

JN the pre-war days of British motor sport, no family was better known than the Evanses: the brothers Denis and Kenneth and their slim, attractive sister, Doreen. During the summer they would be found racing, all three of them, at most Brooklands or Donington meetings, usually in well-tuned single-seaters that were painted pale green with a thin cream-coloured line down each side.

But in the depths of winter they were just as likely to appear at some muddy and unfashionable trials hill, in a trio of matching sports cars that were equally well prepared. Although Denis ran the well-known Bellevue Garage, somehow the Evanses gave the impression that they competed because they enjoyed it, and not just for commercial advantage. Frequently on the leader-board though seldom in the lead — for as drivers they were very good indeed, but not outstanding — they seemed to remain amateurs in the literal, non-disparaging sense of that much misused word.

Probably it was Denis who persuaded his father, Graham, to enter his 4.0-litre Chrysler for a Brooklands Test Hill event — which he won! — in the spring of 1930, Denis himself coming third in a novice handicap at the same meeting, in the same car. Graham Evans was a successful chartered surveyor, but Denis opened a garage in Bellevue Road, Wandsworth Common. There a fateful meeting took place one evening in 1931 when Kenneth was seen working on his 1½-litre sports Alfa by one

Walter Ernest Wilkinson, who had acted as racing mechanic to Eyston and Ramponi, and lived just around the corner. Wilkie introduced himself, was quickly taken on, and remained with Bellevue until WW2, successively as ordinary mechanic, foreman, general manager, and then as a director of the new company, Bellevue Garage (Racing) Ltd, that was established on the other side of the road early in 1937.

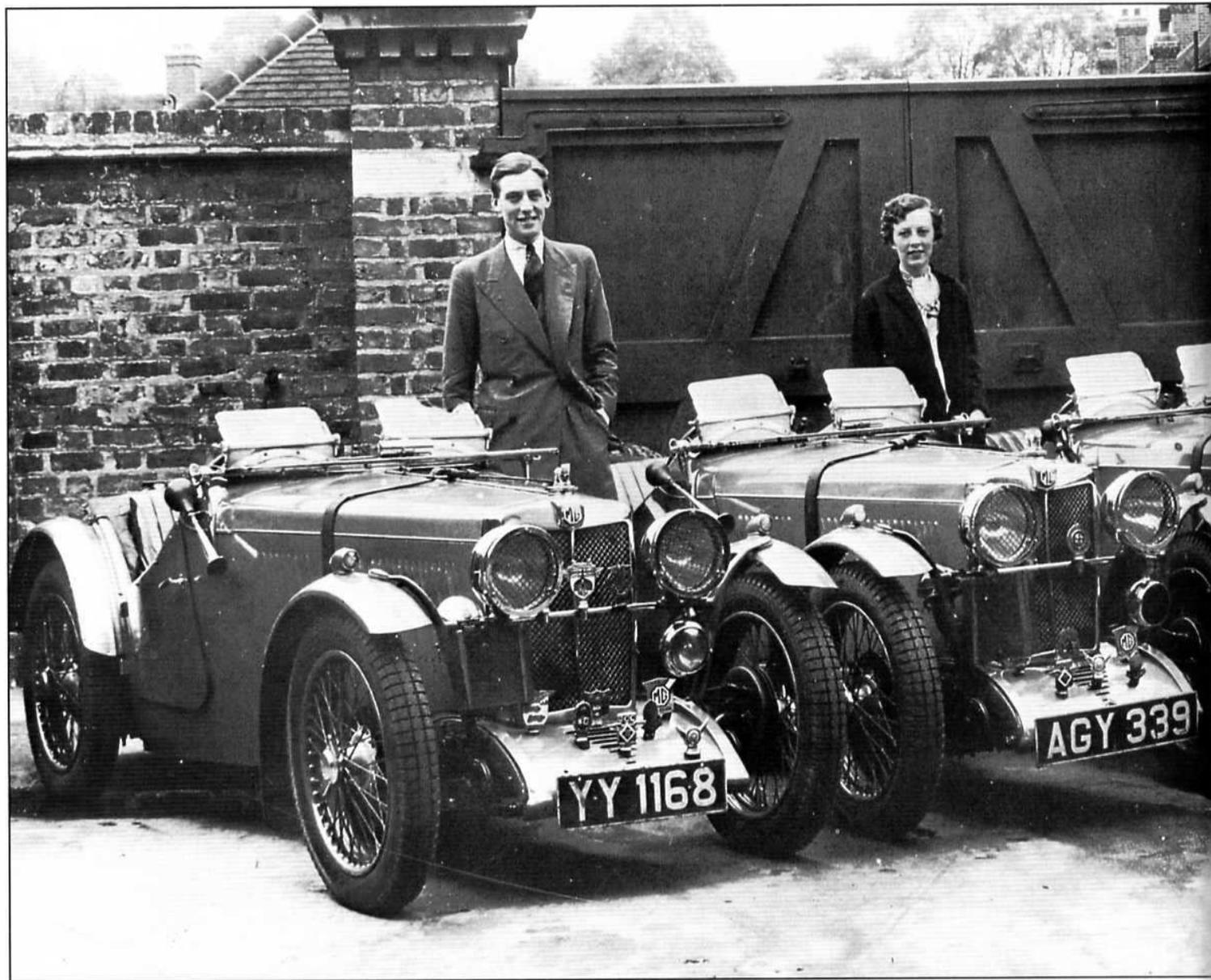
Although Kenneth had the Alfa and Denis was racing a blown 2.0-litre Bugatti, the two brothers bought one of the new 750cc sports/racing C-Type two-seaters that MG announced in 1931. They became much attached to this rather unexotic little British car, and thus began a relationship with Abingdon that proved very fruitful for all concerned.

When the pretty little J2 Midget came out in mid-1932 they bought three, had them finished in Bellevue colours, and drove them in trials with Nevil Lloyd as third man. By the following year, little sister Doreen was old enough to take her place in the team. Thereafter the three Evanses went mud-plugging together each winter, at first in the J2s and later in three N-Type Magnettes which were specially built for trials work, with Bellevue-designed lightweight bodies on chassis supplied by Abingdon.

Kenneth had more success than Denis with the C-Type, now supercharged and driven in all kinds of speed events, from short sprints to the Brooklands 500 Miles. He drove it in the very

The end of the Evanses

Wilson McComb records the achievements of a notable motoring trio





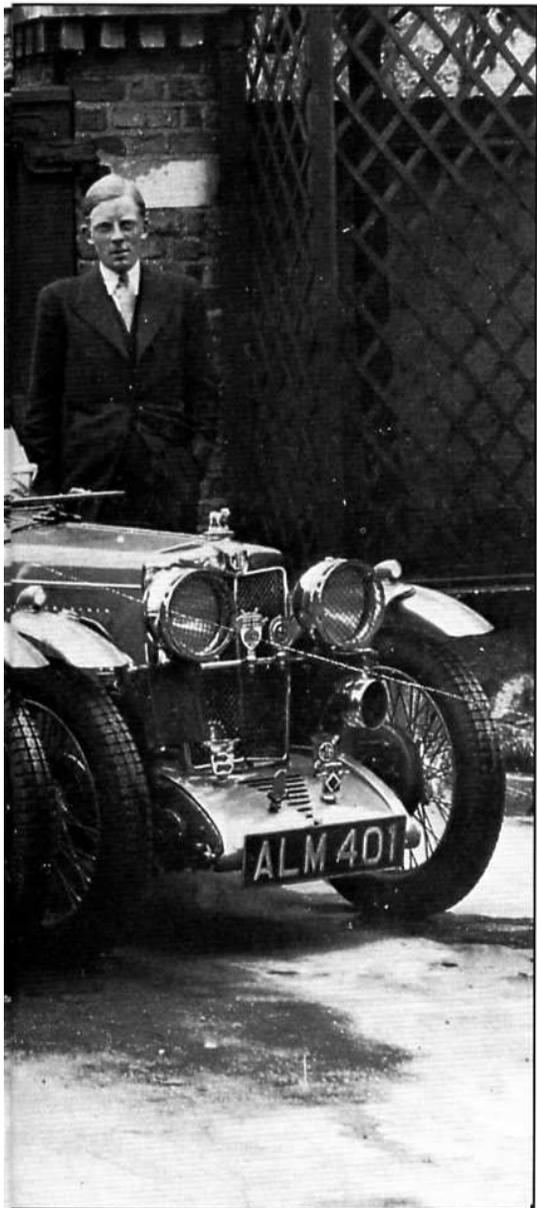
first car race at Donington, in March 1933, won a Mountain Circuit race at Brooklands, made FTD at Oxford University sprint, and came second in the India Trophy Race at the British Empire Trophy meeting. In 1934 they bought one of the C-Type's successors, the Zoller-blown Q-Type sports/racing Midget, whose 750cc engine was developed to give 146.2bhp at 7500rpm in sprint form — a higher specific power output than any other car engine in the world at that time. Not surprisingly, it was too fast for its chassis, even with a bigger wheel-base and track than the C-Type's, but it gave Kenneth one of his best race results: third behind Mays's ERA and Seaman's K3 in the 1934 Nuffield Trophy at Donington. During the winter, Wilkie rebuilt the Q-Type MG as a slim single-seater of very purposeful shape.

Meanwhile Doreen had made her presence felt on the racetracks in 1934, starting with an unblown 1100cc L-Type Magna two-seater which brought her several awards, and being entrusted with one of the prototype NE Magnettes in the all-women team that took third place in the Brooklands Relay Race, where she drove well in torrential rain. Then she switched to the Q-Type MG, winning the Women's Mountain Race at 67.50mph in the last Brooklands meeting of the 1934 season. Reappearing at the first 1935 Brooklands meeting with the Q-Type in single-seater form, she won again — this time at 101.77mph!

That was quite a year for Doreen. Bellevue

had ordered one of the new all-independent-suspension R-Type single-seater Midgets as soon as they heard that MGs were building them. Doreen drove one of the six that started in the R-Type's first race, the 1935 International Trophy, and hers was one of the only two to finish, coming seventh behind the Campbell/ Everitt car. With Donald Letts eleventh in the ex-Eyston Magic Magnette, Bellevue took the team prize although Kenneth was officially a non-finisher in the Q-Type, being delayed by plug trouble. Two weeks later, Doreen took the Ladies' Record from Barbara Skinner (later to become Mrs John Bolster) at Shelsey Walsh, her R-Type tying with brother Kenneth's Q-Type for third place in the 750cc class. The following month the two girls found themselves sharing a P-Type MG in Capt Eyston's 'Dancing Daughters' team at Le Mans, leading the other two P-Types to finish a neat but unimpressive 8-9-10 in class.

Unfortunately Morris Motors Ltd took over MG and closed down the Abingdon racing department in mid-season. Bellevue bought Eyston's three works team R-Types and three NE Magnettes, of the type that had scored MG's third Ulster TT victory in 1934. But they soon found that even with Wilkie's help it was difficult to keep their MGs in racing fettle, now that Morris Motors were keeping a beady eye on Kimber and little assistance could be had from Abingdon. The Evanses had no success in the 1935 British Empire Trophy, the Relay Race or



Top, Denis Evans kicks up the dust at a Bugatti OC hillclimb in 1935 with his old C-Type, the first MG owned by the Bellevue Garage trio

Above, Cecil Kimber congratulates Kenneth Evans on taking third place in his Q-Type MG behind Mays and Seaman in the 1934 Nuffield Trophy at Donington

Left, Kenneth, Doreen and Denis Evans with their J2 MGs in 1933. Doreen's car was her 17th birthday present and the three were driven as a trials team

Below, with the Q-Type turned into a single-seater, Doreen Evans competes in the same Bugatti OC hillclimb held at Chalfont St Peter in 1935

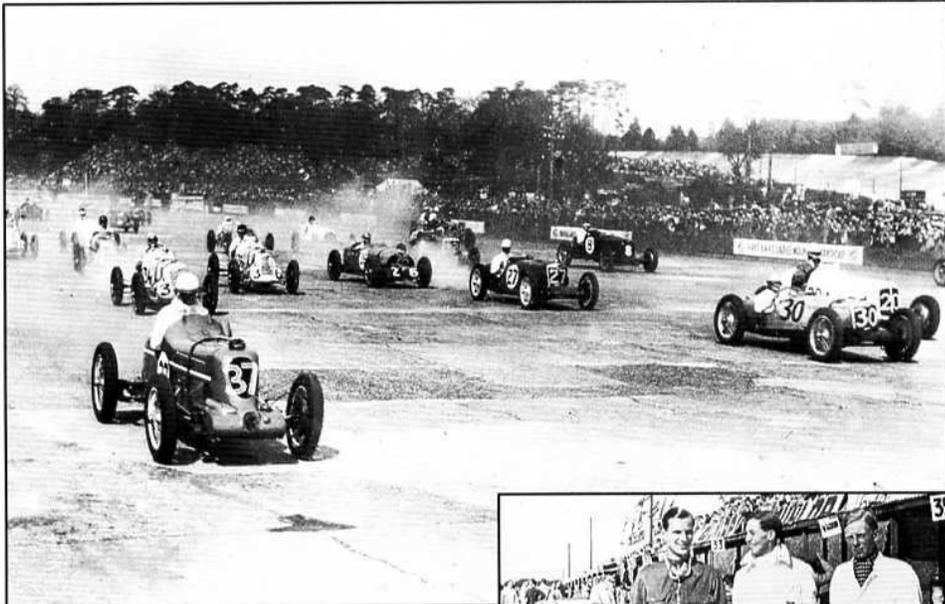


The end of the Evanses

the 500 Miles. In the Ulster TT (where they attracted attention by experimenting with radio control), Dick Seaman took one of the Magnettes into 10th place, Kenneth was 13th, and Denis retired. Doreen lost her Shelsley record to Kay Petre at the September meeting, and her attempt at a 750cc Outer Circuit record was one of the R-Types, beating that of Driscoll's works Austin.

Foolishly, perhaps, Bellevue then fitted some of their R-Types with experimental dohc heads developed by Pomeroy and McEvoy. Not one MG finished the 1936 British Empire Trophy, and all the R-Types retired from the International Trophy — Doreen having to bale out when her car caught fire. Kenneth's car lasted less than a lap in the Nuffield Trophy, and he and Denis also retired the car they shared (the old Magic Mulette) in the 500 Miles. It was then sold to Goldie Gardner, while the NE Magnettes, the R-Types, the single-seater Q-Type and the trials Magnettes were all disposed of, leaving only their first racing MG, the venerable C-Type. Doreen, who in July had married an American named Allan Phipps, was to share a 2.0-litre Aston Martin with him in the Ulster TT, but her new husband rather inconsiderately crashed it on his third lap of the Ards circuit. Then they moved to Colorado, where she died only a few years ago.

During the otherwise lugubrious 1936 season, Kenneth had shared Briault's ERA in the Nuffield Trophy, the two former MG drivers taking an excellent third place behind Seaman and Howe. He then bought a most exciting car — the actual 2.9-litre Alfa with which Nuvolari had beaten the combined might of Mercedes-Benz and Auto Union to win perhaps the most dramatic race in history, the 1935 German GP. And he actually drove it in the 1937 German GP



Above, start of the 1935 International Trophy at Brooklands featuring Kenneth Evans in the Q-Type (37), with Dixon's Riley (30) and Roveree's Maserati (20) on the right. Behind are the R-Type MGs of Eyston (34) and Black (36), Donald Letts in the Magic Mulette (26) and McLure's Riley (27)



Right, the Bellevue entry for the 1936 Ulster TT consisted of Dick Seaman, Kenneth and Denis Evans in ex-works NE magnettes which were radio controlled, rather unsuccessfully, from the pits

at Nürburgring, his being the only green car among a mass of red and silver ones, finishing ninth overall, three laps behind Caracciola's Mercedes.

Kenneth Evans continued using the ex-Nuvolari Alfa until WW2, establishing a Campbell Circuit class record in 1939 which stands in perpetuity, and racing it in the very last Brooklands meeting of all, on August 7, 1939. From there, he and Wilkie went on to Berne for the Swiss GP on August 20, where he finished 11th. The Bellevue pair then had a hair-raising drive back across Europe to catch one of the last boats to England before war was declared on September 3.

During the war, Bellevue Garage became a Civil Defence ambulance depot for a time, and

also produced aircraft components, before it finally closed down. Wilkie joined MG's former chief designer, HN Charles, at Rotol Airscrews, and Denis Evans eventually followed his sister's example by moving to the States, where he died about a year ago. Kenneth, who had never gone into the garage business — he worked for the family firm of chartered surveyors — sold the famous Alfa Romeo to Roy Salvadori and became a vice-president of the BRDC. As chief flag-marshal until the early 1970s, he wielded the chequered flag with great efficiency at all their major races, then turned his attention to active work with the Brooklands Society. The last of the racing Evanses, he was 74 when he died on March 30 this year.

Below, line-up at Bellevue Garage after the 1935 International Trophy to mark the team prize victory of Donald Letts in the Magic Mulette, Doreen Evans in the R-Type and Kenneth Evans in the Q-Type

