



Motorsport legend Murray Walker is reunited with his past at the Royal Automobile Club dinner

Retired motorsport commentator Murray Walker was surprised and overwhelmed last night when, as guest of honour at a Royal Automobile Club dinner, when he was reintroduced to one of his father's old racing motorcycles. The bike was one of a group of his late father's Rudge motorcycles that the Club had assembled as a surprise for Murray.

To millions, the name Murray Walker is synonymous with Formula One, but as the son of Graham Walker, the successful motorcycle racer of the Twenties and Thirties, Murray's first love was bikes and his early career centred around motorcycling. Indeed the king of F1 commentary often said; 'four wheels good, two wheels better.'

Another bike in those assembled had been specially shipped over from Australia for the occasion and hasn't been seen in the UK for over 60 years. The collection included:

1932 Isle of Man TT Senior Race, with a top speed of 76.36mph (finished 6th)

1933 Rudge TT replica

1934 Tyrell-Smith motorcycle (6th in the Ulster Grand Prix and won the Australian TT)

1935 TT Rudge Replica racer, one of only ten made

Murray was obviously deeply moved by the sight of the old racing warhorse. 'For once I'm almost speechless,' said the 90 year-old broadcaster. 'This is absolutely astounding. My father was a great man to me. I have fifteen silver replicas of his TT bikes and to see these here together after all these years is overwhelming.'

Graham and Murray Walker

Murray's late father Graham Walker was a motorcycle despatch rider for Royal Engineers Signal Service during the First World War. He received a leg injury and had to ride a motorcycle with a modified brake pedal. Despite this, Walker went on to a successful racing career with Rudge, Sunbeam and Norton. He won the Ulster Grand Prix on a Rudge Ulster in 1929, at an average of 80 mph. He also won the 350cc class at the 1931 North West 200 on a Rudge, and won the lightweight 250cc class in 1931. Walker won the Manx TT 15 times.

In 1935 Graham Walker retired from motorcycle racing and was employed by the BBC to commentate on motorcycle racing events for both radio and, later, television. After a brief spell racing motorcycles himself, his son Murray was also employed and made his first outside broadcast at Shelsley Walsh hillclimb in 1948. In 1949, both Graham and Murray were partnered on the BBC's motorcycle commentaries.

By 1949 Murray was commentating on races alongside Max Robertson, although it wasn't until the late Seventies that Formula 1 racing was given extensive coverage on British television. Murray went full-time with Formula One for the 1978 season and, from then until his retirement at the 2001 Indianapolis United States Grand Prix, was to millions, the truly authoritative and entertaining voice of the sport.

About Rudge

Back in the Thirties, Rudge was the British make everyone was talking about. Its four-valve, single cylinder-engined machines dominated racing in a way not seen before. Racing and lap records fell to Rudge motorbikes as they won both the Senior and the Junior events.

Graham Walker's Ulster Grand Prix victory in 1929 prompted the release of the Rudge Ulster, which went on to become one of its most famous models. The bike was advertised as "probably the fastest 500cc motorcycle in production".

Notes to Editors:

The Royal Automobile Club

The Royal Automobile Club was founded in 1897 and its distinguished history mirrors that of motoring itself. In 1907, the Club was awarded its Royal title by King Edward VII, sealing the Club's status as Britain's oldest and most influential motoring organisation.

The Club's early years were focused on promoting the motor car and its place in society, which developed into motoring events such as the 1000 Mile Trial, first held in 1900. In 1905, the Club held the first Tourist Trophy, which remains the oldest continuously competed for motor sports event. The Club promoted the first pre-war and post-war Grands Prix at Brooklands in 1926 and Silverstone in 1948 respectively, whilst continuing to campaign for the rights of the motorist, including introducing the first driving licences.

Today, the Club continues to develop and support automobilism through representation on the Motor Sport Association (MSA), Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and RAC Foundation, while continuing to promote its own motoring events, such as the free-to-attend Regent Street Motor Show and the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

The Royal Automobile Club also awards a series of historic trophies and medals celebrating motoring achievements. These include the Segrave Trophy, the Tourist Trophy, the Simms Medal, the Dewar Trophy and the Torrens Trophy.



A Royal Automobile Club Event

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