

EARLY CARS

By Poyntzpass Primary School

LAST year we went to the Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra. Among the many things which interested us were lots of early methods of transport. In class we had been looking at the first ships, trains, aeroplanes, bicycles and cars but have concentrated mostly on cars. We have looked at how people travelled before they had cars and the importance of the bicycle and the horse and cart.

The first cars were expensive and so sold to rich people who had their cars made especially for them. With the very first cars a man had to walk five yards in front with a red flag. By the 1900's this was no longer necessary but there were strict laws about how fast they could travel. They could not go over 12 mph. There were no petrol stations at this time and petrol was sold in chemists' shops.

Early cars were made one at a time. Then Henry Ford started a factory making cars on a production line. This meant cars could be made more cheaply and quicker. In 1908 he made a new car the Model T. Mark Bicker's granny remembers her first car. It was a blue Model T Ford.

Ford cars have changed over the years but they are still very popular. Some of the Primary Six boys went out to the front of the school to do a survey on passing traffic. They found that the most popular cars were the Ford, Vauxhall and Peugeot.

We interviewed our parents, grandparents or elderly friends and neighbours to find out how they travelled when they were young and if they remembered their first car. Rachel interviewed Tommy Morrow who remembers travelling by horse and cart, and her granny, who was born in 1919, remembers travelling by steam train from Newtownards to Belfast. Darren found out that cars had no radios or heaters. The popular makes were Austin and Ford, and his granda bought a 1930 Ford 8 for £60. Laura Purdy's granda had a black Austin 10 (1934). Her granny had an Austin 30. Suzanne's granny and granda had a blue Austin 7. Victoria's granny had a black Austin — registration number EUS 656. She also recalls that in her young days drivers did not have to do a driving test.

We went to see a 1937 Austin 10. It was lovely. We were allowed to sit in the back and in the front. It was very comfortable. The windscreen and back window were smaller than in the cars to-day. They were also straighter — not so curved. We stepped on to the running board while getting in and out. The gentleman showed us how the indicator worked. A little orange 'arm' went out either to the left or the right. It was between the two windows on the side of the car. The back doors also opened differently from those in today's cars and they made a solid 'Klunk' sound

when they closed. The boot opened down whereas the boot in most of our cars opens up, and the bonnet opens sideways. Neill noticed that there weren't as many wires in the engine as we have now.

Wendy's dad remembers his first Austin 40 which was a very dark red. He says, 'I never forgot the registration number, it was EVA 73.' Melissa's dad had a grey Austin and Adam's mother had another make of Ford — a green Anglia.

As cars became more popular different makes began to appear. For example, Aaron's mum had a bronze Vauxhall Viva and his dad had a white Mini Van. Nigel's granda had a grey Morris Minor. Robert's granda owned a Red Morris Oxford. The registration plates were black with white figures. We noticed that not only were there more makes of cars they were also made in a greater variety of colours.

When our grandparents were young, people did not travel as much as we do nowadays. We found from our interviews that the main journeys were for groceries, clothes and to work or Church.

As we did our surveys we noticed how fast some of the traffic was going. Two roundabouts have been recently built in the village to slow down the traffic. Not only were the first cars not able to go fast, but it would have been dangerous if they had as most people were walking, cycling or on horse and cart. Everything moved more slowly. Also the roads were not as good as they are now. One elderly gentleman remembers his first car. He says the farmers objected to the minor country roads being improved and tarred as this would make them too slippery for the horses' hooves.



Kate Troughton's grandparents beside a vintage 1953 M.G.Y.B.



The children admiring an 1937 Austin 10.

