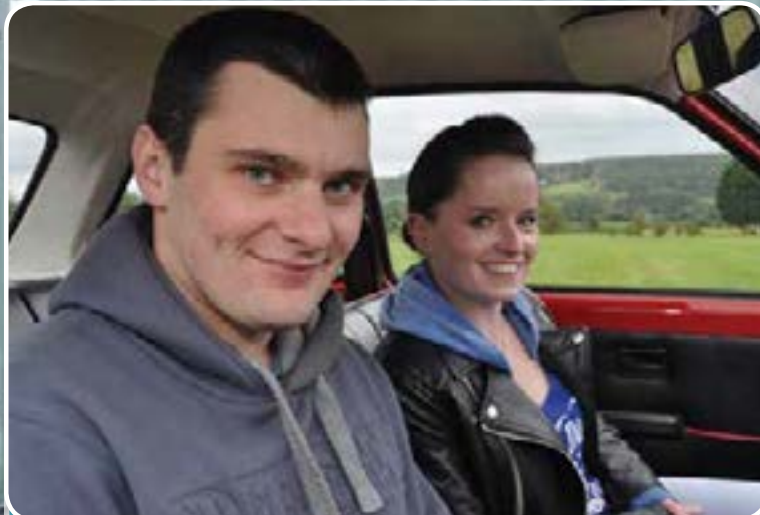
Identify the car? [\(click here\)](#)

A FAMILY Affair

Words & Photos by John Cradden



They may not have owned this 1978 Opel Kadett C from new, but a tough service at the hands of the Byrne family during the 1990s has been finally rewarded with a painstaking nut-and-bolt restoration to better-than-new condition today.



It might have taken a lot of money and work, but this family heirloom was done in time for Chris and Amanda's big day, and has been treasured since.

From
the **Archives**

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 125 OCTOBER 2016

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It's strange how any car, no matter how ordinary, can comprehensively worm its way into an entire family's affections, even after a relatively short period of service. This Kadett, owned by Denis Byrne from Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow, was first registered in 1978, but it was already fourteen years old by the time it moved onto its second owner, Denis's sister Ellen, in 1992. She didn't own it for very long before passing it onto her brother Tom, who patched up the door and side panels before giving it to his girlfriend, Michelle, who ran it for two years. She then sold it to Tom and Denis's father, also named Denis, who kept it until 1999, when he stopped driving.

Instead of selling it off, the Byrnes laid up the Kadett for a number of years until the family home was sold, at which point the family decided that Denis Jr should have it. At that stage it was in an unroadworthy state, and fit for the scrapyards in many ways, but it continued to gather dust at Denis's home in Rathdrum until about five years ago, when he started talking about the possibility of selling it as a restoration project. However, by this time Denis's daughter, Amanda, had developed an attachment to the poorly red classic, and asked her fiancée Chris Jameson if he could take on the challenge of getting it back on the road in time for their wedding. "It's the car she remembers her grandfather polishing, and sitting in it on a sunny day listening to the radio," said Chris.

Before going any further with the idea, Chris decided to have the body sandblasted so that he'd know what he was dealing with. It wasn't a promising start though. "It turned out I didn't have a whole lot left!" he laughs. But, the sentimental attachment to the little Kadett clearly won over less important concerns like the high cost and long labour that would be involved to get it ready in time for the big day. "After getting the car back from blasting I sat down and made a list of the repair panels I needed, and their cost" Chris explains. "I then ran it around in my head many times, but because the car meant so much to Amanda I decided to press on and forget about the cost."



One concession to luxury made during this restoration was the retrimmed seats, with black vinyl with red piping replacing the previous black cloth.



The Kadett C was available in two- or four-door saloon formats, but the two-door undoubtedly has the cleaner styling.

THE RESTORATION

The first few images here show the state that the Kadett was in before the restoration started, having been in storage for a long time in stripped condition and with plenty of rust in evidence. The sorry-looking shell was sent off to Enniscorthy Autobody for the works, including welding in new panels and a full respray. Once it was back in the garage the mechanicals were attacked, with the engine, transmission and suspension all being serviced and cleaned up, all in time for the big wedding date.





The 1.2-litre OHV Opel engine is known for its reliability and decent performance, and this one lived up to that, with the bottom end needing no work during the restoration.





The Kadett C interior was as basic as they came in the 1970s, but still comfortable. It's great to see the radio blanking panel still intact!

The list of new panels needed was a long one: new inner wings, new doors and sills, a new boot floor, new rear quarter panels and a back panel. Once they had all been sourced, there came a point where Chris had to decide if a cheap and cheerful job would be enough, or whether he would do the job properly. "I bought the panels whenever I had a few pound to spare, and once I had got them we decided not to do the welding ourselves, as I was busy with work and feared that if I started and didn't get momentum going that the project would have dragged on." So, the welding and paintjob were outsourced to Brendan Whelan of Enniscorthy Autobody, who completed the work by March 2012. What should have been the second phase of the work – the engine and other mechanicals, the interior and general finishing off – was delayed when Chris was laid off temporarily, during which time the restored shell was stored until he returned to work in October 2013.

Although the Kadett C was a hugely popular car in its day and now has a strong classic following worldwide, a lot of parts are now hard to find, such as doors, and are expensive to boot. Besides travelling the country picking up parts and complete donor cars, the family sources parts from eBay, TJ Motorsport in Wales, and German classic Opel parts specialists Dr. Manta and Opel-Classic-Parts.com.

Turning attention to the engine, the cylinder head needed a rebuild but, even with just over 130,000 miles on the clock, the bottom end was found to be in good shape so, aside from a clean-up and complete gasket refresh, it was left alone. The gearbox was stripped down and rebuilt with all new bushes and gaskets, and ditto for the rear axle. Besides the welding and paint, the only other job that was outsourced was to Ambience Upholstery, who re-trimmed the black seats but added some neat red piping that really sets them off next to the stunning red paintjob. Other than that, the restoration was a true family affair, with Denis, Tom, Chris's brother William and Amanda herself all mucking in throughout the whole thing. Luckily for Chris, Denis had owned a number of Kadetts for years and knew them well, not to mention had accumulated a lot of spares. But, Amanda was also very hands-on and helped keep spirits up in her own way, according to Chris. "She loved working on the car and still lends a hand on my next project, but most importantly she kept us fed so no-one had a reason to leave!"

What was that about his next project? Well, it turns out that although the Kadett C wouldn't have been Chris's first choice as a car to restore, he has clearly been bitten the bug. "I am now addicted to them for their shape, style and simplicity" he smiles, and has since been working on another Kadett C, into which he is planning to fit a V6 engine from an Opel Omega. He also has another Kadett that has been sand-blasted and is awaiting a resto. Needless to say, it's easy to see the appeal. The Kadett C has strong looks, neat dimensions and a strong motorsport pedigree thanks to its RWD layout. Not unlike a Ford Escort, in other words. Although Kadett C values are nowhere near those of RWD Escorts, this hammers home the point about just how much this was a family labour of love. Chris and Denis sheepishly admit that there was no expense spared in the restoration, which reached well into five figures. But, that mattered little when it was finally finished in time to play a star turn at Chris and Amanda's wedding, on the day that Denis Senior would have turned 100.

Opel Kadett C – Quick Spec

Years Produced: 1973 to 1979

Body: Unitary-construction 2- or 4-door saloon

Engine: 1,196cc OHV four-cylinder

Transmission: 4-speed manual/3-speed auto, RWD

Front Suspension: Coil-sprung double-wishbone

Rear Suspension: Coil-sprung live axle

Power Output: 54bhp @ 5,600rpm

Top Speed: 87mph



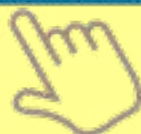
Note the fuel filler hidden under a hinged panel on the C-pillar.

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LEFT: A highly experienced engineer, Jim has produced a beautiful result for his first tractor restoration. The bug has now bitten, and a Honda 50 is in pieces in his garage at present, which also has a family connection.

MAIN: The grey and gold colour scheme of the FE35 makes it unique amongst its Ferguson and MF brethren. This one has been finished to an extremely high standard.

ONLY BUILT FOR A TWELVE-MONTH PERIOD BETWEEN 1956 AND 1957, THE FERGUSON FE35, BETTER KNOWN TO MOST AS THE 'COPPER BELLY', IS HIGHLY SOUGHT-AFTER BY CLASSIC TRACTOR COLLECTORS TODAY. THIS PARTICULAR EXAMPLE HAS BEEN IN THE SAME LIMERICK FAMILY SINCE 1982, AND HAS RECENTLY BEEN RESTORED TO AN IMPECCABLE STANDARD.

The replacement for the legendary grey Ferguson TE20 was always going to have to be a very special machine in order to fill its predecessor's shoes, and the FE35 that came along in 1956 was certainly a great effort. It was restyled and improved upon the TE in a number of areas, but didn't stray so far from the original that it would alienate any existing Ferguson customers. The trademark grey colour scheme was still in place, but was augmented by a bright copper-coloured engine and frame, giving the new tractor a highly distinctive appearance. Added to this was a new, more user-friendly braking system which placed both pedals in a conventional manner on the right-hand side of the tractor, unlike the TE which had a pedal sprouting from each side of the rear axle. More intuitive and accurate controls for the hydraulic lift were also fitted, and an hour/rev counter was added to the instrumentation to measure the productivity of your new Ferguson. Perhaps most importantly, six forward speeds and two reverses were available, double the ratios of the TE, and an independent PTO was offered as an optional extra, allowing added flexibility when using certain implements as their operation was no longer tied to the tractor's wheel speed. Four cylinder petrol, TVO and diesel engine options were carried over from the outgoing TE models.

COPPER

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 69 FEBRUARY 2012

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ER FASTENED

Words & Photos by Andrew Pollock, andrew@irishvintagescene.ie

It might have been an attractive and deserving heir to the Ferguson throne, but the Copper Belly was only to last in production for one year due to Harry Ferguson's departure from the Massey Harris Ferguson concern. Following this development, the model was rebranded as a Massey Ferguson 35 with red over grey paintwork and triangular MF badging, although the mechanical specification remained unchanged. This, of course, was the genesis of the iconic red and grey Massey Fergusons we know and love in Europe today, and the Copper Belly remains a fascinating and crucial element of the MF story. The fact that the FE35 is far rarer than its MF35 predecessors makes it a highly sought-after machine with classic tractor collectors today, but the tale of the restoration of the beautiful '57 on these pages predates that mentality. It was bought in Shanagolden in 1982 by Denis Hayes, father of current owner, Jim Hayes from Co. Limerick, not as a collectable plaything, but as a tractor to work the grounds around the family home. Indeed, like many other Copper Bellies over the years, its appearance had been altered at some stage in its past to make it look like a newer red and grey Massey 35. Jim was in his early teens at the time, and still remembers clearly the old Ferguson's not-so-auspicious arrival... "Jim Roche, the local tractor dealer, used a Merc 240D to tow us home after we broke down while bringing the tractor home!" he explains. The old FE35 was running poorly and was in tatty condition overall, but Denis was well known in the locality for his engineering skills, and brought these to bear upon the ailing machine. "There was a 'miniature overhaul' done on it" Jim remembers; "there were new rings put into it, the wiring was tidied up, and other bits and pieces were done to make it roadworthy to a reasonable standard. It was hand-painted red and grey, which was the way we got it. We did notice when we were cleaning it that there was a lot of gold underneath, but it wasn't of any relevance at the time."

The Copper Belly might have been in disguise, but after its freshen-up it went about its duties unaffected, shifting firewood and carrying out other tasks at the Hayes household. This it continued to do for almost another twenty years, until it eventually cried enough and was parked up in a shed around 2000. "It was fairly clapped out" Jim smiles; "it was running but very poorly, with water leaks and oil leaks, and it was impossible to start it." There it sat for a number of years, but the passing of Jim's father, Denis in September 2005 triggered a renewed interest in the old machine for nostalgic reasons. Even though Jim had only restored one other vehicle previously (a Triumph Spitfire back in the eighties) he had a number of good friends around him involved in the classic tractor scene, primarily work colleagues Pat O'Shea and Tommy Lane, and soon the Copper Belly project began to gain momentum. We hear that Jim's teenage son, Nick, was also a strong advocate of the restoration, perhaps for obvious reason!



DURING RESTORATION



Unusually, this FE wasn't sandblasted but instead was cleaned down to bare metal using wire brushes and elbow grease. Every single component was returned to new condition, and the engine runs better now than it most likely ever did.



ABOVE: No aspect of this restoration was overlooked, with all knobs and lever parts present and correct. Even the spindles for the brake pedals were rebushed.

The project got off the ground in 2007 when the tractor was placed on axle stands in Jim's garage, where it was carefully stripped of its parts. As this was to be a high-quality restoration with an eye to future longevity, all of the Ferguson's various systems were to come in for the closest of scrutiny. The largest and most important component, the engine was removed from the bellhousing before being dispatched to McCarthy Engine Reconditioning in Castleisland, where it received "the works"; the list runs to a reconditioned injector pump along with new pistons, injector nozzles, valve guides, eight valves, hardened valve seats, timing chain, oil pump and new main and big-end bearings, as well as a thorough polishing of the crankshaft and a skim for the block and head. This is one diesel FE35 that will have no problems starting in the future! Although many enthusiasts sandblast their entire tractor to eradicate the dirt and corrosion of the past, Jim elected to buck the trend on the basis that the sand can sometimes damage a tractor's various rubber seals, and he restricted the process to the wheels and front axle. Instead, the frame was brought down to bare metal the old-fashioned way using a mini-grinder and rotary wire brush, which took a very long time to complete. The results spoke for themselves, however, as the adjoining restoration photos indicate; it's not often you see a tractor in gleaming bare metal!

The engine rebuild and frame clean-down were two large milestones to pass, but there was still a lot of mechanical work left to be done. "Pat O'Shea was the mechanical man, and he was typically pestered with a phone call every Saturday morning around 11 o'clock" Jim laughs; "he'd normally answer me over the phone, or was good enough to come up to me an awful lot." The badly-worn front axle was drilled and bushed by local engineer Joe Bibby and the original radiator was re-cored by Limerick Radiators, while Jim got busy re-bushing the swivels for the foot pedals, repairing the various springs and linkages for the rear end, and rebuilding the brake system. He even turned his hand to making new front grille screws and a new throttle lever from polished stainless steel. Transmission-wise the worn-out gearsticks were replaced, as were the housings they fit into, the half-shaft seals were renewed, the clutch was replaced (with a release bearing being eventually sourced by Eoin Monahan from Cavan), the PTO seal was changed and the gearbox and hydraulics internals were inspected to ensure all was as it should be. All new steering track rod ends were also fitted as a matter of course, although the steering box was found to be in good order.



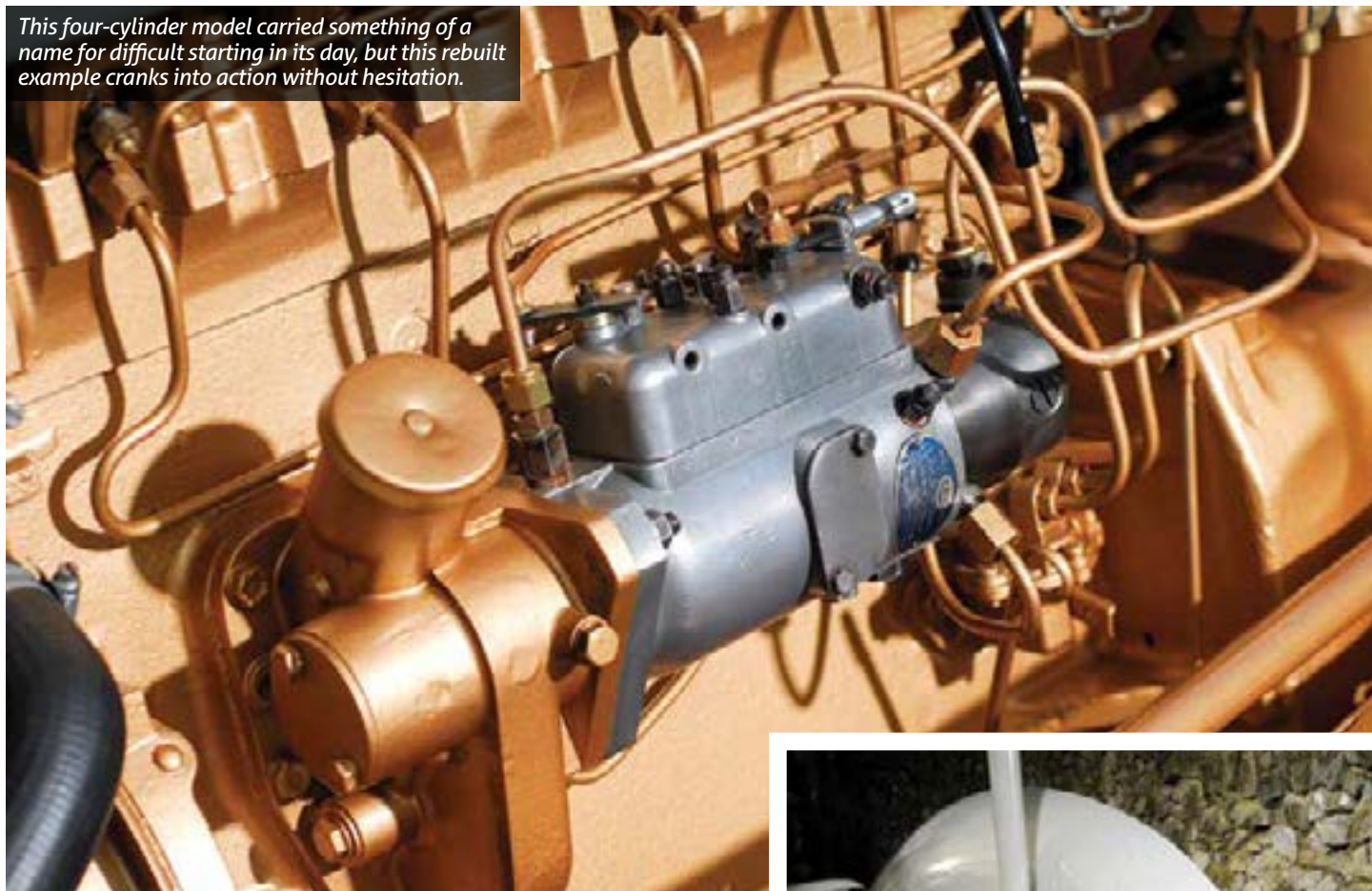
The original radiator was re-cored during the restoration, and all other ancillary items were either rebuilt or replaced.

An engineer by trade, Jim fabricated new grille bolts in stainless steel instead of using the generic chrome items.



FERGUSON FE35

This four-cylinder model carried something of a name for difficult starting in its day, but this rebuilt example cranks into action without hesitation.



For the all-important bodywork element of the project Jim turned to his friend and colleague Tommy Lane, a qualified panel beater. While the bulk of the original bonnet was saveable, there was severe corrosion to the bottom front edge as well as the sides near the hinging point. A highly-experienced welder, Jim tackled this aspect himself, but found that the new bonnet side panels he bought at a show were a poor fit, and needed a lot of adjustment. "I'm a welder/fabricator by trade, and I spent eight Saturdays out there trying to get that bonnet right" he explains. "I eventually had to cut the tops of the old sides near the headlamps and add the new ones from there down, and then polish off the welds." It might have taken a lot of unplanned work, but the bonnet is now as straight as they come. The old fuel tank was also repaired, with Jim making improvements to the original mounting system as he was at it, and a new battery box was fabricated using the old as a pattern. Once a new grille and pair of mudguards were fitted the tractor was ready for paint, and even though it had

been red and grey all through their ownership, Jim has verified from the Friends of Ferguson Heritage that it was indeed an FE35; the gold was applied in Jim's garage by Tommy during a fine summer's day, while the grey panels were dispatched to Derek Walsh's heated spray booth to achieve the best finish possible.

The debut for the completed machine had been set for the Gordon O'Donovan Run on the 28th of November 2010, organised by the West Limerick Vintage Club, and this target was indeed met. The Copper Belly's high standard of finish has been recognised any time it has appeared in public, and it never fails to draw a crowd. "I didn't visualise all of the work that was ahead of me at the start; it kind of snowballed really" Jim smiles, "but we had to try to do it right because of the family background." This FE35 has been in the family for thirty years in 2012, and with the attentions of Jim's son and also his nephews being trained upon it at present, it's unlikely that it's going to leave the fold in the foreseeable future...



Some vintage purists might lament the fitment of the non-original roll-over bar and seat; these were already fitted when the tractor came to the Hayes family in the early eighties, and so have been kept for reasons of authenticity and nostalgia.

Thanks... Jim would like to mention a word of thanks to everyone who helped out with this project in any way, particularly Pat O'Shea, Tommy Lane, Bill Conroy, Liam Flanagan Tractor Spares in Effin, ABS Sandblasting in Patrickswell, McCarthy Engine Reconditioning in Castleisland, Abbey Tyres, Derek Walsh for paint, Joe Bibby, Eoin Monahan, Pat O'Gorman, Dunlop Tractor Spares, Limerick Radiators, Old 20 Parts Company, Newbridge Plant Spares, Jim's boss for sourcing high-grade Castrol engine oil, and last but certainly not least his wife Teresa and son Nick for their patience and support.

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We didn't catch up with the owner, but this Porsche-wheeled Beetle is an absolute stunner nonetheless.

NORTH-EAST VINTAGE & CLASSIC CAR SHOW MOSNEY, 13TH JUNE 2010

ORGANISED EVERY YEAR BY THE NORTH EAST VINTAGE & CLASSIC CAR CLUB (NEVCC), THE MOSNEY CLASSIC CAR SHOW IS AN ANNUAL FAVOURITE FOR CAR ENTHUSIASTS NORTH AND SOUTH, AND NEVER FAILS TO BRING TOGETHER A TURNOUT OF EXHIBITS HIGH IN QUALITY AND VARIETY.

Words & Photos by Andrew Pollock andrew@irishvintagescene.ie

This year's running, held on the 13th of June, was no exception, and from early in the morning the very finest of classics were pouring through the gates. The layout of the venue always presents a great opportunity for clubs to show off their member's cars, and even though the displays are on grass the ground is very level and well-kept, so there are no issues in that regard. The autojumble is also part-and-parcel of this event's appeal, and this year several long rows of traders and individuals had some very interesting items up for grabs, from rare new-old-stock Ford panels to Mini tuning parts, and everything else between.

As mentioned, the sheer variety of cars on display is perhaps unrivalled in this country, with the club displays incorporating everything from

high-performance Japanese classic from the seventies and eighties to the grandest and most opulent of twenties and thirties saloons. The event is also a firm favourite with the classic trucking brigade, and more than a few colourful old commercials were on show to stir up nostalgia in many of the show-goers. Although the day was bright and warm up until around half two, the rain unfortunately then set in to somewhat scatter proceedings, but overall the 2010 Mosney Classic Show was as successful as ever, and remains one of the leading get-togethers for car enthusiasts on the East coast and beyond. As usual, the NEVCC again went to great lengths to present a fantastic array of prizes on the day, and indeed the list of winners indicates the diversity of the vehicles on show. A credit to the organisers, we always look forward to this event, and do so again for 2011.



ABOVE: A red Triumph TR6 will always attract attention; this is Tom Flood's 1970 Dublin-registered example.



FAR LEFT: This event is well-known for the fine display of vintage motor cars laid on by the host club, which this year included the lovely 1930 Austin 16/6 saloon of P. Morgan.



LEFT: Pat McDonald's 1960 Rover P4 80 is a fine example of this classic car; the P4 is popular amongst enthusiasts for its ruggedness and comfort.

Porsche Club Ireland had an impressive line-up on show, with both air-cooled and water-cooled models well represented.



The Gardiner-powered ERF KV54G of Ronnie McCrea was just one of many classic commercials on show at the event; note the cleverly-disguised living quarters on the rear of this lorry.



One of the pioneering front-wheel-drivers, Citroën's Light-15 is one of those cars that stands out in a crowd. This '54 belongs to Pat Fullam.



You don't come across many Commer TS3s at the shows, so this one was a rare treat for commercial fans.



Pat Mockler's 1976 Opel Kadett Coupe is a rare sight, as it is one of the pre-facelift models built up to 1978.



Could this be the ideal solution to the Mini's lack of boot space? Shay Martin's ex-feature ERA Turbo has sprouted this new appendage, complete with matching wheels and bodykit!

Prize-Winners

Car of the Show

John Daly, Dundalk: 1925 Austin 20

Brendan Gartlan Trophy

Kevin Mc Shane, Cooley: 1940 Wolseley 12

Jamey Byrne, Tinure: 1923 Morris

Gerry Hoey, Castlebellingham: 1924 Austin 20

Eamonn Clinton, Termonfeckin:

1927 Erskine 50 J

Henry Bates, Donabate: 1930 Ford A

David McConkey, Corlat: Model Thresher

Pat Clarke Duleek: BSA Motorcycle

George Gardiner, Lurgan: Honda Motorcycle

Mick Hunt, Howth: Bedford TK

Matt Brady, Newry: Opel Manta

Donal O'Sullivan, Dunshoughlin: Ford Pop

Peter Jones, Lusk: Ford Escort RS

Edward Connolly, Newcastle: Borgward Coupe

George McCartney, Portadown: BMW

Vincent Byrne, Dromiskin: Porsche 356B

Cecil Troughton, Newry: Land Rover S1

Tom Traynor, Tullyallen: ERF A-Series

Martin Ayres, Newry: Ford RS

Michael Flanigan, Magherafelt: VW Beetle

Noel Ellis, Kesh: Ford Capri

Richard Jordan, Portadown: Rover 16

Emmet Quinn, Newry: Hillman Convertible

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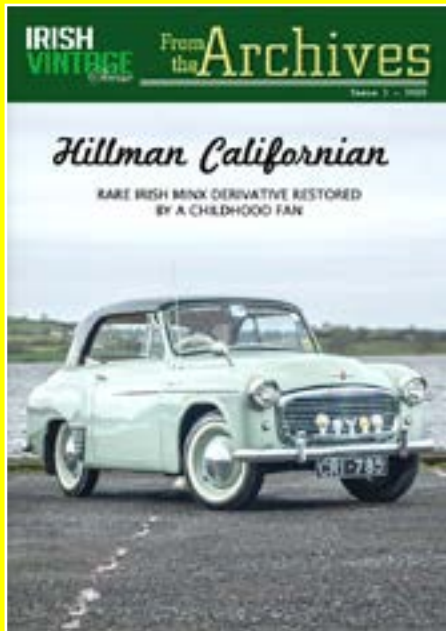
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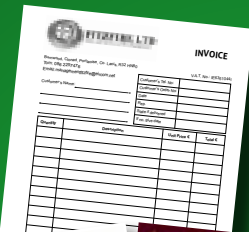
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From
the Archives

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 21 FEBRUARY 2008

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Now Alert



Text & Photos by Andrew Pollock
andrew@irishvintagescene.ie



Barry (left) in his father's uniform in 1961, beside the very bike he owns today.

This AA BSA outfit provided a lifeline to motorists in the Dundalk area throughout the early sixties, when driving was an altogether different proposition to what it is today.

It's a wet, windy November afternoon in 1961. You're driving the wife and kids down to Drogheda to visit the inlaws in your Ford Popular, and the vacuum wipers aren't in the best of form. Visibility isn't great as a result, and all of a sudden you plough through a puddle deep enough to almost pull the steering wheel out of your hand. The little sidevalve motor coughs, misses and stops. Cranking over the engine does nothing, and the battery loses more and more charge while the family becomes less and less impressed. Your trusty mobile phone unfortunately hasn't been invented yet, and the new condenser you've been meaning to buy is still on the store-man's shelf. You haven't seen another motorist for over half an hour, and you're quickly running out of ideas.

Then a little voice pipes up from the back seat; "hey look!" Through the misty windscreen a yellow shape approaches, too big to be a motorbike but too small to be a car, a single beam of light shining out of its nose. "It's the AA man!" the kids cheer, as

the thump-thump of a BSA big-single approaches the stricken car and pulls up. After a cheerful greeting, the soaked distributor is attended to and the car is soon up and running, much to the relief of all aboard. The AA badge on your front bumper seems to shine a little brighter than usual as the AA man rides off over the hill, his immaculately-turned out bike shining like a yellow beacon in the gloom.

Even though the Automobile Association is best-known nowadays for its breakdown and motoring services, it in fact came about as a response to the establishment of the first police speed traps, which were highly inaccurate and without any kind of appeal process. In its first year of 1905 it had 100 members, but this soon grew and grew, and by 1914 this figure had grown to 83,000. The AA in Ireland was formed in 1910, and one of their first implementations was the signposting of the country's roads, which remained their responsibility until the local authorities took over in 1926.



“The bike had got into disarray, and the fibreglass was buried somewhere in the garage”, Barry explains, “the bike was in terrible shape, terrible. I had a chat with my father one day about my memories of him as an AA man, and I asked him for the bike, and he said he never realised that it meant so much to me and that I could have it with a heart and a half. Then I could do something with it”.

The infrastructure of the organisation grew by leaps and bounds as the years progressed, and soon there was a fleet of mobile patrols servicing all of Ireland, as well as a network of special AA phoneboxes at which the patrols would periodically wait to be contacted. While reasonably effective, this system was updated in the mid-sixties with the introduction of the so-called ‘patrol service centres’, which maintained permanent radio contact with the mobile patrols. This made it a lot easier to contact a patrol in times of breakdown, as previously you had to rely on either the patrol being at his phonebox when you rang it or the generosity of a fellow motorist to look for the patrol on his beat and send him to you, which could be a hit-and-miss affair.

The fabulous BSA M21 combination you see on these pages directly witnessed these changes in the AA infrastructure, entering service in 1961 and bowing out in June ’66 with the introduction of the Mini vans and the patrol service centres. The AA man who rode it during that time was John Kane, one of five bike patrols on the Drogheda/Dundalk beat. This time is fondly remembered by his son Barry, who is the present owner; this

machine has never left the Kane family, and it is doubtful that it ever will. “Everybody knew my dad”, Barry remembers, “the big tall man on the yellow motorbike, and I was so proud of him as a wee boy. He went out at nine in the morning in all weathers; I have memories of him coming home late, and we used to worry about him in case he was in an accident.”

In fact this bike was John’s second machine, his first being another M21; being a mid-fifties example it was fitted with the earlier-style metal windscreen with a black apron and a metal sidecar body. 1961 brought the introduction of the fibreglass-equipped model, the bodywork of which was both lighter and easier to maintain. The M21 was quite an old model at this stage having been based on a wartime design, and indeed the civilian model had ceased production at the end of 1958. However their sturdy construction and torquey, low-revving engine made them ideal for sidecar duty, and BSA continued to supply the AA with the model by special order up until 1963. The M21 was powered by a 596cc single, with an 85mm by 105mm bore and stroke. The unit was of simple, rugged sidevalve design with air-

cooling, and with the rigorous maintenance given by the AA these machines were well-capable of racking up serious mileage in the course of their duties.

Major changes were being implemented in the AA in 1966, and Barry’s father made the decision to hang up his khaki uniform at that time. He was given the opportunity to buy the bike and sidecar, as these were being decommissioned in favour of Mini vans; it went into the garage of the family home, where it was to remain for many, many years until Barry made the decision to resurrect the outfit in 2000. “The bike had got into disarray, and the fibreglass was buried somewhere in the garage”, Barry explains, “the bike was in terrible shape, terrible. I had a chat with my father one day about my memories of him as an AA man, and I asked him for the bike, and he said he never realised that it meant so much to me and that I could have it with a heart and a half. Then I could do something with it”.

Due to work commitments Barry spends a great deal of time in the United States, and so he enlisted the help of Ivor Gore in Somerset. Ivor is a retired AA inspector and



The sidecar lid contains the full complement of documentation, including the triptych required for crossing the border into Northern Ireland at that time.

a recognised expert in such matters, and owns a number of similar machines himself. "I had the bike completely dismantled; there weren't two pieces of it together", Barry recalls, "so I was delighted to get it back as brand new. My father's been out and had photographs taken with the bike; he was delighted to see it." The fact that the bike hadn't stirred from its resting place since its decommissioning meant that it was very complete, and all of the original equipment, tools and bodywork were present, making the restoration easier. "Usually the AA badges were buffed off them, but in our case it never left the house so that didn't happen. It really was a fluke, so all of the equipment remained" he explains. The upshot of this of course is that, even though it has been restored, this outfit is a very original and correct machine indeed, and even features a full set of original maps, triptyques and other documents in the lid of the sidecar.

The AA were well-known for their regimental approach, and Barry has been keen to emulate this in his use of the bike. "The AA had many,

many rules for the patrols, and one stated that 'no other person may sit, kneel, rest or ride on an RSO (road service outfit) except a policeman in the execution of his duty'. My father had to polish up the locks on his phone-box and keep it spotless. Everything had to be spotless; boots, leggings, badges and buttons, and the sidecar had to have everything in it that should be in it, and nothing else. So now I couldn't take the bike out for a wee run in a pair of jeans and a t-shirt; if I take it out I have to do like my dad did; polish the boots and leggings and shine up the brass badges and do it right!"

Barry's uniform is a period-correct original, and is the result of plenty of autojumble searching. The motorcycle breeches were unworn ex-stock items from the AA, the tunic and helmet were sourced in the UK, and Barry even has the top coat for wet weather! Even so, this outfit never turns a wheel unless the weather is up to scratch, leading a much-more pampered lifestyle than it would have in the sixties.



All you need to get a 60s car back on the road. Sidecar also contained the motorcycle's battery.

Barry cuts quite a dash aboard the BSA in his full regalia, and on the day of our shoot I notice a great reaction from the public when he chugs past. It's almost as if he has motorcycled straight out of the 1960s, and many people come up to him with nostalgic stories from their own childhoods. "Everybody knew the local AA man" he beams, "people tell me that you could set your clock by the AA man passing your house, or that the AA man used to turn at their house every day." With our modern 'globalised' society, this facet of neighbourhood life has all but vanished, and even though the AA operates more extensively than ever, the patrols have become more faceless as time has progressed. Barry's RSO comes from a different era, one that is sadly unlikely to return; "as my dad says, when they went into the Mini vans the AA man vanished. He got into a van and was never seen again. He's still around, but nobody knows who he is."



Pye radio wasn't originally fitted to this bike, but Barry decided to fit it as it is of the type used by the AA in the late sixties.



Barry has been given official permission to display the logo by the AA itself.

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PRO



While Morris Minor vans are very rare nowadays, that 1971 Kilkenny registration marks out this freshly-restored example from the crowd.

A VERY IMPORTANT OBJECT

SURVIVING COMMERCIAL VARIANTS OF THE MORRIS MINOR ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN THESE DAYS, SO THIS STUNNING TEAL BLUE EXAMPLE TENDS TO STAND OUT AT THE EVENTS IT ATTENDS. OF COURSE, THAT COULD ALSO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT GREAT KILKENNY REGISTRATION NUMBER!

Words & Photos by Andrew Pollock, andrew@irishvintagescene.ie



Niall has been a big fan of the Morris Minor ever since his youth, when his father worked for Hassett's Morris/Leyland dealers in Thurles.

The Morris Minor needs no introduction, especially in this country where this unassuming little car provided loyal service in countless ways. Whether it was towing a cattle trailer, taking the family to mass or carrying a salesman up the Dublin road the Minor could be relied upon to rise to the task at hand. It mightn't have been particularly fast, glamorous or capacious, but its rotund shape harboured some very decent engineering including a proper monocoque bodyshell, compact torsion-bar front suspension, rack-and-pinion steering and overhead-valve engines on all but the earliest versions. The interior was spacious enough for family use, the available paint colours were cheerful and bright, and overall it would be hard to fault the Minor as a thoroughly worthy little car. A production figure of 1.3-million units built between 1948 and 1971 speaks for itself.

Another area of life in which the Minor excelled was in the light commercial sector, thanks to the van and pickup versions. These differed structurally from the saloon in that they had a full separate chassis, which was necessary to sufficiently brace the pickup's open bed and the van's bolted cab/van partition. The rear suspension was tougher and the differential ratio was higher in order to increase load capacity, but the engine remained unchanged from their saloon stablemates, meaning an A-Series unit of various capacity from 803cc in the early cars through to 1,098cc for the latest models. These commercials were cheap to buy and easy to run, and even though this was the main reason for their success it was also to lead to the downfall of many examples, as they were simply run into the ground and replaced in quick order. Of all the Minor versions built, the pickup and van are some of the rarest, and you won't come across too many of them on the classic scene nowadays.



DURING RESTORATION



These photos taken after the van returned from the soda-blasters show how much tricky panelwork was in store. The roof skin was rotten around its edges, while the wheelarches were also holed. The rear load area bolts off the cab section for easier access. Niall also picked up a donor saloon, which yielded many useful nuts, bolts and trim pieces.

With its double rear doors and tall roof the Minor van boasted a useful load capacity, and was ideal for light delivery work.



The Teal Blue beauty on these pages is sure to stir the memory of many readers, in a general sense as a reminder of the commercial history of this country, but also in a specific sense in its own locality. The reason, of course, is that very lofty registration number, which identifies it as a 1971 Kilkenny vehicle. It turns out that the registration was in fact quite befitting of the van, as it was bought along with a group of other vehicles by the McCalmont family for servicing their estate in Thomastown, now the Mount Juliet Hotel & Golf Club. The Morris van was delegated to the estate's farrier, and so it was very well-kept in its early life, trundling around the estate carrying blacksmith's tools for the most part, while being kept indoors at night. Once it eventually left the estate it took on a vegetable round for a local trader, but after a number of years the inevitable happened, and it fell into disrepair.

When current owner Niall McGrath picked up the van in 2009 it was in poor condition, with plenty of rust in evidence. A larger engine from a Hillman Avenger had been fitted, along with the matching gearbox, and the front suspension had been adapted to take disc brakes from a Morris Marina. None of these alterations were of great interest to Niall who, although not a pedantic perfectionist, does like his Morris Minors to be more or less as the factory intended, having genetically inherited a love of the Minor from his father, who worked at Hassett's

Morris dealership in Thurles in his day. Indeed, while this Minor van wasn't much to look at, and not even the greatest basis for a project, there was one crucial element of its character that made Niall adamant in saving it; that special registration, which had ensured that the van remained very well-known in the locality.

Armed with plenty of enthusiasm and the skilled help of his two friends and fellow Kilkenny Motor Club members, Declan Cooke and Dan Kennedy, Niall embarked on what was to become a two-year restoration project that saw a great deal of the Minor's bodywork replaced outright. After being stripped down to a bare shell it was taken to Soda Blasting Ltd in Kilkenny to remove all of the rot, plus the non-original red paint that had been applied in subsequent years. Once back at his garage Niall, Declan and Dan were presented with a large Morris-shaped sieve, but after ordering a large catalogue of panels from ESM Morris Minor Spares in the UK it wasn't too long before the van was on the mend. Declan skilfully welded in the new metal, and in the end most of the floor had been replaced, as well as the roof, front wings, rear wheelarches and various other smaller sections around the structure. The Hillman running gear was also given the heave-ho in favour of a good 948cc A-Series and gearbox, which was freshened up and detailed so as not to let down the cosmetic side of things.

Although this '71 van should technically be fitted with a 1,098cc A-Series, this nicely detailed 948cc unit looks just as good and provides reliable motivational power.



A period toolkit is a lovely addition to the otherwise spartan load space.

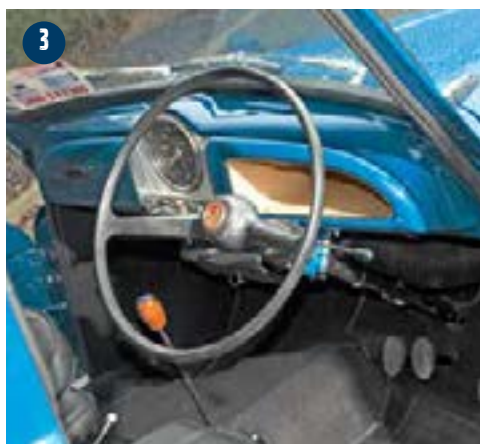


Niall was keen to get the van finished for the Morris Minor display at last year's vintage show in Danesfort in August, the Kilkenny Motor Club's main event of the year, and having lost a lot of time on the project over the previous harsh winter there was some pressure on to make the deadline. The skills of Mickey Murphy in Kells were employed to apply the new coats of Teal Blue, but even after this was completed there was a lot of work ahead. "The hardest part is putting everything together" Niall smiles; "it takes ten minutes to take a rubber out, but it can take two days to get it back in again!" After pulling a number of very late

nights the three lads did indeed succeed in debuting VIP 8 at the 2011 Danesfort show, where it brought back memories for lots of people, particularly as it was back in its original colour. As that was almost the end of the 2011 show season Niall has yet to bring it to many other shows, but is looking forward to this year's calendar of events as he is keen to get out and about in the van after such a long restoration period. We certainly can't blame him, as the best part of any project has to be that moment when you pass through the gate of a classic show with the fruit of your labours, where it should be enjoyed by your fellow enthusiast.



The rebuilt wiring is a good indication of just how comprehensive this restoration was.



1: The upper reaches of the speedometer are no doubt out of reach for the Morris van, but it wasn't built for speed.

2: A previous owner had engineered this very neat spare wheel mounting, which swings out with the rear doors, and so Niall has left it in place.

3: You won't find many creature comforts in here, but what is there has been finished to a very high standard.

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SHAKEN, *Not Stirred*

Words & Photos by Andrew Pollock



When Porsche rolled out their new 911 in 1963 as the replacement for the much-loved 356, they must have known they were onto a good thing. The rear-mounted air-cooled flat-six powertrain was unorthodox to say the least, so they had put in serious research and development into making it work. The increased power over the 356's flat-four was very welcome, as was the independent rear suspension to replace the older car's antiquated swing axles. It was a more substantial car with more interior space, yet was still small enough to be a nimble,

proper sports car, and it boasted a slippery shape that both looked fast and was fast. It didn't take long for it to capture the imagination of performance fans and racers alike, and 51 years later its appeal hasn't waned. Sure, the current model might be a behemoth compared to the original, is full of complicated electronics, and has a water radiator instead of delicate air-cooling fins, but the engine is still a flat-six and it's still in the back, and the overall silhouette is very much a development of the '63 classic.

RETRO CLASSICS

From
the Archives

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 15 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2015

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Paul's been racing historics since the nineties, but his first love for Lotus Cortinas has now been firmly replaced by Porsches.



Martini and Porsche are a classic combination, and this newly-revamped matt-black wrapped 911 2.7 is looking sharp for its next season of racing.

Nowhere is the mettle of a so-called "sports car" tested more than in the heat of motorsport, and the 911 has a peerless reputation in this regard. It has excelled in fields as diverse as desert rallying and endurance racing, and has exhibited strength and stamina as well as outright speed. Both qualities are well recognised by Paul Gray, who has been racing the matt black '72 on these pages in the Irish Historic Racing Car Association (HRCA) Championship and Irish Porsche Open Series since 2006. Paul, who's settled in Dublin but has lived in the UK and Spain in the past, lives and breathes classic racing cars, and there haven't been many times in previous decades

when he hasn't had one knocking around. "I've always been drawn to classic cars, but especially historic race cars" he explains. "I raced in the nineties in the UK with Lotus Cortinas, which were always my passion, but gave it up when I moved to Spain. Within six months of returning to Dublin I had located a Lotus Cortina Mk1 race car and campaigned from then on." He's been on the pace too, having won at the Phoenix Park Races in 2003 in a dual-drive with Rosemary Smith, and was runner-up in the HRCA championship in 2004. "I eventually won the championship in that car in 2005 - I regret selling it in 2008" he smiles ruefully.

We all know that you can't keep them all, and the Cortina's sale in 2008 was due squarely to the 911 you see here. It had been put up for sale in late 2005 after a very successful stint for a few years with Richard O'Mahony at the wheel, taking many class wins in both the HRCA and Irish Porsche Open series, and actually won the 2004 HRCA title outright. "During 2005 I had been offered drives in the Irish Porsche Open, and decided that I wanted to drive something different the next year" Paul recalls. "After getting various free drives in 911s I suppose I had been smitten, and was on the lookout for a nice race 911." Originally believed to have been raced in the UK by Mark Haynes of Haynes Publishing, this car was ready to roll with a proven track record, and so Paul took the plunge into the unknown, away from his Cortina comfort zone.

So, what exactly is the car? It started out in life back in 1972 as a two-litre 911T, one of the now-so-desirable pre-1973 facelift models, but between then and now has been converted very specifically for track use. The bodyshell has been lightened extensively to the tune that it now weighs only 850kgs, which was accomplished through the use of fibreglass panels and Perspex windows (except for the windscreen). A full FIA-recognised roll cage both protects the driver and adds plenty of stiffness to the shell. Racing-spec Bilstein suspension holds each corner off the ground, and all bushings have been replaced with stiff polyurethane items. In contrast to the relatively slim wheels and tyres this car would have worn when a new 911T, it now boasts fat eight-inch Fuchs at the front and nine-inchers at the rear, which have recently been beautifully restored by Jeff at Tallaght Powdercoating (see their advert in this issue). These wider rims are entirely necessary, as the old two-litre engine is long gone – the tail end is now home to a 2.7-litre from a later 911, which barks through a pair of triple-choke Weber IDA carbs to pump out 280bhp and 250lb/ft of torque. It's an impressive output when you work out that this lightweight car's power-to-weight ratio is now almost 330bhp per tonne, when most people's benchmark for a decently fast car is 100bhp per tonne! A racing 915 gearbox backs up the unit, and has been modified for shorter shifting, and the brakes are from a later 911 Turbo with Pagid Blue racing pads all round.



Triple-choke Webers are a 911 peculiarity, and sound amazing.



Rear wheels are fat 9x15-inches, recently restored by Tallaght Powder Coating



The front bumper is an RS replica item, which has a more aggressive chin spoiler.



The gear shifter is a trick-looking quick-change unit.



Paul is well held into the Sabelt seat by Schroth harnesses.



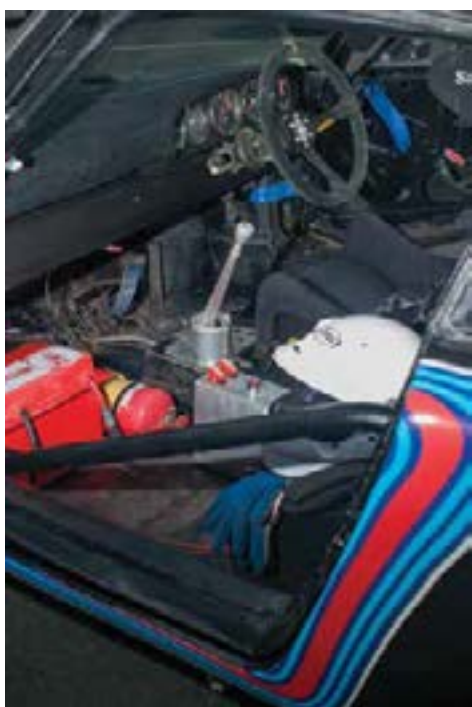
In place of the two-litre motor that would have been in the base car, this racer now sports a 280bhp 2.7-litre powerhouse.



Like most race cars, the cockpit isn't built for looks, but business. Note the modified clutch pedal for easier heel-and-toe action.



Regular Mondello-goers might remember this car in its previous black/red Carrera livery, where it could be usually found having a massive top-three tussle.



Paul takes his safety seriously – as well as the usual FIA cage and plumbed-in extinguisher system, he also always wears a HANS device.



The rear end features a 2.7 RS-style ducktail engine cover, custom exhaust and plenty of "speed holes".

THANKS...

Paul would like to thank Susie, Laura, Saoirse and Michael for listening to him only talking about racing and racing cars over the years, plus the HRCA racers, John Morris, Matt, Ian, Jenny, the safety marshals and all the team at Mondello Park, and Richie Redmond, Stephen Boden, Eamonn Harte and Des Quinn, who founded Numpy Racing over a decade ago and are all still close friends.

HRCA RACING

If you'd like to know more about the Historic Racing Car Association, check out www.HRCA.ie or email Paul directly on paulgray48@gmail.com. No matter what car you have there's always someone to race against, and we're told it's not as expensive as you might imagine.

It's not much use having a serious racing car if the soft bit in the driver's seat isn't up to much, but that's certainly not the case here. Paul has really taken this car by the scruff of the neck and made it dance, taking the 2006 and 2007 Irish Porsche Open championships and winning its class around such legendary circuits as Oulton Park and the scary fast Silverstone. "I love this car" beams Paul; "it's the most successful racing car I have ever campaigned, with 52 class wins or podiums out of 56 races. It is super reliable, and bullet proof." Every winning race-car is a team effort, and he is full of praise for the backing he received from Barry Whelan at Whelan Motorsport in 2006 and 2007, which contributed greatly to his wins in the Porsche Open in those years; "Barry and David did everything to make sure the car was flying in every race" he confirms, and he'd also like to give credit to Damien McCauley for electrical work and Paul Hickey and Peter Gerrity for the engine build.

The car has recently had some work and a cosmetic makeover, and will be ready to roll for the 2015 season. While it was previously black with red bumpers, it's now been redone in a very attractive matt black wrap with gloss Martini graphics, which was carried out by Jonathan White at Insignia Signs & Display in Harold's Cross in Dublin (www.WRAP.ie). This has really given this Porsche a new character, and we'd hate to see it bearing down on us in the rear view mirrors on track! Paul is looking forward to campaigning it in anger in 2015, and only has good things to say about the HRCA and everyone involved in historic circuit racing here in Ireland. Having enjoyed watching Paul's on-track tussles for many years in the car's old guise, I look forward to more of the same in the future.



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