

## Jim Finlay - Mr Sunflower !

The JAS Finlay Sunflower Trophy Race meeting, celebrates its 540<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It has become the Biggest national short circuit meeting in Northern Ireland, Over the years, many of the Top British riders , along with competitors from further afield have competed in this event.

Reflecting back over the years, the JAS Finlay Sunflower Trophy Races, which was first held in 1977 at Aghadowey , and it was the young Mastero Joey Dunlop, who became the First ever winner of the SUNFLOWER Trophy! Over the years, this race has become the event of the year, Most of the top British Supercup, and BSB stars have graced this meeting, which has taken place at Aghadowey, Kirkistown and now, Bishops court.

We have been blessed to witness such stars as; Ron Haslam(Pepsi Suzuki), Brian Morrison ( Dambuie Honda) Carl Fogarty (Honda Britain) Jamie Whitham (Honda Britain/Suzuki), John Reynolds (Team Green Kawasaki), Rob McElnea, Paul Brown ( Loctite Yamahas), Jeremy McWilliams, Eddie Laycock (Millar Hondas/Yamahas) Jurgen & Patrick Van De Goorbergh (DocShop Yamaha) Gary Cowan (DocShop Yamaha) Jonathon Rea ( Honda) Michael Laverty ( Honda/Suzuki) Chris Walker (PBM Honda) The List is ENDLESS!

These riders were all competing for one thing, to WIN the prestigious Sunflower Trophy! But How did this Trophy come about, What is "SUNFLOWER"? Lets have a wee look into the history of this unique event.

One of the great Characters in the Club at that time was Billy McReynolds. Billy worked for Jim Finlay (Sunflower Foods) and convinced or maybe blackmailed Jim into sponsoring our event and so in 1977 The Sunflower Trophy was born and has continued from Aghadowey to Kirkistown and now the wonderfully prepared Bishops court Circuit. Many fans will know "Jim Finlay", as THE sponsor to great riders like Tom Herron, Jackie Hughes, Graham Young and etc.

Who is Jim Finlay? Jim Finlay is one of those race sponsors, who prefers to remain out of the Limelight!, Jim is one of the most genuine sponsors within our sport, a modest humble man, he has given so much to the sport over the years, and still remains as enthusiastic as ever, not a Glory Hunter, Jim would much prefer to be watching with spectators, rather than been treated like Royalty! Jim still owns the famous OW31 Yamaha, on which Tom Herron set the North West200 lap record on ( prior chicanes!), which was also raced by Jackie Hughes and Graham Young.

And "Sunflower?" The term "Sunflower " was born out of a New Product by the Finlay Food Group, and when Jim Finlay began sponsoring this event, It was thought, that this would be a good way of promoting his new Product! Almost 40 years on, and mention the word SUNFLOWER to anyone, and they will always connect it to Motorcycling. I am sure the Finlay Food group will admit, that this was probably their best way of Promoting their Product.

And Finlays Food?

Finlay's Food is now a leading name in the Irish food industry and still remains a family

owned business with three generations of the Finlay family working within the organisation. It was founded in 1970 by James Finlay.

In July 2000, Finlay's Food moved into the confectionery market with the procurement of a vermicelli / sugar strand plant and are now one of the leading manufacturer of this product in the United Kingdom.

In their purpose built facility, Finlay's Food manufacture chocolate vermicelli and sugar strands, supplying these in variety of sizes, colours and flavours to suit customers individual requirements..

Finlay Foods operate from their modern manufacturing and distribution facility at Maghaberry,( near to what was at one time a short circuit, and used by the organizing Hillsborough MCC!) Finlay's Food continue to service and support their customers and suppliers in both Ireland and the United Kingdom.

The sport, and in Particular, the Hillsborough MCC are indebted for the sponsorship and Support shown by Jim Finlay and his family over the years, and we, as race fans are equally appreciative of his input to keep this prestigious meeting on the race calendar

**Baylon McCaughey**