

# Harry Ferguson Legacy

SELF-GUIDED  
TOUR, TRAIL  
& MAP



**LCCC**  
Lisburn &  
Castlereagh  
City Council

*you're  
welcome*  
Lisburn & Castlereagh

Following the footsteps of the  
truly remarkable engineer and  
inventor Harry Ferguson

[fergusonlegacy.com](http://fergusonlegacy.com)

# Welcome

## WELCOME TO A SELF-GUIDED TRAIL DEDICATED TO THE LIFE OF HENRY GEORGE 'HARRY' FERGUSON.

Born in 1884, Harry was an Irish engineer and inventor who is noted for his role in the development of the modern agricultural tractor, for becoming the first Irishman to build and fly his own aeroplane and for developing the first four-wheel drive Formula One car, the Ferguson P99.



## Places of Interest

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- 4 GROWELL GOSPEL HALL
- 5 THE FERGUSON HOMESTEAD AND MEMORIAL GARDENS, GROWELL
- 6 TESTING FIELD, GROWELL
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- 8 WATSON'S SHOP, DROMORE
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# LAGAN VALLEY ISLAND, LISBURN



The Lagan Valley has a long association with engineering and technological innovation. A number of local personalities have made outstanding contributions to various aspects of this, not least Harry Ferguson, the main subject of this Trail and Map booklet.

With Lisburn being a historical focus of road, canal and rail transportation and Harry's contribution having been in the field of transportation and agricultural engineering, it seems appropriate that this commemorative trail should begin at.



## **Lagan Valley Island. A plaque at the entrance car park provides some introductory information.**

Lagan Valley Island is a multi-purpose building and contains the ISLAND Arts Centre, which is open to the public. There is also a theatre, conference centre and it is the civic headquarters for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

For more information contact:

Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn BT27 4RL Tel: 028 9244 7444

Email: [civic.centre@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk](mailto:civic.centre@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk) or visit: [www.laganvalleyisland.co.uk](http://www.laganvalleyisland.co.uk)



54.511685  
-6.035158

On 17 November 1909, aviation pioneer Harry Ferguson transported his first and untried aeroplane which had been constructed in Belfast, by road to Hillsborough, to the large park owned by Lord Downshire. Due in part to the difficult terrain, initial flight trials carried out proved unsuccessful; however, after

modifying the design and fitting a more efficient propeller, he made a 130-yard flight on 31 December 1909, thereby becoming the first Irishman to design, build and fly an aeroplane. The site of his flight is believed to be a field known today as Near Magennis, just to the northeast of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Farm.



54.459105  
-6.082966

## PLANE SCULPTURE, HILLSBOROUGH FOREST

A marble obelisk bearing a bronze plaque was erected to celebrate the centenary of Harry Ferguson's first successful flight. It is sited in the car park of Hillsborough Forest close to where the historic flight took place. The achievement is also marked by a half scale replica of the aircraft in stainless steel.

The Plane Sculpture located at Hillsborough Forest is part of the

Digital Sculpture Trail that brings the plane to life through augmented reality via the 'Hillsborough' App.

Hillsborough was the closest village to Harry's home and to get to Belfast, he and his brother Joe would have caught the train there at the railway station on Culcavey Road.



54.458781  
-6.099954



**Lisburn Visitor Information Centre, Market Square,  
Lisburn, BT28 1AG. Tel: 028 9244 7622  
E: [vic.lisburn@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk](mailto:vic.lisburn@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk)**



# DRUMLOUGH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Drumlough Presbyterian Church was established in 1818 and features a graveyard that contains the burial plot of the Ferguson Family. Both Harry's parents are buried here, however Harry and his wife Maureen are not. Their remains were cremated and scattered over their estate of Abbotswood, near Stow-on-the-Wold in the Cotswolds.

Drumlough Public Elementary School existed on the site where the church hall stands today. Harry attended Drumlough Public Elementary School for a period between 1889 and 1899. He was expelled for a period of roughly seven months after an argument with the headmaster. These months he spent at Ballykeel Public Elementary School.



# GROWELL GOSPEL HALL



**The present Growell Hall was constructed in 1933. It was built on ground donated to the church by Harry's father, James Ferguson, to replace a cottage that once stood there.**

James and Mary Ferguson were devout members of the Plymouth Brethren, a religious sect that had broken away from the Anglican Church. The hall was built for the congregation to meet in after it grew beyond what members' homes could hold. The Ferguson Family had a high reputation within their religious community, often inviting visiting preachers to stay in their home.

Family life in the Ferguson household was dictated by the teachings of the Bible; this meant Harry grew up in a very stiff and restricting environment, one that he broke away from in later years. Harry never fully embraced the religious and strict lifestyle of his parents, but his upbringing did instil good self-discipline and a strong work ethic which enabled him to thrive in the business world. His regular disagreements with his father also meant he developed a greater certainty in his own judgement.



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-6.026033





# THE FERGUSON HOMESTEAD AND MEMORIAL GARDENS, GROWELL

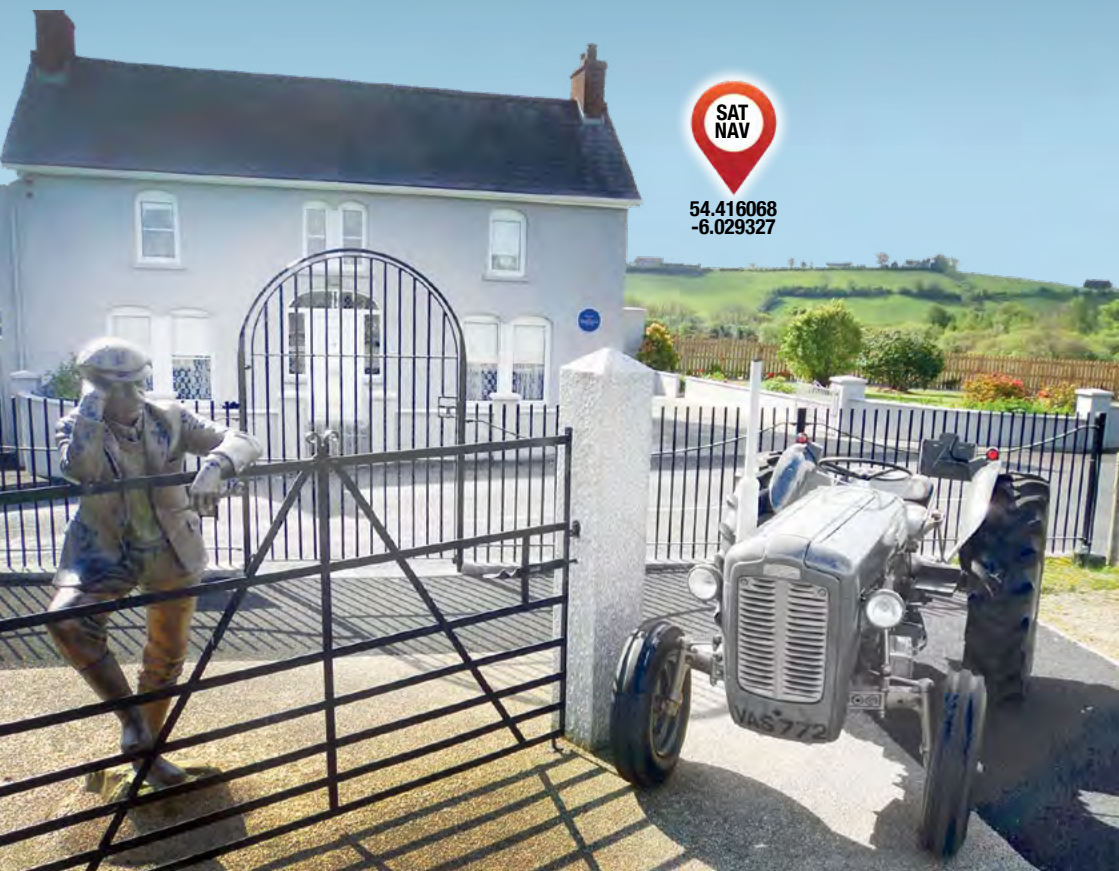
**The memorial garden is steeped in history and aptly set opposite the Ferguson Homestead in the Townland of Growell, Hillsborough.**

Here, a series of information boards retell the story of Harry's fascinating life and show his many accomplishments in the areas of farming, motoring and aviation. The gardens also feature a life-sized bronze statue of the man himself, depicted leaning

on a gate with a look of contemplation on his face, a look he no doubt would have worn many times during his life.

This location is a perfect photo opportunity. It is the site where Harry grew up as a boy in a family of 11 children and is also where he would have worked the farm with his father and tested some of his ideas and machinery.

The Ferguson Homestead and Memorial Gardens can be easily accessed from Royal Hillsborough, Dromara and Dromore.  
[www.visitlisburncastlereagh.com](http://www.visitlisburncastlereagh.com)



54.416068  
-6.029327

# TESTING FIELD, GROWELL



## BALLYKEEL PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HILLSBOROUGH

Harry attended Ballykeel Public Elementary School for a brief period after he was expelled from Drumlough for arguing with the headmaster. The issue arose after Harry disagreed with the Headmaster who he felt had wrongly punished a fellow pupil.

Although his time at this school was short, it was a significant event in his life. It was one of the first signs of Harry's reputation for fairness and directness, something which he was well known for in future years when he began to deal in automobiles and later, tractors.





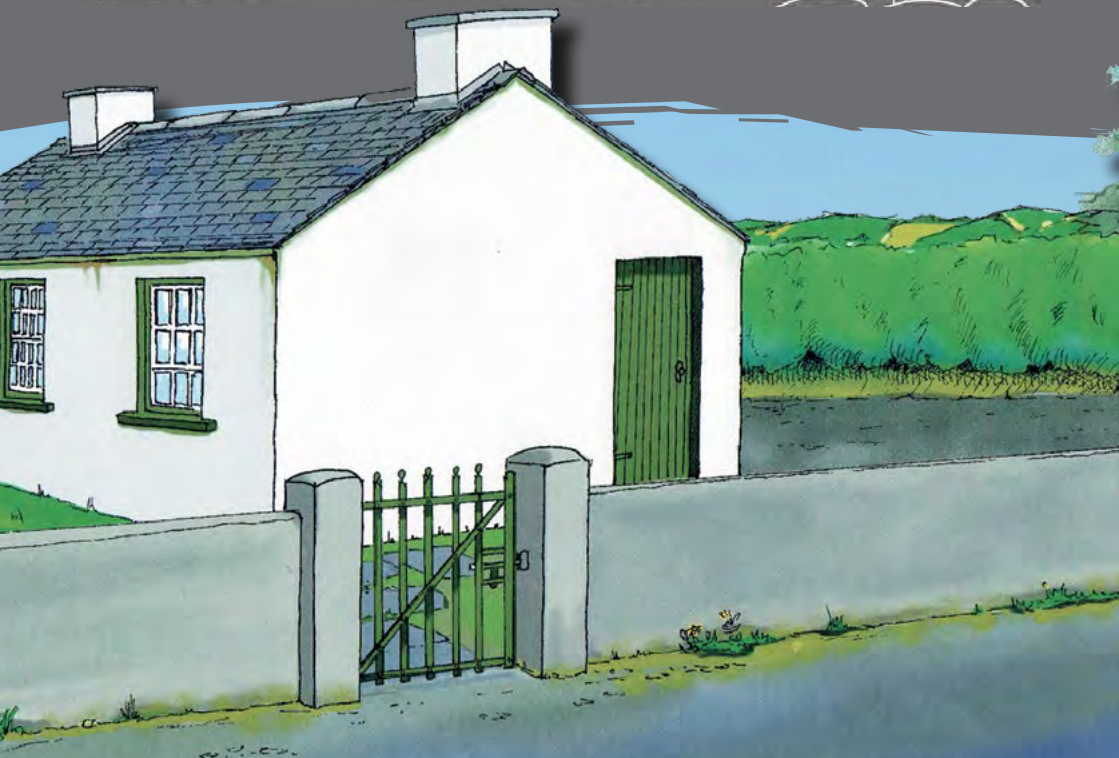
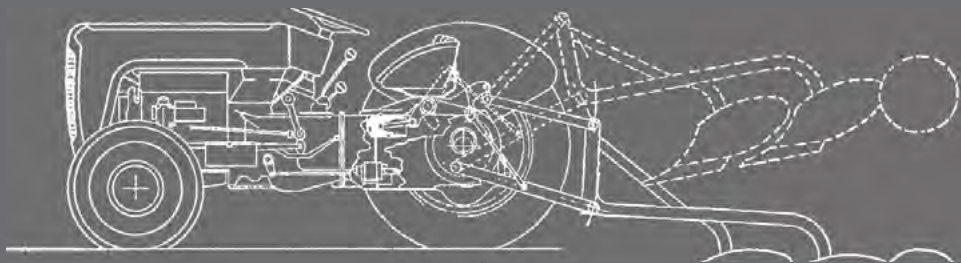
**In the early days of design Harry needed somewhere suitable to test the three-point linkage system and therefore to prove its worth before producing it for the open market.**

Harry acquired a difficult, steep sloped and stony field where a plough would lift every obstacle in its path. The field was an ideal testing site as it was just down the road from the Ferguson Homestead, on the Dromore side.

This particular field would prove to be a challenge for any piece of machinery; however, it was no match for Harry's Ferguson tractor and three-point linkage system with plough attached.

Many other locations were used for demonstrating and testing as Harry exhibited his machinery all over the country, but it was appropriate to have actually tested his workmanship at Growell.

This device designed and manufactured by Harry marked him in history forever and had an impact across the world.



# WATSON'S SHOP, DROMORE

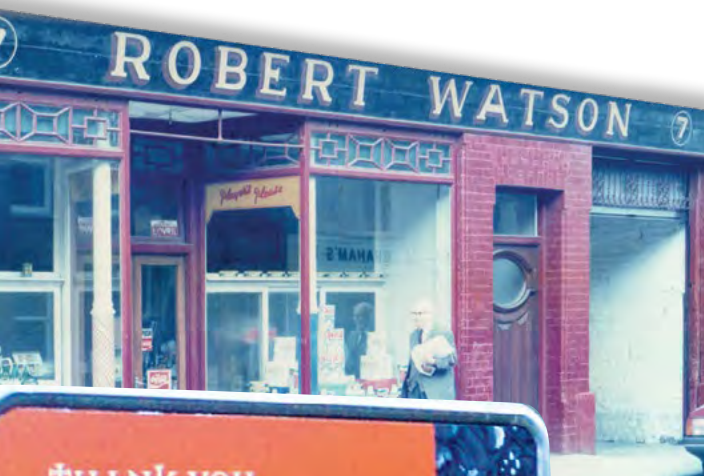
This shop, located at 7 Meeting Street in Dromore, County Down, was the home of Harry's wife to be, Maureen Watson.

It was a grocer's that Harry would have regularly visited during his days living at Growell. The building still stands but is currently

occupied by Gamble's Funeral Furnishers. After Maureen's family had left the premises, it was occupied by a greengrocer named Robert Watson who was unrelated to her.

It is well known around Dromore that Harry married a girl from the town even though they subsequently went to live in Belfast and, much later, in Stow-on-the-Wold, England.

Members of Maureen's family are buried in Dromore Cathedral Graveyard, not far from Meeting Street.



## DROMORE VILLAGE

Dromore was a market village during Harry's lifetime, and it was here he would have attended the cattle markets held in the main square beside the town hall with his father. It was a regular trip that would have been made on foot or bicycle and the cattle would have been driven to and from the market.

To mark the significance of Dromore in Harry's life, there is a Ferguson TE20 Tractor at the north entrance to the village. This lovely example sits on steel wheels and is set in a grass area surrounded by flowers and shrubs. It is located just off the A1 dual carriageway on the Hillsborough Road.



THE SQUARE & TOWN HALL,  
DROMORE.



SAT  
NAV

54.413397  
-6.149452



SAT  
NAV

54.420074  
-6.132388





# ULSTER AVIATION COLLECTION MAZE / LONG KESH

By flying successfully at Hillsborough on 31 December 1909, Harry Ferguson inaugurated an extensive history of aviation in Ulster and Ireland. Many aspects of this are represented by the Ulster Aviation Collection at the Maze/Long Kesh Regeneration Site. The assemblage of historic aircraft and aviation memorabilia in the care of the Ulster Aviation Society and accommodated there includes a one-third scale model of the last variant of Harry's aircraft.

The Ulster Aviation Society has played a key role in the ambitious new BBC Television series which highlights the amazing aviation career of engineer/inventor Harry Ferguson – he of farm tractor fame. The BBC actually commissioned

the construction of a replica Ferguson aeroplane, one the famous aviator built and flew himself before the First World War.

The final assembly was done over several weeks in the hangar of the Ulster Aviation Society at Maze/Long Kesh, with the assistance of society volunteers, said UAS Chairman Ray Burrows MBE. "The pilot himself, William McMinn, is a Society member; he took a lead role in those final stages, along with member Steve Lowry, who's been a key part of our aircraft restorations programme," said Mr. Burrows. "The Ferguson aircraft has been an interesting project," said Mr. Lowry". "There'll be memories for myself here, and I can say to my grandchildren: 'I built that.'"



54.476616  
-6.099628



[bookvisit@austeraviationsociety.org](mailto:bookvisit@austeraviationsociety.org)

# REX MCCANDLESS HOMESTEAD

Another man from the Lagan Valley to achieve fame in the field of engineering and technology was Rex McCandless.

Fiercely independent and largely self-taught, McCandless, like Harry Ferguson, was imbued with irrepressible inventiveness and had an impressive list of developments to his name including motorcycles, four-wheel drive racing cars, cross country vehicles, brick-making machinery and gyroplanes (autogyros).

His first major success was the 'Featherbed' motorcycle frame used by Norton during the 1950s.

Although McCandless was born in 1915, more than 30 years after Ferguson, his exceptional abilities caught the latter's attention, which led to a brief, ill-fated association in regard to the development and testing of the 'Mule'. With a view to it being produced by Ferguson's company, which never happened because the two men couldn't agree about some aspects, this off-road vehicle was tested at Abbotswood in England where Harry eventually went to live.

Rex McCandless was born at Aghnatrisk Road, Culcavey, just five miles from the Ferguson Homestead.

# HARRY FERGUSON SITE LOCATION MAP







- 1 LAGAN VALLEY ISLAND
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# THE FERGUSON BLACK TRACTOR AT THE ULSTER TRANSPORT MUSEUM



The Ulster Transport Museum features incredible inventions by local innovators including the Ferguson Black Tractor.

Having been housed for many years in the Science Museum in London it has been loaned to the Ulster Transport Museum by Harry's family and is now on display there.

The Black Tractor was the first tractor in the world to incorporate a complete version of the transformational Ferguson system, which revolutionised agricultural practices worldwide. No tractor existed that was suitable to incorporate Harry's invention and it became clear that the only alternative was to build his own.





By 1932, the team had formulated their ideas and components were sourced from several places, many in Northern Ireland, including forged parts locally and certain castings from Harland and Wolfe. The Black Tractor incorporated a technology that was developed, built and tested by a brilliant team of engineers, all born and reared within a 30-mile radius of Royal Hillsborough.

The tractor was initially launched in 1933 and completed in 1935.

The Ulster Transport Museum celebrates the story of transport and social change in Northern Ireland. It is a place to be

inspired by big machines and big ideas.

This iconic prototype, engineered in Belfast, truly expresses the genius of Harry Ferguson. The tractor offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore the origins of the Ferguson System, a technology that continues to shape agricultural practices today.

Explore how our lives and communities have always been in motion, from the history of road and rail to new innovations like surfing, motorbikes and aviation.

**For more information, visit**  
**[www.ulstertransportmuseum.org](http://www.ulstertransportmuseum.org)**



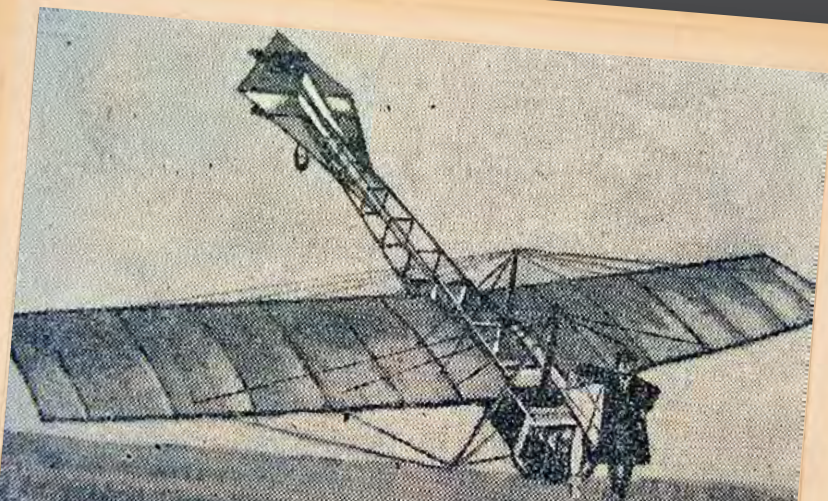


# NEWCASTLE, COUNTY DOWN

In Newcastle on 8 August 1910, after unsuccessful attempts during July, Harry won a prize of £100. This was offered by the local Sports Committee for flying a distance of more than two miles in a straight line along the beach from the entrance to Inner Dundrum Bay to just past the Slieve Donard Hotel. His unsuccessful attempts ended

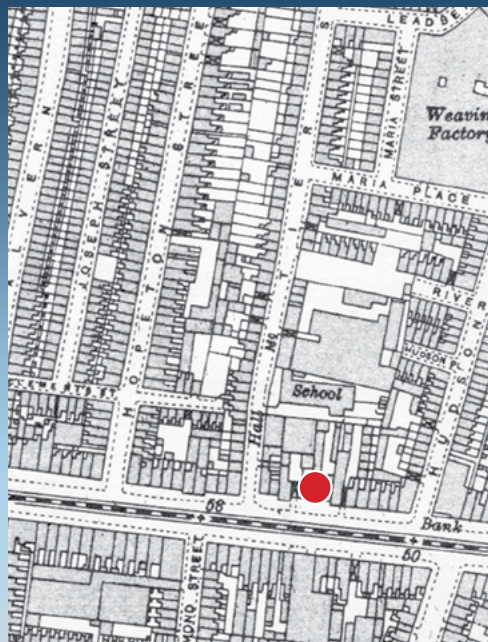
in crashes which resulted in damage that included two wings, three propellers, great lengths of rigging wire and severe buckling of eight wheels.

The North Promenade in Newcastle is now home to a granite memorial, which marks his historic flight in 1910.



54.210812  
-5.889329

# SHANKILL ROAD, BELFAST



AN EXTRACT FROM 'NORTH BELFAST 1900'  
AS REPRINTED BY ALAN GODFREY MAPS

In 1902, Harry Ferguson went to work as an apprentice in the Hamilton Partnership, in which his elder brother Joe was a partner.

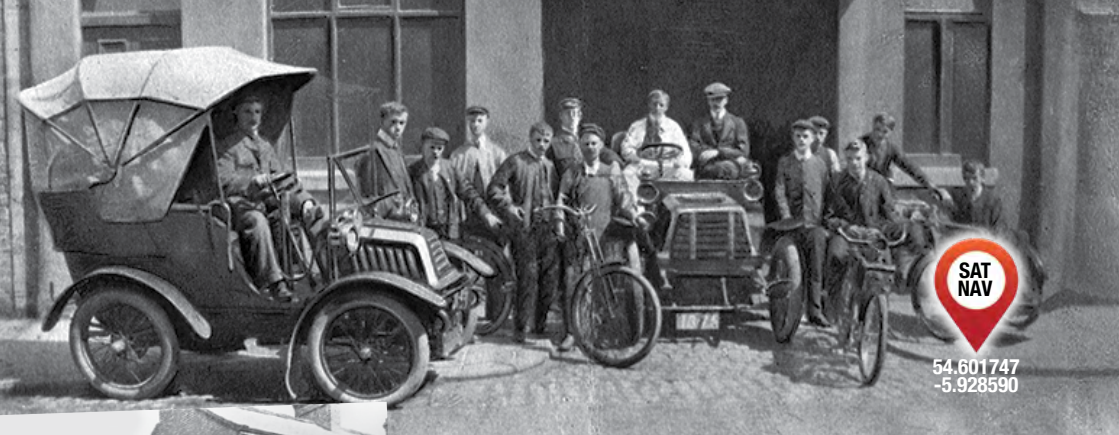
At this point Harry was contemplating emigrating to Canada, but abandoned the idea after Joe offered him the job. Harry was desperate to be involved with the rapidly expanding motor vehicle industry and jumped at the chance.

This small engineering business was located on the Shankill Road, Belfast, between Hudson and McTier Streets, and was engaged in tool making, engineering, repairing and servicing cars.

As a result of urban redevelopment, the premises no longer exist but were more or less on the site of what is now Shankill Road Gospel Hall, 41 Little Donegall Street, Belfast.







MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL INSTITUTE, Belfast.  
SESSION 1906-1907. (Sixth Session.)

## ENTRANCE FORM.

### STUDENTS.

one relative to Officers of the Force.  
Tickets, namely the one and a half pence, must be presented to the cashier at the entrance to the building during the hours of the day.

For every person, new or old, to be admitted to the Institute, the following instructions must be followed:

1. The person must be a resident of Belfast.

2. The person must be a member of the Institute.

3. The person must be a member of the Institute.

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Surname - *Ferguson*  
Christian Name or Names (in full) - *Harry George*  
Private Address - *46 Donegall St.*  
Age (last birthday) - *21* Date of Birth - *4<sup>th</sup> November 1886*  
Occupation - *Automobile Engineer*  
Employer's Name - *J.B. Ferguson & Co*  
Employer's Address - *41 Little Donegall St.*  
Standard or Grade in which entered on date of leaving school or date of leaving home school reached - *6<sup>th</sup> Inst. St. Sch.*  
State the subjects taken - *Maths, English, History, Geography, Science, Art, Music, Physical Training, and others.*



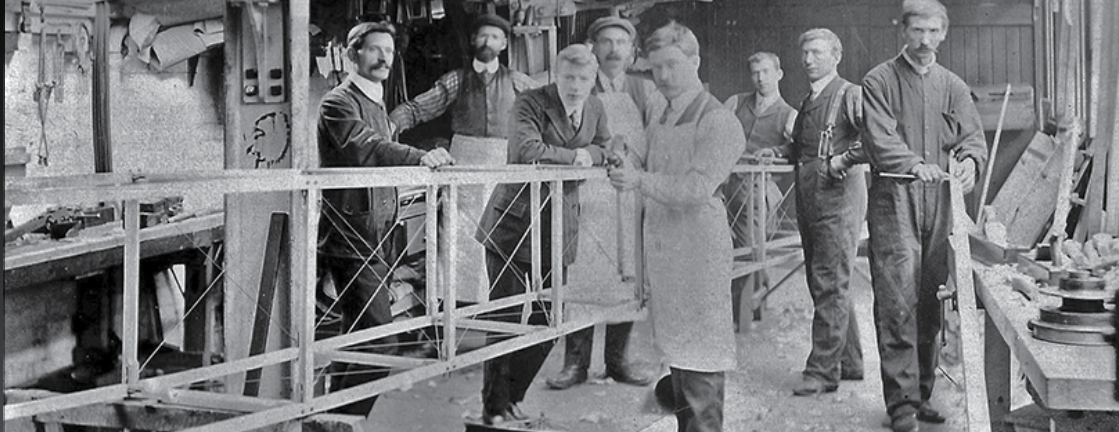
# 41 LITTLE DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST

In 1903, the Hamilton Partnership dissolved and Joe Ferguson, accompanied by Harry, moved to larger premises at 41 Little Donegall Street, Belfast, under the title J B Ferguson & Co Automobile Engineers. The business prospered and expanded rapidly, taking in premises at the junction with Union Street and Harry immersed himself in all aspects of it.

Moreover, his attraction to speed, combined with an engine tuning talent, led him to become heavily involved in competitive events for motorcycles and cars, with notable successes. This helped to promote the business, which soon outgrew the premises on Little Donegall Street.

The site of the original J B Ferguson & Co Automobile Engineers has now been redeveloped and there is no longer any trace of the building, however the streets have remained the same. The location of the shop can be viewed, where a new building now stands.





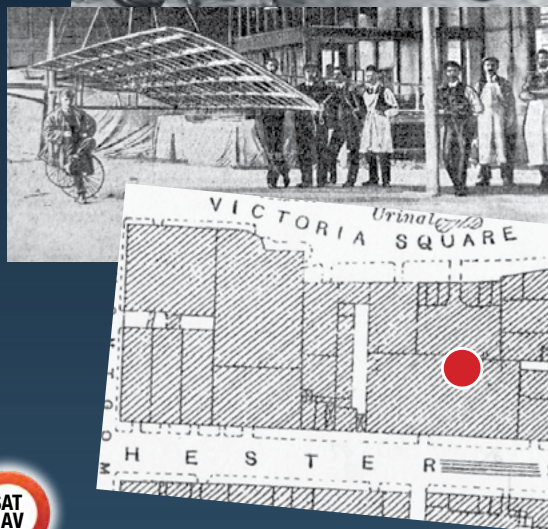
# CHICHESTER STREET, BELFAST

By June 1907, J B Ferguson & Co Automobile Engineers were the most prestigious motor business in Belfast and had moved to new and larger premises at 60-76 Chichester Street.

By 1909, Harry had become Works Manager and a Director in the company. He became imbued with the idea that building and flying an aeroplane would be great publicity for the car business. With Joe's agreement, Harry designed and built his first aircraft in the workshop of J B Ferguson and completed the project within six weeks. This aeroplane was the first variant of what would become a succession of aircraft.

Chichester Street in Belfast has been largely redeveloped and the site of the former J B Ferguson premises is now part of Victoria Square, a multi-million-pound shopping complex containing a number of restaurants and an Odeon Cinema. This facility is popular with local people and visitors and is the most expensive piece of architecture in Northern Ireland to date.

For more information please visit [www.victoriasquare.com](http://www.victoriasquare.com)

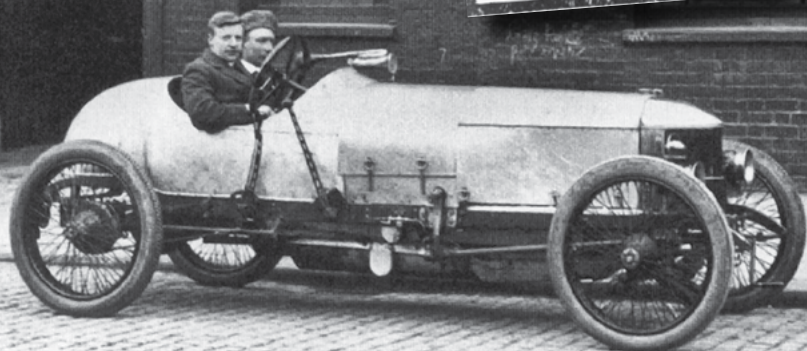


54.597655  
-5.924243

MAP SUPPLIED BY ORDNANCE  
SURVEY NIMA PERMIT NUMBER  
LA 100-156

# MAY STREET, BELFAST

MAY STREET



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-5.924715

Throughout 1910, Harry became increasingly involved in his aviation enterprise, flying at various locations, modifying and repairing his aircraft as the result of crashes at considerable cost to himself and the company. Relations between Harry and Joe deteriorated and they went their separate ways.

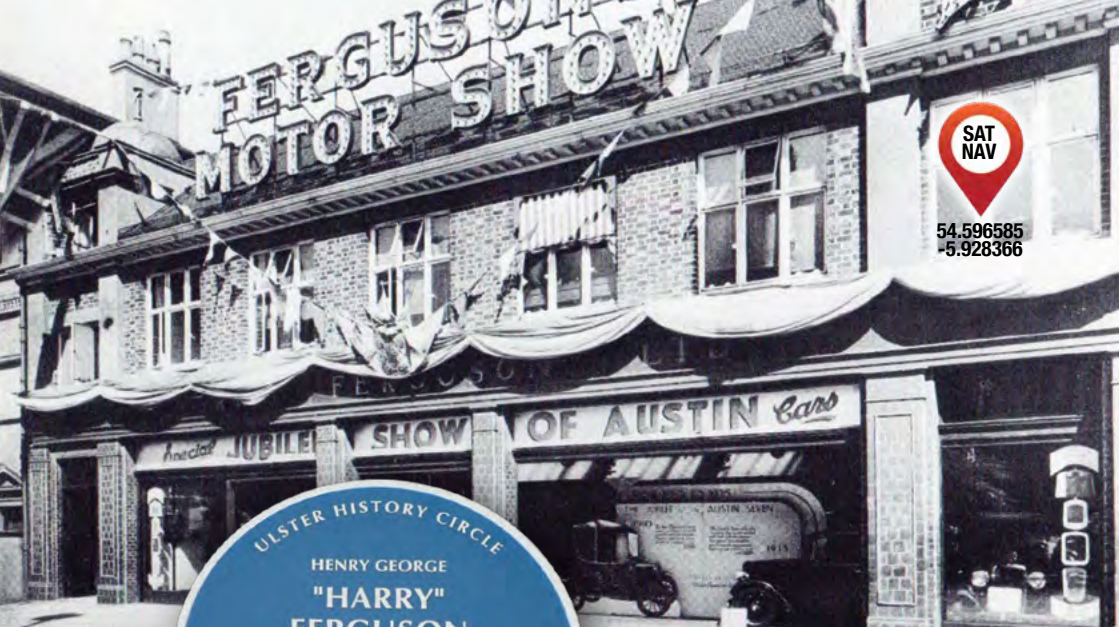
Harry started trading in a vacant property at 87 May Street, Belfast, eventually named Harry Ferguson Motors Limited. It was in these premises that Harry completed the design and construction of what turned out to be the last variant of his aircraft.

In the late 1930s, the road layout of May Street was completely remodelled. Telephone House now stands in the area that was previously Harry's showroom.



MAP SUPPLIED BY ORDNANCE SURVEY  
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54.596585  
-5.928366



## DONEGALL SQUARE EAST, BELFAST

Northern Bank



Harry later moved Harry Fergusson Motors Limited to a showroom on Donegall Square East, where he changed the name to Harry Fergusson Motors. The business was the distributor for Austin Cars in Northern Ireland.

The showroom still remains and is occupied by the Ulster Bank and is marked with a blue Ulster History Circle plaque. An image of Harry appears on £20 notes issued by the former Northern Bank now Danske Bank.





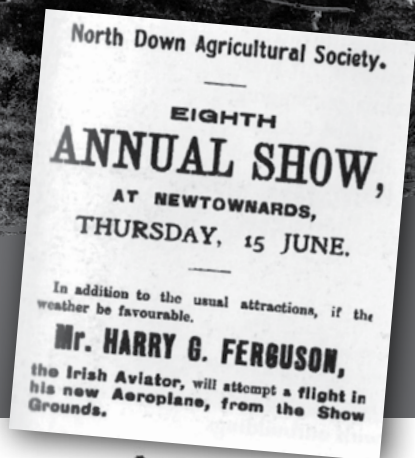
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-6.875687



# MAGILLIGAN

In June 1910, Harry changed his flight zone to a more suitable location at Magilligan, where his flights over the sands were soon attracting large crowds of spectators.

There he tested a further-modified version of his aircraft and made steady progress until a disastrous crash in October 1910 destroyed the machine beyond repair.



# NEWTOWNARDS

Undeterred by the destruction of his aircraft in October 1910 at Magilligan, Harry was flying an entirely new design from the beach at Newtownards by June 1911.

Although he badly damaged the aircraft in a landing accident at the adjacent showgrounds during that month, he repaired and flew it successfully from the beach between September and the end of the year. By then, he began to lose interest and flying experiments ended when the machine was written off by Harry's friend and associate, learner pilot John Williams, on 30 March 1913.







# TULLYLAGAN MANOR HOUSE, COOKSTOWN

Tullylagan Manor House was built in the early 19th century by the Greer family and Mr Thomas MacGregor Greer farmed the surrounding lands at that time. MacGregor Greer was interested in mechanical engineering devices and was the first man to drive a car down Cookstown Main Street.

After some research Mr Greer heard about a young engineer by the name of Harry Ferguson who allegedly was a great

mechanic and it was not long before Harry was invited to come to Tullylagan and service the cars on the estate. Mr Greer also saw the potential of some of Harry's ideas in relation to farming and encouraged him to proceed with the tractor and plough developments.

Mr Greer offered to help with finance to allow Harry and his assistant Willie Sands to produce a tractor with hydraulics fitted that would couple to a plough and this was tested on the Tullylagan soil. Mr Greer became the first owner of the new black tractor.

This private house can only be viewed from the road while enjoying the Harry Ferguson Self-Guided Tour Trail.



54.592058  
-6.765180



# THE ULSTER GRAND PRIX, DUNDROD

The Ulster Grand Prix, Dundrod  
Harry Ferguson's passion for all things mechanical and his talent for tuning engines meant he was participating in competitive motorcycle events from an early age.

With others, he lobbied for the introduction of legislation to permit temporary closure of public roads for racing purposes. In 1922, the first such race was held on a 21-milelong course at Clady in County Antrim.

It became an annual event and in 1935 the international governing body of motor sport gave it the title Grand Prix d'Europe.

The Ulster Grand Prix, as it was named, was curtailed on the outbreak of the Second World War but resumed in 1947 on a shorter Clady circuit of 16 miles and, in 1949, it was chosen to be one round of a

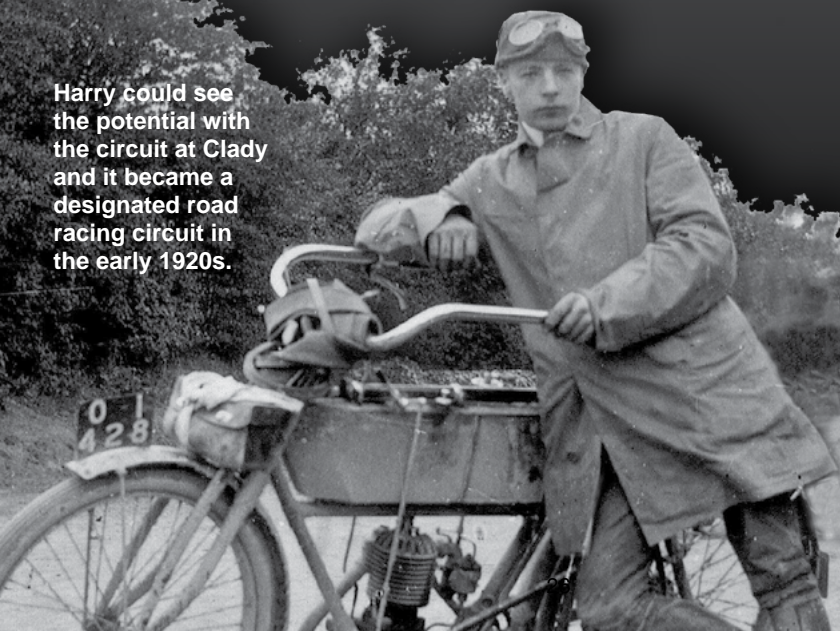
new World Championship series.

Harry could see the potential with the circuit at Clady and it became a designated road racing circuit in the early 1920s. In 1953, the event was run over a completely new 7.5 mile circuit at Dundrod.

It was expanded to include a week-long festival of racing and was an internationally recognised fixture in the road racing calendar, attended by tens of thousands of enthusiasts from all over the world.

On the basis of a win in 1919 by Peter Hickman, who set a lap record of 136.415 miles per hour, it was recognised as the fastest motorcycle road race in the world. Harry Ferguson also lobbied the RAC to organise the famous Ards Tourist Trophy motor car races, races, which were held from 1928 until 1936. Although the Ulster Grand Prix has not taken place since 1919 due to different circumstances, the Revival Racing Motorcycle Club remains committed to reviving the road race for the future.

Harry could see the potential with the circuit at Clady and it became a designated road racing circuit in the early 1920s.



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-6.084323



# Harry Ferguson Legacy

SELF-GUIDED  
TOUR, TRAIL  
& MAP

Following the footsteps of the  
truly remarkable engineer and  
inventor Harry Ferguson

**LCCC**  
Lisburn &  
Castlereagh  
City Council


*you're  
welcome*  
Lisburn & Castlereagh

[fergusonlegacy.com](http://fergusonlegacy.com)

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