

By Kevin Herron

The BRASS BRIGADE Lights up Kilkenny



It was with great delight that I learned that the 5th Brass Brigade Rally was moving from its original Dungarvan base of the past four years to the four-star Pembroke Hotel in Kilkenny. The hotel was built on the site of Stathams garage, a name well known for its Ford Special that placed very well in the Phoenix Park and the Limerick Grand Prix of '35. Most members know the owner of the Pembroke, John Ryan, a club member and a keen old car enthusiast.

Those who had participated in the 2017 Statham Pre-War Run will know what an excellent location the Pembroke Hotel is and how well it lends itself to a rally base for an old car event.

The participating brass cars were securely parked in the hotel's courtyard at the rear, while the trailers and tow cars were parked in the grounds of St. Kieran's college, which is in walking distance from the hotel. It was this element that made a veteran car event in a city centre location possible.



The weekend kicked off on Saturday with a vintage and veteran car display in Kilkenny Castle, on the invitation of the Kilkenny Motor Club – a very leisurely and social aspect of the weekend, with the cars basking in the sunshine for the afternoon. Entrants met up for a drinks reception at 7pm and enjoyed the open air and a chat with old friends. An extensive dinner menu was offered and even those with the fussiest of palates were catered for.

An inspection from the hotel window on Sunday morning showed that it had been raining very heavily overnight, but thankfully it had stopped before our 10am departure. After an impressive breakfast the courtyard was alive with activity, entrants uncovering cars, cars being started, final checks being made before the off. The atmosphere was electric!

The cars took us on an easy route from Kilkenny city centre to Woodstock House and gardens via Gowran, Thomastown and Inistioge, with some very picturesque scenery and steep hills along the way. Woodstock House is just outside the village of Inistioge on the banks of the River Nore, the actual house is now in ruins, having been burnt down during the Civil War in 1922.

However the Victorian gardens there are beautifully maintained and feature a walled garden with tea rooms housed in a Victorian conservatory that was designed by Richard

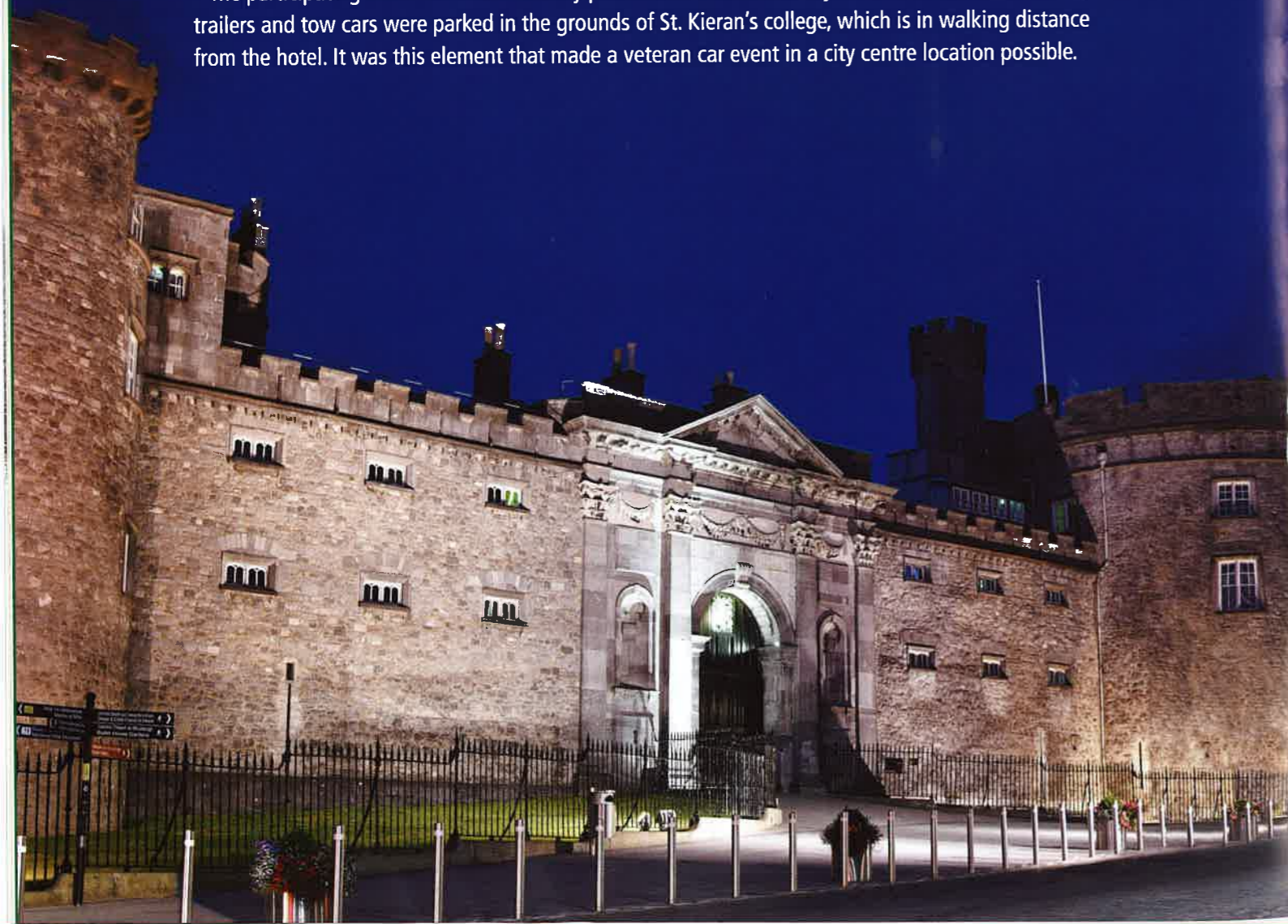
Turner, who also designed the glasshouses in Dublin's Botanic gardens. These provided an appreciably relaxing atmosphere for the entrants to enjoy the coffee stop.

After an hour's rest the cars set off again for the journey back to Kilkenny, via a scenic route through Stoneyford and Bennettsbridge.

One of the most striking elements of this event was the number of marshals on hand. They were at every corner and roundabout on the route, slowing down and stopping traffic where necessary to facilitate our cars. This greatly alleviated the stress from driving a veteran car in traffic, as most of you know, modern motorists rarely make an allowance for our ancient brake technology.

All in all this was an extremely enjoyable event. A huge amount of thanks goes to Declan Grogan and Bernadette Wyer for the organisation, John Ryan and his staff for their welcome and hospitality, Derek Cummins and his rally marshals, Kilkenny Motor Club and Brian Keogh recovery.

A great amount of time and effort goes into organising an event of this nature and I would urge those of you with an eligible car to support the 2019 event. ■



Photos: Martin Taylor

