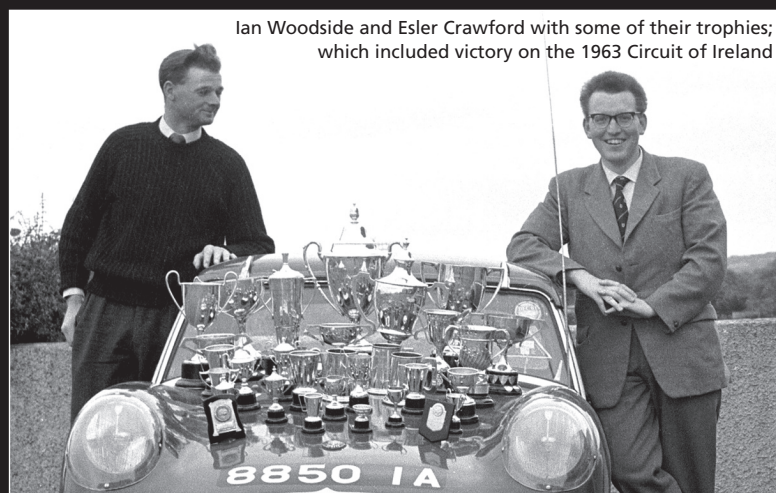




Harold Hagan, Ian Woodside and Adrian Boyd.



Ian Woodside and Esler Crawford with some of their trophies; which included victory on the 1963 Circuit of Ireland

An Appreciation: Ian Woodside

BY BEATTY CRAWFORD PHOTOS: ESLER CRAWFORD

In the late fifties and in the course of the sixties, three sets of brothers more or less ruled Irish rallying: Adrian and Derek Boyd, Dessie and Ronnie McCartney and Ian and Robert Woodside.

They honed their driving skills on autotests and night navigation rallies. They competed in autocross, hillclimbs and races. There was no such thing as trailering a car. The car that was driven to work was the one that was used to slither through the boreens of Co. Tyrone and Monaghan on a Friday night or on an autotest on the disused wartime airfields of Maghaberry on a Saturday afternoon.

Ian Woodside is perhaps the least well known of the sextet, but by no means the least talented. He won the 1963 Circuit of Ireland in an MG Midget navigated by my brother Esler. He won numerous rallies and would have won more if he had taken more time off from his business. He was a member of the victorious Northern Irish team in the Ken Wharton TV Driving tests.

In later years he concentrated very successfully on hill climbs and sprints in his trusty MG Midget.

In the meantime, he and his brothers built up one of the most successful haulage businesses in Ireland through hard work and superb business acumen.

Ian was not particularly well-known, mainly because he was a shy quiet man who didn't say much. He was a home

bird who loved to play badminton in Ballynure Church Hall. His idea of fun was to take his Ferrari to Portstewart for an ice cream on a Sunday afternoon.

Ian let his prodigious driving talent do the talking as Esler recalls: "I was in awe of Ian Woodside's driving – he was simply the fastest and safest driver with whom I have ever sat on the public road. In night navigation events he never seemed to have reached his limit – if you were running a little bit late you just had to hint at this and he upped his pace effortlessly. He was also totally courteous and sportsmanlike but intensely competitive and nothing gave him more pleasure than beating his good friend and neighbour Adrian Boyd!

"He was also a man of the utmost integrity and generosity. My cousin Charles Crawford tells of how for several seasons Ian loaned him a car – totally free of charge and with no strings attached – to compete in sprints and hills climbs.

"Ian suffered more personal tragedies in his life than anyone I know – his father died young, his elder brother died at 46, he had a baby girl who died at birth, his son died at nine and his wife died some years ago. Yet he never let this succession of tragedies get him down and enjoyed his motor sport until quite recently as well as running an extremely successful haulage business.

"Ian Woodside was a gentleman whom I was proud to call my friend."



Esler Crawford, Ronnie White and Ian Woodside. Photo: The News Letter.

Esler recalls that Ronnie White was the man who made our win in the Circuit possible. He and Ian were both using 1098 supercharged engines and on the Monday morning, while in a substantial lead, Ian's carburetor caught fire and was ruined.

Without demur Ronnie gave us his carburetor and retired from the event. Of course we had lost a lot of time and had fallen well back in the placings. But the Circuit in those days always had a vicious sting in the tail in the form of a night navigation section on the notorious network of narrow roads in Co. Monaghan of which the half inch maps of the days only gave a rough representation! Here we managed to keep a clean sheet and overhaul Adrian Boyd and Maurice Johnston.