

Ford and the Fordson F,

The most famous automobile and tractor inventor Henry Ford can trace his roots back to the village of Ballinscarthy in County Cork. His Family emigrated to the United States of America after the Famine in Ireland to begin a new life there. In July 1863 Henry was born to his parents William and Mary who were farmers. From an early age Henry showed an interest in all things mechanical and in 1896 built his first car. After a number of years of development, the Ford Model T was born and went into production in 1907 until 1928 when it replaced by the Model A. It was the car that put the world on wheels and Henry ever conscious of the drudgery of muscle and sweat of man and beast on the farm decided that by modifying and developing the Model T car it could eventually take over from the Horse and cumbersome Steam Traction engine which was heavy, awkward and took a couple of hours to build up steam to begin its days work. After much work the Model T engine with its trembler coils for spark ignition was strengthened developing 20 horse power and coupled to a gearbox and back axel becoming one complete unit. Its fuel was petrol to begin with and when the engine was warmed up after about five minutes switched over to Tractor Vaporising Oil (TVO) which was cheaper than petrol. The wheels were steel with large cleated wheels on the rear and ribbed with a single rib on the front, similar to the steam traction engine and the modern rubber tired tractors of today to help traction. It also had a belt pulley on the right hand side to drive stationary machines such as threshing machines and machinery requiring to be driven from an engine of sorts. It could also pull a two furrow plough and other tilling equipment. It had forward speeds of two to six miles per hour. It was small, lightweight, mass produced and affordable and sold at the time for 750 US dollars. It went into production in October 1917 in Dearborn Michigan. At the time it was seen as a huge advancement in mechanised farming.

Ever conscious of his Irish roots, Henry decided following a visit to Cork in 1912 that he would establish a factory in Cork in 1917 to bring industry to Ireland, turning the sod in the Marina that year. Tractor production began in 1919 to 1923 and 1928 to 1933. The tractor continued its development in 1927 becoming the Model N with a 27hp engine improved ignition system and a power take was available from 1935. The model N was regarded as the tractor that won the Second World War in Great Britain.

Following the Second World War the model N was further developed to become the E27N with its similarly powered Petrol/TVO becoming affectionately known as the "High Nellie". A diesel engine version was later developed and with continual development a new era dawned with a total move from the old Model F designed tractor with the new E1A Fordson diesel Major and the Fordson Dexta.

This year as we celebrate our twentieth Innishannon Steam and Vintage Rally we welcome the Fordson Model F, N and E27N as we celebrate 100 years of Ford in Cork and Ireland.