

# 2019 Gordon Bennett Classic Car Run - Ireland



# Malcolm Pritchard



**2018**  
 In 2018 Tony & Andee Maddison, Malcolm & Norah Pritchard took part in the Gordon Bennett Classic Car run, in Ireland with organised runs and visits to Birr Castle, on Saturday, retracing the original Gordon Bennett route, on Sunday, and a run to a private collection of vintage and classic cars in Naas, on Monday. At each location a wonderful array of refreshments were provided. The Gala dinner was held on Saturday evening, a dinner on Sunday evening and a BBQ with live music on Monday. Success came on Sunday at the judging of the all the cars taking part, by the Cill Dara (pronounced "Kildare") Old Wheels Club, with Malcolm Pritchard in his Riley Elf winning best car taking part.



In view of the success of the Riley marque, the Gordon Bennett Committee approached Victor Riley at the 2018 NEC Classic Car Show, to be guest speaker at the Civic reception of the 2019 Classic Car run.

**2019**  
 After the very successful and enjoyable 2018 event we wondered what 2019 was going to offer, it was no anti-climax. Over 180 cars were registered, including seven Rileys, Anto Heneghan (Ireland) 1932 9 Special; John Lutterall (Ireland) 1935 Monaco; Tony Maddison (UK) 1936 Kestrel Special; Brian Gannon (Malaysia - the car is garaged in the UK and Brian is a close friend of Tony Maddison) 1936 Merlin Special; Declan Good (Ireland) 1954 RME; a new member Philip Dulson (UK) 1954 RME and Malcolm Pritchard (UK) 1967 Elf. Several more Rileys although not participating came along for the gathering and to meet Victor.



Drivers briefings took place each day at Treacys (on the Heath) and voluntary breakdown cover for the whole weekend had been arranged.

New for 2019 was the Friday Thatch to Thatch run visiting two of the oldest thatched pubs in County Laois, (pronounced Leash) Treacys and Sheenans. This was followed in the evening with the official launch of the event at Laois County Hall Chambers, the CEO, John Mulholland and Chairman of the Gordon Bennett Committee, David Clegg each gave their opening address. Victor was guest of honour and his presentation included the "do you know who I am" story. Another special guest was Rosemary Smith participating in a Sunbeam Tiger. This legendary Irish rally driver was a works driver for Rootes who took part in many events (and winning them) such as the legendary Monte Carlo rally alongside such greats as Pat Moss-Carlsson.



Drivers were registered and information packs including car stickers, maps, official programme and car grille plaques handed out, a delightful finger buffet followed.

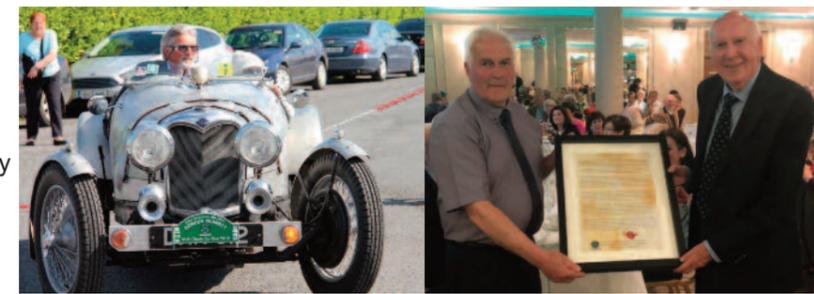
On Saturday, after gathering at Treacys thatched pub, a run to the wonderful Russborough House and Gardens, (one of Irelands most famous Palladian houses but unfortunately known for being the most raided house in Ireland for it's artworks by a well known 70's organisation) a house tour and parklands walk took place. There was an option of two routes for the return, either around Blessington Lakes or a more direct but still scenic alternative, after which in the evening the drivers' dinner was enjoyed at the Gandon Inn.

Sunday, well what can we say about Sunday. All participants were encouraged to dress either in tweeds, goggles and cap, or dress up in the period of their car. We weren't going to be caught out! Bridgit Jones came to mind! We went to breakfast in usual clothes, well it was side splitting experience - picture the scene, most lets say, were over 60, some dressed as hippies with Ban the Bomb sunglasses and Mexican moustaches and some in Twiggy style. We retreated and changed, we'll say no more other than take a look at the photographs!

After gathering at Treacy's, the traditional run took place on the 1903 Gordon Bennett route with stops at Moate of Ardsull, (the original 1903 starting point) Ballymote and Kildare. At Ballymote the town centre was closed to traffic for parking of the classics. Refreshments were again kindly provided by the townsfolk. The Fireman and Garda (Policeman) entertained us all, karaoke style, with such numbers as 'Mustang Sally' and Elton John's 'Your Song'. Travelling on to Kildare, via the Curragh, refreshments were again provided and the Cill Dara Car Club judged the 'best car', sadly this year it was not a Riley, but a rather stunning 1955 MG TF.



The day was concluded with the Gala Dinner, with Victor being presented with a mounted copy of the news report of the 1903 Gordon Bennett Cup race. Live music followed for those who had enough energy left to dance.



Monday, the final day, again after gathering at Treacys, a run was arranged to Kilcullen (the original capital of Ireland). Participants of the Gordon Bennett Classic Car run had been invited to celebrate their 700 year anniversary. We were welcomed with generous hospitality and a presentation of the town's history in the town hall. Seating was rather unique and took the form of Volvo car front leather seats. The story goes that one of the committee bought a new Volvo car and was invited to Sweden for a factory visit. During the visit he spotted a large number of seats, belonging to the outgoing model, asking the destiny of these seats Volvo responded saying the were going to be recycled, the committee member said "we can recycle them for you". Two weeks later 114 Volvo seats turned up in Kilcullen destined for the town hall!

We left Kilcullen for Treacys, and there found a craft fair, showcasing local food and craft products, this had been set up around the Gordon Bennett marquee. The weekend concluded with a BBQ live music and lots of craic (fun).

We weren't disappointed, the organisation was excellent, relaxed and low key, the atmosphere was extremely friendly, the venues greeted us warmly with wonderful hospitality and the Gordon Bennett committee once again excelled.

Special thanks must go to David Clegg, Chairman and the committee members of the Gordon Bennett Organising Committee; Declan Good with his RME 1500 and Philip Dulson also with his RME 1500 for looking after Victor so well throughout the weekend.

No doubt you can guess what is in our diaries for 2020, a highly recommended event which we suggest considering in your events diary, the website is: <https://www.gordonbennettclassic.ie>

Who was Gordon Bennett? We'll find out in the October Edition.

Malcolm Pritchard

