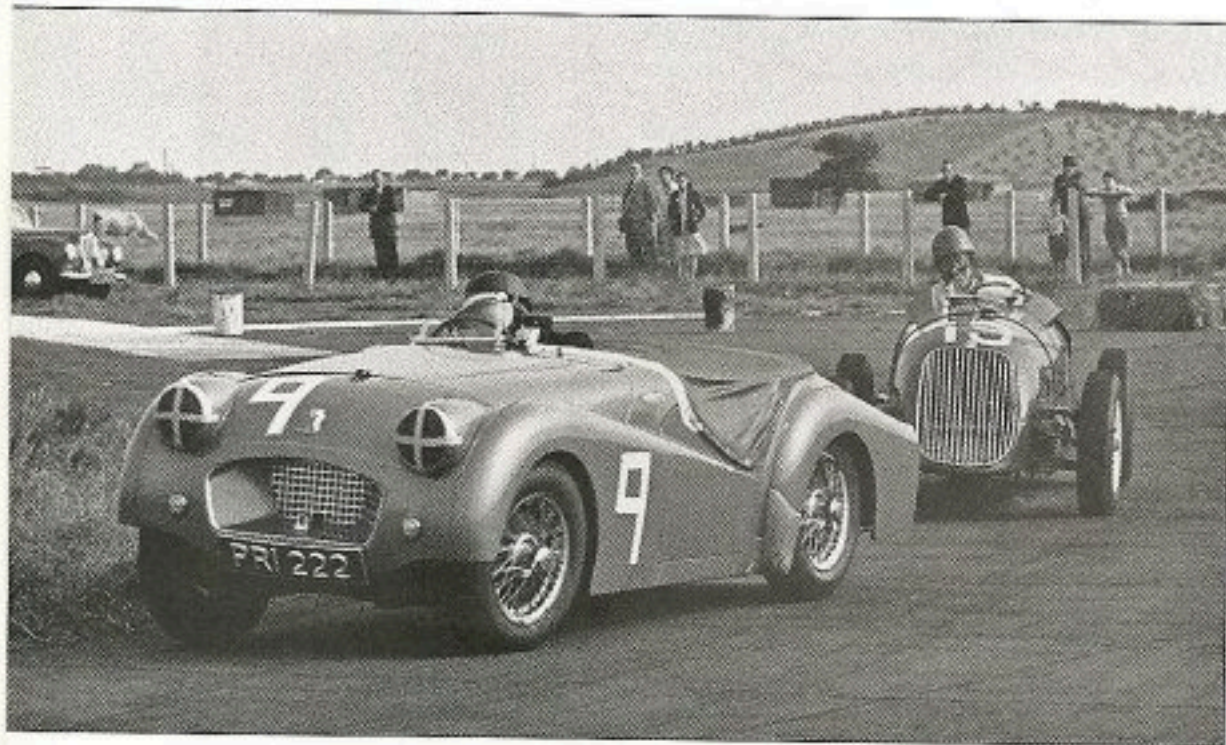


One step up: Paddy and his TR2

During his time at Trinity, Paddy had been friendly with Matt McQuaid, whose brother was the Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of All Ireland. Matt ran the Standard-Triumph assembly plant in Dublin, and in 1955 Paddy was offered a Triumph TR2 at the right price. "The roads weren't that good in the '50s but I used to drive home to Belfast at the weekends in the Triumph flat-out – it was great, and it was certainly a good bird-puller! Matt kept mentioning my name to Ken Richardson, team manager of the Triumph rally team, and this may have helped get my name known in Coventry."

Paddy contested a number of events in the green TR2, including road races at Phoenix Park, Kirkistown and Leinster, and the Craigtlet Hill Climb as well as trials and rallies, and met with some success. "The TR2 was outstanding in its day – it was strong and simple, and it was quick and lovely to drive. I surprised myself at how well I did in it at Phoenix Park, and it was also a good car for driving tests. It was less good, though, on rallies that had very rough roads – the solid rear axle didn't do it any favours."

The 1955 Phoenix Park race meeting was his first outing in the Triumph. It was at this event that Paddy showed that he could be just as much a force to be reckoned with in Irish racing as he was in rallies and trials. His new acquisition went well, but after winning Heat



Competing in the 1955 Baird Memorial Trophy race, Kirkistown, again in the Triumph TR2. (W McCandless)

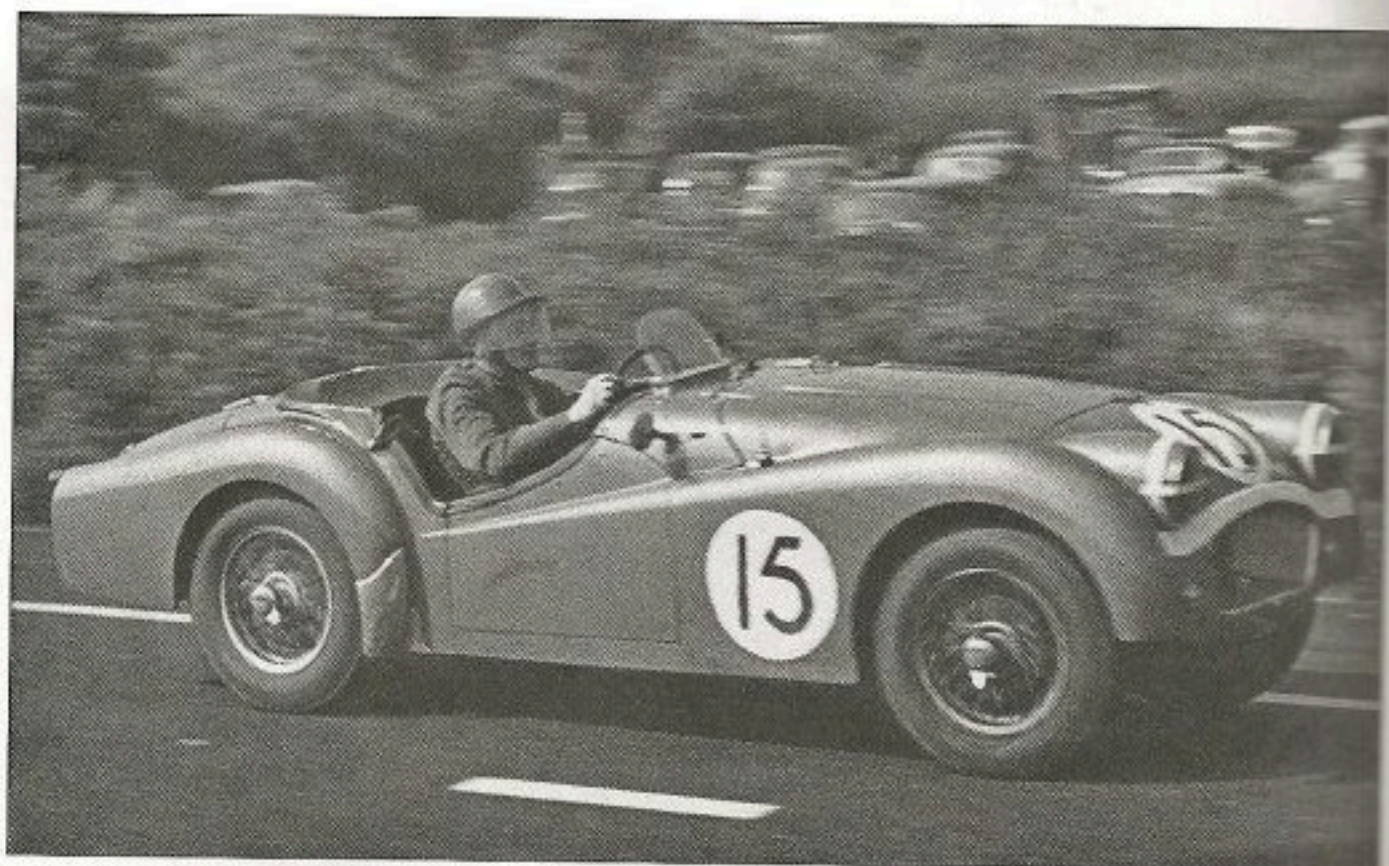
remarkable year. This was the first time that Paddy had entered this competition and he was driving his own Volkswagen against the most experienced drivers in the country. At the end of 1955, as no club colours had been presented for some years, the DUMC & LCC decided to present colours to Paddy Hopkirk, John Garvey, Sam Logan, Mike Heather and David Felton.

Among the events being organised in the south were trials organised by the Irish Motor Racing Club, the IMRC. As Paddy was only too well aware, competing in events in Northern and Southern Ireland meant

crossing a clearly constituted border. "In those days I was frequently crossing the border between the North and South. What we tend to forget now is that the North and South of Ireland were two different countries, with their own border controls and customs houses. There was always the added nuisance of being stopped and having passports checked, just like going through any other European border of the time."

At this time another change of employment came about through his father, who was still MD of Tennant's Tar Distillers in Belfast. Paddy was given the opportunity of taking a job as a draughtsman at the company branch in Dublin, called Irish Tar Distillers, where brother Eric was also working. "Father probably thought I would come in and eventually run the business. But I don't think I had my heart set on that. It was just a way of using my engineering skills, and it gave me the opportunity to spend more time rallying." It was in February 1956 that Paddy started his new job in the drawing office: "I remember doing some engineering drawing, with Eric teaching me, and we did some drawings for a pipeline down in the Dublin docks, for Esso Petroleum. This particular pipe had to be lagged to keep the tar warm as it was designed to take the tar in from the ships.

"Percy Wallace was my boss and he was a good man, often turning a blind eye when I took off extra time to go rallying. I was rallying-mad by now but was earning enough



A real road-race: Paddy in the Wicklow mountains during the 1955 Leinster Trophy race, in his Triumph TR2. He finished fourth overall. (Paddy Hopkirk)