

National Motor Museum takes Napier Gordon Bennett to Ireland

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One of Britain's oldest racing cars was recently taken to Ireland by the National Motor Museum, to participate in a significant anniversary rally...

The National Motor Museum tells us...



(All words and photographs from the National Motor Museum).

The veteran 1903 Napier Gordon Bennett attended the 120th anniversary of the 1903 'Gordon Bennett' cup race which took place in southern Ireland, following an invitation by the Irish Veteran and Vintage Car Club.

In 1903, the prestigious Gordon Bennett Race was held in the Kildare and Athy area of Ireland. Ireland was chosen for the race because racing was illegal on British public roads, and the Napiers entered were all painted green, in honour of the hosts, the colour which was then adopted as Britain's racing colour.

Doug Hill, National Motor Museum Manager says, "We were delighted to attend this year's rally, and that the Irish Veteran and Vintage Car Club (IVVCC) sponsored our attendance. This year's rally traversed the original route of the race. The car covered 70 miles with no issues and was the star of the rally."

Doug added, "In 1903, sadly, the Napier failed to complete the original event, suffering a major crash following a mechanical failure whilst driven by Charles Jarrott. Following intensive research, the Napier visited the exact spot where the accident 120 years before occurred. During the trip another entrant informed me that he had in his possession a pair of gears which were picked up from the crash site of the Napier in 1903. The following day he arrived with the gears and indeed they were a direct fit onto our engine."

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The Napier car, driven by Charles Jarrott, was built especially for the Gordon Bennett Race in 1903 by D Napier and Sons Ltd, London. Jarrott was in a team of three Napiers, representing Great Britain. Running with the competition number 5, the car ran well until it crashed at high speed near Stradbally, throwing Jarrott from the car, but trapping his mechanic Cecil Bianchi underneath it. Thankfully both driver and mechanic survived without serious injury, but they were out of the race.



The repaired car, while still very competitive, did not take part in the following year's race but continued to be used until the 1930s. Post-war, the car went to the United States, and after a period in the Harrah collection, was bought with the support of the National Heritage Memorial Fund to be displayed in the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu in 1987.

The 2023 Gordon Bennett Rally took place on the 8-9 June 2023. This was the first time the 1903 Napier had visited Ireland since its appearance at the 100th Anniversary Gordon Bennett Rally in 2003.

To find out more about the Napier and the vehicle collection at the National Motor Museum visit <https://nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/>