

Our Very Own Scruffy Neck MCC Member

AIDAN BROWNE COMPETES AT THE TT 2013



How did you get started in side car racing?

I think it was the Falcons Rally in Waterford when I met up with John F from Tipp and I hadn't seen him in ages. Anyway while we were talking he said he was busy racing sidecars which I didn't have a clue about but sounded like good craic. Well after a heap of bottles of McArdles I said if you're stuck for a passenger give me a shout. 2 weeks later Mick Donovan from Limerick gave me a call and asked me would I like to try it out as there was a practice day in Mondello. Well I gave it a go and have been hooked ever since.

How do you suggest someone gets started within Road Racing/ Side Cars?

Road racing with sidecars has been banned by the MCUI in Ireland for a good number of years so the only place to do the roads are the Isle of Man (TT & Southern 100), or Oliver's Mount Scarborough, but you have to compete for at least 2 years on the short circuits to get you're A licence for the road. I'd say if someone wanted to get start the Irish Sidecar club is a good start or just talk to any of the lads at the short circuit meets. Where always trying to encourage more people to take it up and I must say in the last couple of years the field has doubled.

How do you find the cost of competing?

The costs are not too bad once you have the bike when it comes to short circuits, and often the tyres

are the biggest expense but unlike the solo boys you could get half a season out of a set. When it comes to the TT and over the water trips the cost really rack up. But it's possible to get started and have a full season relatively cheaply and remember there are two of you to split the costs. One thing about the sidecar boys is there is great comradery between the teams such as recycling of tyres from the top boys to lads starting out or if anyone is stuck there is usually an army of people to get you going again. Last year our swing arm broke with 1 race to go where we had to finish 2nd to get a 2nd place in the championship. I lost count of how many people were running around helping us, mostly from the other teams.

Do you find it hard to get sponsorship deals?

Sponsorship is pretty tough to get but the odd litre of oil or petrol money is always received gratefully. I must say when it comes to doing the TT people really dig deep we got lots of sponsorship and fundraisers run for us this year which really helped. That's not to say that the credit card is still not on fire at the back of the drawer as I'm afraid to look at it.

Who was your inspiration in getting started?

I must say I didn't have any inspiration when I started I kind of fell into it but one moment kind of stands out was watching the footage of Nick Crow and Dave Molyneux coming around the mountain in the TT and the soundtrack was The Automatic – Monster ('What's

that coming over the hill'), and I was in awe of them, and then I still not sure how I was there the following year 2009 competing.

How do you cope with the dangers of Road Racing/ Side Car?

I guess you try not to think about it. I'm a passenger so you really have to have faith in your driver Pa Gill from Limerick for the last couple of years but it was brought home this year at the TT. On the Wednesday night practice the outfit in front of us went straight into the bank in front of us up the mountain near 'The Veranda' at over 100mph. We were right behind and just saw bodies and wreckage all over the road and nobody moving. But we went to the 2 people and held their hands and tried to keep them calm, within seconds the marshals were there and the helicopter was on the scene in less than 10 minutes. It's amazing how professional the marshals and everyone involved is and within minutes we had them on body boards and in the helicopter. Both will make a full recovery thankfully, but you can't dwell on it and you have to kind of fool yourself and say it won't happen to me.

Does your family life suffer with your love for Road Racing or do they get involved?

Well I must give full thanks to my wife Aedín who often has to stay at home with the 2 young lads as I'm gone for another weekend. But the short circuit season in Ireland is not too hectic as there are only a couple of tracks so there are between 12-14 rounds. Most are 1 day with a couple of weekends. The TT is the biggest challenge that's 2 weeks and that takes some juggling.

Titles you have won or would like to achieve?

It started out I'd like a finisher's medal at the TT but after getting them I'd like to get a replica from the TT. We were flying this year but unfortunately we blew an engine in the 2nd race, so some unfinished business there. I'd also like to win the Irish Masters, we were 2nd last year. The biggest problem with sidecar racing in Ireland is that the field is not massive, about 20 outfits if everyone is out but there are 2 types of bikes the Formula 1 - 1000cc bikes and the Formula 2 - 600cc bikes and everyone competes in the same class. We use to run formula 1 but for road racing Formula 2 is the only bike allowed as the F1's are too unstable. So we have to scrap with the big bikes which give

for some good racing as we often have better corner speed but where the track has lots of straights it's hard to keep up. Needless to say we give it a good shot and have had many 2nd's and 3rds to the F1's.

How do you think Road Racing compares to Circuit Racing?

Short circuit can be great fun when it gets thick and heavy especially with the sidecars as there more often than not will be paint exchanged in the battles. Your safe in the knowledge that for the most part if something happens or you fall out (which I have done), you should be OK. The road racing is a different animal when you're going beside those walls at speed you really know you're alive and the buzz at the end of a race or even a practice is unreal. Sometimes it could be hours later when you think of another moment in the race and start grinning again. Road racing can often be less work than short circuit racing too. For example 8 laps of Bishopscourt, I would get of the bike with both arms falling off covered in bruises as there are so many quick change chicanes, where as the roads are more flowing, not saying you don't have to work hard but you get rest periods in between. Give me 37 ¾ miles of the TT any day over 8 laps of Bishopscourt.

Riders and Passengers

Riders are driving in a kneeling position with the handlebars often near parallel to the forks and the gear change and brake pedal behind them. All brakes are worked off the one pedal and the bias is adjusted to brake on the 3 wheels by varying amounts. F1 bikes have the engine behind the rider and the chassis is longer. F2 bikes have the engine under the rider's belly.

People that don't know a lot about the sport often wonder what the hell I'm doing jumping around the back of the bike for but without my ass hanging out for a left hander the chances are the chair wheel will come up in the air and flip the bike. The reason I'm over the driver on the right hander's is to put weight on the rear of the bike and get drive from the back wheel and extra grip on the front depending how far forward or back I am. So the monkey on your back can sometimes be helpful.

Well Done Aidan and your achievements

Best of Luck in the future

BRENDA IRISH BIKERS BIBLE

