

Kilmaley Vintage Show

It was the day that six weeks of endless sunshine decided to, well, end, and although the forecast was for sunshine and showers it was certain that the Kilmaley Vintage Show and Tractor Run would go ahead as planned and what a great little event it turned out to be.

Kilmaley is a village just to the west of Ennis in County Clare and Organising the show was Gerry Keane who I had visited a few weeks earlier to see his Crossley LL hot bulb engine. Naturally he had it here along with much of the rest his collection of stationery engines and tractors which, remarkably, included a rather bulky Ruston and Hornsby diesel engine from the 30's. Remarkable because just three weeks earlier it was a half completed restoration project lying in his workshop with its specially built trailer still only a skeleton of steel in another barn. It was a grand effort by Gerry and his sons, Brian and Ger, to get it together on time especially since they are also so involved in planning the show as well, never a task to be underestimated.

Besides the vintage farm machinery there turned out to be a grand collection of cars plus a handful of trucks and bikes and my eye was immediately caught by the seductive shape of an E-type Jag. Now, if there was ever an exercise in symbolism that epitomized the sixties then this is it. Anyway, this particular example was brought to the show by Liam Harrigan of Ennis who had her beautifully turned out for the occasion and as it lay poised in the long grass I could swear I saw it wink as the girls walked by.

Also amongst the cars was something a little more rugged, a country lad to the E-Types smooth lothario in the guise of a series III Land Rover. This particular chappie was made 38 years ago, and yet such is the familiarity of these old darlings that it seems hardly plausible. Just how many amongst the multitude of 4X4's on the road today will survive beyond even their 20th, let alone see their fortieth birthday is a question yet to be answered but it won't be a big number I'm sure. The expense of repair will see to that.

The fire brigade also put in an appearance, thankfully not to answer any particular emergency in this case (and it wasn't the real fire brigade either) but simply as an excuse to show off a splendid Merryweather appliance from 1931. Her looks belie her size, being far bigger than one thinks from a distance. Her massive pump and outlet valves dominate the rear like a prize cow displaying a bulging udder whilst her bell proved a magnet for the youngsters who queued to up to ring it.

All in all the number of cars and trucks attending the show, probably not far off the 100 mark, reinforced the view that this is a very strong sector of the Irish vintage scene, probably due as much to their availability and close personal connotations. The pride that people now take in older models which the modern industry would rather forget is impressive indeed and serves to remind us of just how rapid progress has been in the automotive world.

Pat Meehan had brought along his Honda Goldwing in absolutely mint condition, pointing out that he likes to ride it on a regular basis during the summer months, which after all, is the best way to look after it. Honda is not in the habit of getting much wrong and the Goldwing formula has been an ongoing success since its inception in 1974. This particular 1977 example is a delight to the eye. The shape and style suggests effortless cruising power with an elegance that is sadly out of fashion nowadays.

At the other end of the motor cycling scale was a Honda CB175 and step through moped also from the seventies being shown by Tom Nugent. Basic and lowly these models may be they still hold a place in many people's hearts and were no doubt the first bikes of many more present day riders than may care to admit it. Moving back in time there was an AJS from the Twenties, a 350 H6 I think but I didn't catch the fellow to ask. Don't you just love these old motors where everything is on show? Push rods, tappets, valve springs, they are all there snapping away at the ankles as you gently doodle along. You can understand the enthusiasm for plus fours in the early days of motorcycling.

Fergies and Fordsons were much in evidence of course but other makes were playing their part. A smart lick of paint on a sound vehicle will always draw the attention and this was most definitely the case with the Hanomag belonging to Gerad Leahy. Not only was it fresh and tidy but it also had a leaf spring attached to its front axle which must have softened the ride to a certain extent although the actual solid mounting was still retained.. In contrast to the pristine condition of the Hanomag was a twin cylinder Zetor 25 from 1956 . This was very much in a working condition but none the less fascinating for it. It has been said that Zetors were often sold too cheap and so fell into the wrong hands, hands that were not really capable or interested in maintaining them properly which led to an undeserved reputation for unreliability. I've always thought the Zetor to be worthy of a fairer hearing and the many Crystals that are still about are probably a better testament to their ability.

It's good to see that as much attention is now being paid to the tools that the tractors were hitched up to as the machines themselves. Conner O'Brian of Mullagh. Had brought along a rather fine peat cart. The frame had been pulled from the undergrowth but the sides had been hung in a barn for the last forty years or so up on the Burren. Reassembly, a new set of wheels and a paint job has brought back to life something of Ireland's not too distant pass.

Just as the eye is caught by a bright tractor so the ear is caught by a happy sounding barn engine as our US cousins insist on calling them, and there was none more cheerful than the 8hp Skandia two stroke hot bulb that was popping away in a most business like manner. Believed to be built for marine use it was brought along by Tom McGrath of Corrafin. Also going well was a Bradford Gas Engine Co spark ignition motor of 2.5 hp.

Its owner, Noel Wrin of Nenagh kindly took some time to demonstrate its flick magneto mechanism. A devilishly simple idea but one can't imagine it working well much above the average 400-500 rpm that these smaller engines turned at.

Around mid afternoon word spread of another event and a small crowd gathered in one corner of the field as a Fordson Major was carefully lined up with the Gerry's Ruston and Hornsby diesel engine. A belt was attached to the respective pulley's and with a slight chuff from the tractor the engine was brought up to speed, after just two blank firings she came to life and was running for the first time in public since restoration. There was a ripple of appreciation amongst the audience for it was something of a crowning glory for Gerry and his team after putting on such a great little show.

Photo captions.

Image No.

1797. E-Type Jag, Just watching the girls go by.
1780. Conner O'Brian supporting an Irish tradition.
1744. Merryweather fire engine patiently awaits the call of duty.
1815. Ankle snapping valve gear on an AJS.
1790. Elegance, style and purpose sums up the Honda Goldwing.
1802. Continental Comfort with a leafspring on a Hanomag.
1769. Bradford Gas Engine with flick magneto sitting proudly on top.
1788. Zetor 25. A greater contribution than many would care to admit.
1818. Firing up the Ruston and Hornsby for the first time in public.
1807. Skandia two stroke. Running from here to eternity.
1741. Well, where would you mount a mirror on a Fergie?
1794. Memories of the family car. A Ford Corsair from the sixties.
1783. An albion chaff cutter. One of the many machines presented by James Ruane.
1761. Small but perfectly formed. The 2007 Kilmaley Vintage Show.