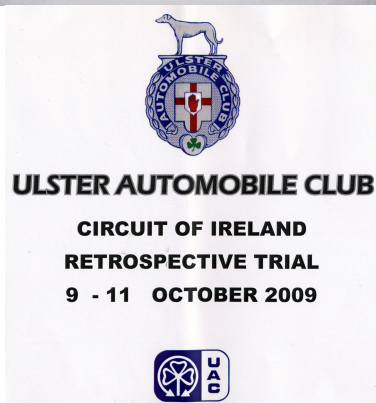


### *Circuit Retro* 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> October



A demanding night navigation section on Friday was instrumental in deciding the top finishing positions.



Frank Lenehan & Anthony Preston excelled, as they did in all of the other elements which made up this fabulous event, and registered their maiden victory in the Circuit Retro. They represent a worthy addition to the list of illustrious previous winners.

Second was the local crew of Noel Cochrane & Paddy McCollum.



The former's autotesting prowess was evident, particularly in the last test in the Premier Inn car park in which Ronnie Kerr acted as a pylon and enjoyed several circumvolutions with him as the vertical axis. Noel may not always set the quickest time but he does always entertain.

Alan Dorman, sitting with Steve Griffin, may have been slightly disappointed with third place.



More importantly for him, though, he beat Paddy McCollum on the night navigation section – he does have a reputation to maintain. He did drop a minute (shock! horror!), courtesy of an avoidable wrong slot.

The fourth-placed crew was a bit of a surprise. A not-so-clean run on the "night nav" spoiled what was otherwise a good event for Eamonn Byrne & Paul Phelan. The good news for everybody else is that this indiscretion suggests that Felix is actually fallible. Eamonn's fan club (Joanna and the girls) appeared at

the lunch halt on Sunday and his elder daughter Emma (4) enquired of Felix, "Why did you get my daddy lost on Friday night?"



Another "novelty" on this event was that Eamonn was beaten on about eight tests. I don't want to cast further aspersions on Felix but could this have been related to the navigators having to sit in for all tests?

Fifth were Dermot Carnegie & Iain Tullie. Dermot must have been expecting mechanical problems as Iris had sent him out in the same jumper he had worn and dirtied during the IMRC Retro – the car behaved impeccably!



This was Iain's second visit to Ireland for a retro. Previously, he had sat with Peter Scott in the 2008 TDC event. I would venture to suggest that this outing was a more tranquil experience. Dermot's faux-pas of the weekend occurred at Nutts Corner. Despite his many previous visits to the rallycross track, he managed to spin not once, not twice but three times during his run. Highlight of Iain's weekend came during the meal in the Lisburn Civic Centre on Saturday night when he won a Sebastian Loeb DVD in the raffle.





He couldn't wait to get back to M-Sport, where he works as a testing co-ordinator / liaison person, to show it to his colleagues.

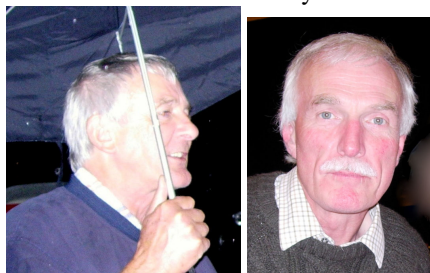
This Civic Centre outing was a great success and another positive piece in the event jigsaw puzzle.



Ronnie Mitchell took on yet another role when he drove the shuttle minibus so as to facilitate those with dipsomaniacal tendencies, e.g. Ronnie Kerr, who, when encountered in the hotel corridor on Sunday morning with a "nice to see you up bright and early", was willing to agree only to one of these. I was fortunate enough to be sitting at a table which included Paul Phelan and so was part of the winning team in the post-prandial quiz. The prize for this was a tin of Roses and a tin of Quality Street. In their own misguidedly generous way, Eamonn Byrne and Anthony Preston gave everybody at our table a couple of sweets before going around the room and giving the balance of the almost full tins to everybody else. Definitely an instance of where it paid to be a loser. Maybe they felt guilty at not having answered any questions and thought that they would enjoy a degree of absolution by giving the sweets away.

Robert Bolton & Ian McCulloch in the former's Wolseley Hornet (restored to full mechanical health, if not uniform colour, after a year being rehabilitated in various infirmaries) could have had a more profitable Friday night. They managed to overcome the other hurdles encountered without too much grief. They were happy enough to make it into the top six, given the calibre of crew ahead of them. They were rewarded with a very nice brandy glass for their troubles. Ian would like to warn his fellow award winners that this particular brand of cut-glass is not washing

machine friendly – I imagine that other brands would suffer similarly.



Ian put his glass in its cardboard box and, as additional security, placed it in the middle of the contents of his dirty clothes bag, for the journey home. On arrival his wife put the bag into the washing machine, shook, withdrew and switched on. It wasn't long before the sound effects suggested that all was not well – and so it proved!

Joe Reynolds & Vincent Fagan were not far behind in seventh. Vincent had driven up in the red BGT so that Joe could give his Ferrari some exercise. This was a welcome addition to the Premier Inn car park, despite its being black. It's not as though Joe doesn't like red.



As well as his Retro car he has another red MGB. Vincent obviously has a strict "need to know" policy vis-à-vis Joe as to how they are doing, as, when I enquired about their progress on Saturday afternoon, Joe's reply was "I don't know".



Probably the most meritorious performance of the weekend was that of

Rupert Leng & Donald Urquhart who were celebrating the tenth anniversary of their participation in this event in this particular Land Rover. The merit derives from the inherent unsuitability of the machine for the event. I have never doubted the competence of Rupert and Donald. They did many of their fellow competitors a favour on the Sunday, when, having struggled a bit, uphill, on the Slieve Gullion regularity, they were making up time downhill in spectacular fashion. Their frightening of a few stray ramblers cleared the way for those following. Rupert was affecting his customary sixties look, it having been a long time since his annual haircut in March.

Bryan Mutch & Ken McEntee were next. Bryan's intended Midget developed what proved to be an incurable misfire before the event so they appeared in a lovely MGB instead.



This had its own foibles – a wandering back-axle and an initially recalcitrant Halda.

Rounding off the top ten was the Midget of Michael Reid showing off that he can navigate as well as co-drive.



He was chauffeured by Paul Lowther, though Michael did take the wheel for the tests.



At this juncture I will digress to the Touring class which featured a ding-dong battle for top honours. Winning out, just, were Rory Dooley & Mick O'Shea in Rory's lovely Mk.1 Escort 1300E.



While Rory conceded that Mick is excellent company, he was a little disappointed in the discharge of his navigational responsibilities to the extent that he assumed some/most of them himself. Despite this extra work, Rory reckoned that being a driver is a much less onerous proposition than being a navigator.

Just pipped into second place (normally the class winner, it was probably time for a demotion) was Denis Bell's Toyota Celica GT.



He was guided by Colin McMeekin who had made his annual pilgrimage from his home in southern Germany. Colin is really a driver as well but does a good "sack of potatoes" job. He concentrates on following the intended route and doesn't bother too much with speed changes and suchlike which he finds rather tedious. If you are at a loose end on this event, it would be well worth your while seeking out the company of either/both of these distinguished gentlemen. They are extremely convivial with a plethora of anecdotes and useless information to amuse and entertain. The foregoing observations are positive. However, Colin did furnish me with a negative. He confided that Denis has one irritating impediment – he could snore for Ireland. So much so that they didn't share a room this year!

Nicky Ward & Ian Glass were third in this class in by far and away the oldest car in the event – a 1934 Talbot 105. Despite its rather rudimentary protection from the elements they survived the persistently profuse precipitation on Friday.



Ian did his first Retro seventeen years ago in a Marauder No.5 of which fifteen were built between 1950 & 1952. At that time, when a Jaguar XK120 could be had for £1500, the Marauder cost £2000. Before leaving this class, I should mention Howard Warren's mischievous suggestion that Rory's Escort should have won a prize for "best vinyl roof".

Anyway, back to the main event. At the time of writing I don't have the full results to hand so I will proceed in more-or-less car number order. Maurice Eakin's MGA blew a fuse before the start and misbehaved again on the event itself.



Conn Williamson had been persuaded to drive although it was a little frustrating, given the car's inability to pull the skin off a rice pudding. Davy Johnston did come up with a similar metaphor involving a soldier and somebody's sister but it is a little too vulgar to repeat here.

Davy & Ernie Campbell had their usual steady run. In days of yore Davy used to drive in the odd test on this event but he finds the steering on the Cooper S very heavy.



He suggested that turning the wheel was as difficult as turning "a pig going to hoke".

Philip Stevenson enjoyed his first outing in the Retro. He was in the hot seat of Raymond Kelly's Triumph Vitesse.



This is the latest in a long line of cars which Raymond has driven and it proved to be ultra reliable.



In contrast, the Rapier of Ken McDonald & Jack Giff did not behave well and had to go home for a new alternator over the weekend, amongst other travails.

The Mini Cooper of David Ronaldson & Paddy McDonnell also suffered mechanically.



The clutch slave cylinder failed on Friday though they got going again at the expense of a few tests.



Andrew Dorman & David Anderson disappeared off home before I had a chance to talk to them. Peter Moore suggested that they are publicity shy.



Conn Williamson's son, Paul, and Lesley Armstrong had their clutch break in Dundalk on Sunday, thus bringing to an end what had been a steady run.

John & Barry McMillan in one of the two Ecurie Cortina Mk.1s were happy enough, though Barry confessed to being twice as inept as John.



They had their customary battle with shy, retiring Ronnie Kerr, & Bob Cairns.



Both drivers sported bespoke waistcoats modelled here by Ronnie [he commissioned it for his last wedding day].

Will Corry was certainly a contender for driver of the weekend. He really should get a Westfield or somesuch and do the NI Autotest Championship to confirm that he is as good as he appears to be. Peter Moore was on the maps and was doing okay until the Sunday when an unscheduled six-mile sightseeing detour cost them a few penalties. Did the pressure get to him? Ronnie Kerr opined that it was more likely that his hair was getting in his eyes and impairing his ability to see the maps properly. Peter sat with Clifford Auld when starting off his navigating career. Will surmised that Cliff had had him for his best years.



The Midget needed some attention on Friday when it drowned out in the "puddle" at the exit of the Nutts Corner complex but this was the only hiccough.

Cliff Auld in his Triumph 3500 (homologation papers available on request) was his customarily effervescent self. He generated lots of smoke on the tests – fortunately mostly from the rear tyres rather than the engine.



He and the very competent John Lindsay were doing well until Sunday when Cliff's exuberance proved too much for the diff. He was able to get going again after a tow home for a replacement, but they had plummeted down the order.



Robert Dixon's Cooper S would have won the acoustic award, had there been one, for the evocative sound of those straight-cut gears.



For a change, (on Retros anyway) he provided some rare test opposition for Eamonn Byrne. A lack of oil pressure on Friday necessitated a trip home to effect a repair. I got the impression that Sam Baird wasn't too distraught at having to miss the "night nav".

Mark Mulligan was under the weather on Friday so could not perform to his usual high standard. As a result, he and Gordon Buckley did not feature as prominently as they had hoped. Gordon's failing a couple of tests on Saturday made Mark feel better.

Howard Warren from the exotic sounding (until you discover it is in Lancashire) Raby Mere was over for his first Circuit Retro in his Porsche.





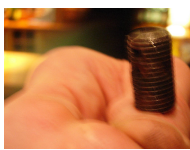
He certainly picked a good one. Whatever preparation has been visited upon the Porsche it seemed well suited to the fare on offer. Howard's purposeful piloting was also an influential factor. Dermot Carnegie, in his own subtle way, suggested that Howard would do even better were he not so fond of the pies. Afterwards Ted Gaffney, who was along for the ride, was delighted to be able to report that he had now navigated in a Porsche having already driven one in a rally and in a race as well as, excusing my indiscretion, at least one licentious liaison. Does this constitute a Grand Slam? Anyway, Ted's lack of experience, especially with the specialised style of navigating on offer on Friday night, blunted their challenge. They had a "reverse gear" problem when Howard refused to listen to the advice of their puddle note crew (Ted's wife, Karen). Howard wasn't impressed with the draughtmanship of the test diagrams – they bore little resemblance to reality – indeed "virtual" was an all too apt appellation. On the tests Ted was exhorted to "speak to me". I reckon that as drivers have little enough to do, Howard should have made a bigger effort to learn the tests himself.

Despite wife, Róisín, appearing on Saturday to spur him on, Trevor McIlroy & Roger Fynn in the former's immaculate Midget did not feature near the top of the leaderboard.



Essentially Roger is a driver and suffers from Ted Gaffneyitis, though to nothing like the same extent.

Last ~~and~~ but not least, we have the Alfa Guilua of Frank Fennell & Paul Bosdet. They were making their mark in the top six, as is their wont, until the bolt below which had hitherto been instrumental in holding the rear suspension together, failed.



This was just before lunch on Sunday and the car was rendered hors-de-combat. The penalties amassed resulted in a lowly finishing position.



Nonetheless, Paul garnered a sufficient number of points to come out on top in the Beacon Automotive Retro Challenge for which he deserves congratulations. The car was sufficiently mobile for Paul to be able to get it to the ferry so that it could be collected and fettled for the Rally of the Tests. Frank was due to cadge a lift to Dublin with Rory Dooley but there was some concern that there mightn't be room for him, given that Rory had won so many trophies – he did manage to squeeze in.

To finish, congratulations to one and all. Just one query – has the UAC been infiltrated by some quantum physics or similarly arcane influence? I noticed in the road book that I was to be cautious, not merely of “two-way” rally traffic, but of “multi-direction” activity. Just how many dimensions are there in N.I.?

See you all, and many more, next year.

*TDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTDCTD*

*More pics*



*Pretentious pic before the start*



*The Premier Inn did well, though late night imbibers weren't too impressed with the lack of facilities for this activity*



TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC TDC



*Being the "Year of the Mini", Saturday's fare was offered to various Mini clubs.*

*Just two Clubmans availed of the opportunity.*

[illegible]

*Arch organisers Aaron Mitchell & Kerry Moreland above and Ronnie M below*





*Peter Allen was first in the check-in gauntlet*



*The Start*



*Frank Fennell holds forth*



*Frank's jacket was in the back of the car when he was bringing a dog to the vet. He obviously has a craving for zips – the dog that is*



*"These bays are for disabled drivers, Frank, not disabled cars"*



*Frank buttresses one of the supporting columns in the hotel*



*The official rally plate fell off the Alfa but Paul came to the rescue with some very elegant duct tape work*



*Which of the competitors availed of this facility in Island Civic Centre, Lisburn?*



*The speeches weren't that long*



*Rory Dooley enjoys the alternative to "beer by the neck" – "wine by the jug"*



*Paddy McDonnell brought Jan along as a one-woman service crew*





*Ernie Campbell won a raffle prize – appropriately a Mini similar to his own*



*Beacon Automotive Retro Challenge co-ordinators Deirdre Gallagher and Noel Devlin enjoy one of the Table Quiz prizes*



*Deirdre expresses some dissension re. one of the quiz answers in her own inimitably direct fashion. Aaron survived.*



*The stragglers head for the last bus*



*The stragglers on the last bus*



*It's all a bit of a blur for Rupert Leng & Donald Urquhart*



*Paddy McCollum, the backward Gael, looks happy in his work*



*A rare moment when Maurice Eakin wasn't fettling*



*Is Paddy McDonnell on the run?*



*Mike Adair was at the start and on the entry list but thereafter?*





*Felix was definitely confused - he's got into the wrong car (Dermot's)*



*Rory plots*



*Are Mike & Roger praying for divine intervention?*



*Joanna and Zoe wait for their hero*



*Robert Holmes suggests that Gordon Buckley uses a cushion for better all-round visibility*



*Peter suggests to Will that it's rude to point*



*Paul and Anthony collude. Is FF asleep?*



*An Andy Hughes misdemeanour is avenged*



*No, this is not a Photoshop creation. Denis is really caressing a glass of water.*



*Colin looks forward to pottering around in the Celica for the rest of his stay*



*The three wise men, Stooges, Musketeers – take your pick*





### *Kerry and Peter engage*



*Ernie Campbell at ease. Is he ever otherwise?*



*Almost the last to leave Aaron sees  
Maurice off the premises*

[illegible]

*A few “celebrities” crossed our paths during the weekend*



*Robert Dickson doing his usual Peter Pan impression*



*Peter Allen (and Valerie) turns the tables*



*Brian Nelson and Will Corry*



*Ken McDonald wonders if Colin McMeekin always looks so forbidding*



*Retro originator, Niall Hannigan*



*Frank Lenehan explains the finer points to visitor, James Wilson*



## Ecurie Cortina on the move



*Motorcycle legend, Phillip McCallen*