

Kirkistown, Ireland June 2013

The Irish adventure started in New Zealand at the beginning of the year when a few of the West Australian crew were having a Barbeque at Peter and Bev Boel's place just down the road from the Hampton Downs circuit. Present at the party were the European team of Formula Ford drivers including Paul McMorrison and James Hagan from Ireland. We mentioned that the container was on the way to the UK and Europe for the summer and at that stage Paul invited us to bring the cars to Ireland and they would find an event for us to participate in. We decided that the 60th anniversary of the 500 MRC club at Kirkistown would be the best event and we all agreed to go.

Paul was then able to organize a deal with the Stena line so the total freight of our transporters, trailers and team was about 250 pounds return which was pretty reasonable given the normal costs. My car had pulled up well following Snetterton so Mandy and I decided to have a holiday in Ireland before the race weekend so if anything bad happened we could then fix it without losing out on a tour of Ireland. We arrived in Ireland on the 12th of June and Paul who owns the Crossle Car Company had agreed that we could leave the trailer and race car with him whilst we traveled around the countryside. We were given the address and there were no signs or indication of which premises it was. His reason was to keep the undesirables from knowing what goodies were up the drive. In the end I phoned the Crossle Car Company and one of the staff gave me directions to the place. They said come up the middle driveway and don't turn off stay on the main road. So with my trailer on board I proceeded to drive up what appeared to be a vertical cliff and found myself on a gravel driveway with a stone wall on each side of the camper. To make it worse it was curved and when the camper lost traction and with the brakes applied started to slide back down the hill; I knew I was in deep trouble. It finally jackknifed and the trailer was wedged on one wall with the camper on the other and unable to move in any direction – crap.

It was a team effort with Mandy finding some wooden logs and I found a heavy duty sling and tied the trailer and van together and removed the trailer hitch. Even with the brakes applied on the trailer it slipped down the drive only stopping when the strap grabbed it. The jarring pulled the van off the wall and with the wood and straps we were able to get it back down the hill. Finally we reattached the trailer, found the right turn (spot it in the photo) and managed to get to the top of the hill. Welcome to Ireland.



(The actual road goes to the right and I went straight ahead)

After our jaunt around Ireland I picked up the trailer and headed for Kirkistown. By this time Peter and Bev Boel (from Queensland and New Zealand) were neatly parked up in the pits and we hooked up the power etc and we then unloaded the cars. The next to arrive were Shelley and Ron Wilkin. Glenn Swarbrick from Perth was unable to make it to Ireland so I offered the car to another friend Ron Wilkin from New Zealand. Ron and Shelley had accommodated all the European team in New Zealand earlier in the year and Ron is a Formula Ford driver so the Alexis would not be an issue. The weather was fine and it was still light till 10 pm. Later Lance, Henry Marty and Bob Juggins arrived in convoy with the rest of the cars. Shortly later we were all there with Brian and Anne Searles finding their way to the circuit. We all unpacked the cars and walked the circuit to see the way it all went. We were greeted by Bob Thompson one of the officials who provided some inside information on the circuit and where the best eating places and pubs were located. Richard Young the person responsible for the event helped us enormously and was a great help over all the logistical issues during our stay and provided us with the practice sessions. The organizers were keen to separate us from the local Formula Ford group as they are extremely aggressive and give no quarter.

All the cars ran well and were packed away for the night. Gordon Dunne the MLA for Kirkistown together with Paul had organized a special function at Stormont (The Northern Irish Parliament) to commemorate the 60th Anniversary and to welcome the

international drivers and partners. We arrived at what was an extremely impressive building with two Crossle racing cars parked in the forecourt. The BBC television was providing coverage and Paul was able to give his formula 2 car a few bursts in front of the main building. We then passed through security and into the function room where we were wined and dined. The hosts were keen to reinforce that Northern Ireland was open for business and given the level of support this was now evident. John Crossle, the founder of Crossle Cars was present and mentioned the importance of Kirkistown in ensuring motor sport and Crossle thrived in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the highlight was the guided tour by Micky who took us through the whole building and we ended up sitting in the seats that are currently used daily by the key powerbrokers and the people who will be remembered long after we are all gone. Richard Drysdale, the Chairman of the MRC club drove us from Kirkistown to and from the function so we did not need to take our motorhomes. This was an indication of the generosity of the people running the event.



Friday was another beautiful day and we all went out for a large number of laps. Henry unfortunately ran out of oil in his gearbox and was unable to fix it without stripping the entire box. Henry decided to abandon the event and enjoy the event as a spectator. He had driven the circuit and the locals were all in awe of the grey motor powered open wheeler. Friday evening we able to have our cars noise tested and scrutineered so that was out of the way. The level of competence by the team was very high and they were supportive and helpful. Over the weekend the flag marshals were absolutely brilliant.

Many of the Australian drivers mentioned how good they were and perhaps we could import some to Australia.

Saturday was predicted to be stormy and consequently most of the cars were bundled into trailers or friends marquees for the night. The club has its own dining and function area and after dinner we all retired rather late into the night. What we did not quite understand is that the locals don't need to practice during the week so it was a bit of a surprise to see cars and trailers parked in our teams spots at 7am. It took a lot of persuasion and effort to get some of them to move. They turned up in the morning and grabbed what they thought was an empty bay. We should have put up some kind of bunting but in the end they were all good humored about it.



Australian and New Zealand Team from left Lance Carwardine (Jane Brabham), Neil McCrudden (Macon MR1), Peter Boel (Lola Mk5a), Brian Searles (Lotus 20/22, Henry Oosterbaan (Alton AF2), Ron Wilkin (Alex Mk9) and Martin Bullock (Chevron B17c) and we were supported by Bob Juggins from Absolute Race Engineering

After putting all our fuel cans down to mark our area we were then able to relax. The morning was overcast but dry and practice / qualifying was scheduled at 10am. All the cars went well but both Peter Boel in the Lola and myself were entered with the same number #5. My car was now numbered 15 for the British season. Unfortunately Peter's times were assigned to my car and my times were assigned to Peter's. Alan

Crocker who was driving one of Paul's Crossle Formula 3 cars came up to me and asked who was the guy in the Formula Junior who was 3 seconds quicker than him. Normally Alan would be expected to win as he is extremely quick (he is leading the European Formula Ford Championships at the moment and Paul McMorrison won it last year). So it will be seen that Peter will hold the Formula Junior lap record which may never be beaten. After speaking to the race office I thought the problem was solved and the cars would be assigned with their correct times. This did not happen and each time I went out I was pushed to the back of the grid in with the Formula Juniors. It made it bloody difficult to work your way up the field as catching Lance was not easy. The race saw Marty on pole in his Chevron with Paul McMorrison in a BDA Formula 2 car beside him. Next was a 1980 March in Atlantic spec then a formula 2 and then Lance in the Jane Brabham. I was further back in the Macon and behind Lance which I was happy with as Lance is very good at getting out of the blocks. Beside me was Peter Boel then Ron Wilkins from New Zealand driving the Alexis then Brian in the Lotus. At the start of the race the March had major problems and both Lance and me had no where to go and were swallowed up and the rest of the field were able to get past before we were able to get past the March. We both worked our way up the field with Marty winning with Paul McMorrison only 4 seconds behind after 18 laps. Lance came in 4th with me about 7th. Ron was just behind me with Peter just pipping out Brian for the Formula Junior section.

The second race was completely different with heavy showers during the afternoon and the track was declared wet. Luckily both Marty and Paul had on their wets and this certainly came in handy. I was once again sent to the rear of the grid and had to start well down the field. The track was very wet at the start of the event and I followed some of the locals to learn how to drive in the wet. It was difficult to see much given the spray. After a few laps the track started to dry and I was able to pass a fair few and Marty was able to win with Paul second, Lance was third and I came in fourth (although the results will show the Formula Junior of Peter coming in fourth).

During the day we were all presented with an A4 sized photograph of our cars in action together with the WARM team which had been prepared free of charge by Thomas Maxwell. This was truly a fantastic gesture and it will take pride of place in the museum. Photos can be seen at <http://www.racelinephotography.co.uk/photo18443569.html#photo>

After the event a presentation ceremony was given and Marty was declared the winner of the Classic Racing cars with Paul McMorrison second, Lance won the two valve category with John Hutchison from England second and myself third. Peter Boel won the Formula Junior category with Brian Searles gaining a second place trophy. It was a great effort by the whole team event to get there never mind the fact that we took out the major categories.

Saturday evening saw us packing up our cars and equipment and putting them into garages for safe keeping and then sprucing ourselves up and then heading off to a post event party or that is what I believed.. James Hagan who had raced in New Zealand had put on a party at his home some 1 hours drive from the circuit. By the time Mandy and myself had put everything away and driven there it was already 9pm and approaching my

bed time especially after such a long day. We had both dressed in casual gear and having being given the information 3rd hand we did not know too much about it. We turned up at the door of this mansion where everyone was in their best gear and it was almost a case of turning around and chalking it up to experience. James' house was situated on the bay and went right down to the water, catering staff were handing out the drinks and food and it was one of those occasions when I thought I should have found out more about the event before accepting. We had the good clothes in the motorhome but what do you do!!! We stayed for a short time and then left – it was a long day. In essence, I loved the Irish event. Apart from the racing and the fantastic countryside the three things which will stick in my mind are: The visit to Stormont, The fly past by the Red Arrows on Saturday and the photos by Thomas Maxwell



Before going to Europe I set very high expectations for the Irish part of the trip and they certainly exceeded all my hopes. The country is spectacular, the people are very friendly and I would certainly recommend it to anyone coming to England or Europe to include in their itinerary. I have raced in a number of places and this experience would be at the top of the list.

WARMest regards

Neil McCrudden
West Australian Racing Museum