



CROSSLÉ CAR COMPANY  
Press Release 13 November 2012

## **A New Chapter for The Crosslé Car Company**

The Crosslé Car Company Limited, the UK's oldest constructor of racing cars, has announced exciting plans for its future.

From Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012, **Arnie Black** hands over ownership and management of the company to long-time Crosslé customer and enthusiast **Paul McMorran**.

After thirty-two years as engineer and executive in the global oil industry, Paul brings a vibrant new approach to the business while safeguarding the values on which Crosslé was founded.

A well-known competitor in historic racing across Europe, Paul's collection of Crosslé cars includes the 12F that boosted exports by winning the US Formula B Championship in 1968, and the unique 1970 17F Formula 3 car originally raced by John Watson, Northern Ireland's five-time Grand Prix winner. Paul drove the 17F to a podium finish at the Monaco Historic meeting in 2010.

**"I'm very excited by the opportunity to lead this iconic company. Historic motor racing continues to grow in popularity and Crosslé, with over fifty years of continuous manufacture, has a very special place in that history. The company continues to provide an unbroken link between the people who designed and built Crosslé cars here in Northern Ireland, and the many enthusiasts who continue to enjoy them worldwide. Crosslé has a famous past, a unique position in the market today, a great team of people and, I believe, a very bright future"** said the new owner at the announcement.

**"This is wonderful news for the company and its staff,"** said

Arnie Black, the multiple racing champion who took over ownership and management of the company in 1997 from its founder, Dr. John Crosslé.

In its fifty-five year history the Crosslé Car Company, which uniquely continues to operate from its original factory in Holywood, Northern Ireland, has built over 1,000 competition cars, the majority of them for export.

Paul McMorran will have the support and on-going advice of company founders John and Rosemary Crosslé, while their daughter Caroline Crosslé is an active director of the company.

**“I’m delighted to see Paul take the company forward, building on the successes Arnie and his loyal team have achieved over the last 15 years”** said Dr. John Crosslé, the company founder.

During a transition period, Arnie Black will continue in a supporting role where his experience and excellent relationships with the customers, not to mention his famed abilities as a test-driver, will be extremely valuable.

**“I would like to thank our key staff, Michael Henderson, Adrian Turnbull and Jonathan Freud, and the Crosslé family who have given me so much help and encouragement over the last 15 years”** added Arnie Black.

**“Arnie and the team in Holywood have done a really tremendous job. Looking forward, Crosslé will offer new opportunities to motorsport enthusiasts worldwide, but our commitment to quality is unchanged. Customers and friends can look forward to being part of an exciting new chapter in the history of this unique company”** concluded Paul McMorran.

## Paul McMorran



Paul McMorran becomes Managing Director of The Crosslé Car Company Limited from November 2012.

Born in Belfast in 1958, Paul studied at Belfast Royal Academy before taking a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Edinburgh. As an undergraduate at Harland and Wolff, the Belfast shipyard, he worked in the training centre and engine shop learning welding and fabrication skills that are increasingly scarce today.

An exchange year at the University of Pennsylvania sparked Paul's interest in a global career. From roughneck to senior management, his 32 years in the petroleum industry included positions in land and offshore drilling operations, engineering and HR.

Resident assignments spanned countries of South-East Asia, the Middle East, West Africa and mainland Europe. From 1998 Paul held executive positions with major Russian oil companies in Moscow.

His early fascination with motor racing was fired by the family garage in Newtownards, and trips to Kirkistown race track in the 1960's and 70's.

Paul's own racing has had to fit between career and family commitments, but his Crosslé credentials cannot be denied. Since acquiring a 25F Crosslé in 2002, Paul has built up an enviable collection of cars from the Holywood marque. These include the ex- Roger Barr 12F which brought Crosslé its first international success by winning the US Formula B championship in 1968; the unique 17F 1-litre F3 "screamer" debuted by John Watson in 1970; the works 22F Atlantic campaigned by Jay Pollock; and the V8-engined 7S that Belfast man Jim Hughes developed into a spectacular road car in the 1960's.

This engineer and global executive brings a new perspective to Crosslé while safeguarding the values on which the company was founded. A well-known competitor in historic racing across Europe, in 2012 he raced 12F, 20F, 25F and 32F Crosslés to win the ADAC Von Trips Cup in Germany, the Dutch Historic Monoposto (FF1600) Championship, and perhaps the toughest of all, the pre-82 Formula Ford 1600 Championship at Kirkistown!

**"I'm tremendously excited by the opportunity to lead this iconic company. I'm also conscious of the privilege and responsibility the job represents. Despite economic pressures, racing historic cars like those built by Crosslé for 55 years, is becoming increasingly popular"** said Paul at the Crosslé reception on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

Fluent in French and Russian, Paul completed a Master's degree at INSEAD business school in Coaching and Consulting for Change in 2012. He looks forward to managing change within Crosslé, and to exploring new export markets and fresh opportunities.

Paul is married with three children. Aside from racing he enjoys opera, and the coastline and lakes of his native Northern Ireland.

## Arnie Black



Born in Belfast in 1945, Arnie studied at Royal Belfast Academical Institution, before working in the linen and food industries. Having inherited a love of all things mechanical from his father, and especially motorbikes, his spare time was consumed by motorsport. Realising that four wheels were safer than two, his mother encouraged him to move in that direction.

Arnie purchased a damaged road-going MG Midget and turned it into a racer. After competing for three years at all the Irish race circuits he progressed to Formula Ford 1600 with a Crosslé 25F, and later a 32F.

The 32F brought Arnie real success when he won both the North of Ireland and South of Ireland FF1600 Championships. Arnie's success continued in Formula Ford 2000 where he won the All Ireland FF2000 Championship in 1980 and 1981 driving a Crosslé 41F.

With the constraints of running Irish Feeds, a company Arnie co-directed at the time, finding the time and the finances to race

outside Ireland was extremely difficult. However racing was in Arnie's blood and he rebuilt Ken Fildes' Historic Formula Two Crosslé 19F (the first car to lap Aintree at 100mph) and won the HSCC Classic Racing Car Championship on two occasions.

Arnie has shared grids with many notable names in motorsport; amongst them the former Ferrari Grand Prix driver Eddie Irvine. At a Leinster Semperit Trophy, Euroseries race Arnie shared the front row with the future World Championship runner-up, split by only 0.05s!

In the late 1990's John Crosslé had begun to think about retirement. Having been a Crosslé customer for many years, Arnie decided that the time was right for a career change and in 1997 he purchased the Crosslé Car Company; "poacher turned gamekeeper" as it were.

Since becoming the company owner and managing director Arnie's racing career has continued at some pace. He established the Crosslé 9S racing series at home and abroad, enabling Crosslé 9S drivers to experience classic European circuits such as Spa Francorchamps, Magny Cours, Dijon, Monza and many others.

Arnie's winning ways continue with club victories in 9S Crosslés, a victory in the Pre '82 category of the 2011 Irish FF1600 Festival, and a third place in 2012 at the famous Monza circuit in Italy in a Crosslé 9S.

Under Arnie Black's management the company has also been honoured in the shape of the George Windrum Memorial Trophy for its outstanding contribution to Northern Ireland motorsport.

Crosslé Cars have recently diversified into the restoration of historic competition cars such as the world famous 4WD McCandless and the Mk. III Crosslé for the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. Arnie had the honour of driving the unique McCandless machine, first raced by its creator Rex McCandless in 1953, at the 2011 Goodwood Revival, the Cultra hillclimb and at Kirkistown race track.

Arnie has steered the company into the twenty first century aided and abetted by an excellent team. He has expanded the company's markets in the UK and further afield into France and

Switzerland, and introduced the new restoration side of the business.

**“I am delighted to be handing over the reigns of Crosslé to Paul. I have known Paul for many years as a customer and competitor and am sure that his vision for the future will allow Crosslé to go from strength to strength”** said Arnie.

## **History in the Making**

**A comprehensive history of the Crosslé Car Company is currently being prepared for publication in 2013. The author of this large work, Alan (Plum) Tyndall is compiling the information from interviews with the Crosslé family and those that have been intimately involved with the company over the years. Alan has interviewed drivers, friends and former employees and travelled to America to meet many of the key characters who made Crosslé such a success on that side of the Atlantic. He has also delved into old race programmes and the extensive information contained in the invaluable scrapbooks that Caroline Crosslé has compiled over the years.**

‘Plum’, as he is universally known in the motorsporting world, has also called upon many of his personal experiences gained from over forty years of commenting at the races, on radio and on TV, and socialising with the drivers who have enjoyed so much success in the Irish manufactured cars.

This book about Crosslé’s discrete success story – **Hidden Glory - The history of the Crosslé Car Company**, will be lavishly illustrated and published in limited numbers. The future collectors’ item will not only record the extraordinary achievements of the little company that shelters in the lea of the Holywood Hills and has produced some 1,000 cars, it also reminds us that all this happened while a civil war was raging just a few miles away from its factory doors in Northern Ireland!

### **Sample extracts**

#### **Introduction**

*Before the arrival of Sat-Nav and GPS, finding the Crosslé Car Company was nigh impossible. Their discrete location in Rory’s Wood, tucked into the Holywood foothills and surrounded by Redburn Park, in many ways typifies its founder’s philosophy. John Crosslé is a quiet man who quietly likes to get on with his own business.*

*Most men and their dogs are aware of Belfast's industrious past, but ignorant of the fact that almost under their feet, just below the Redburn Country Park, there is another, admittedly much smaller business, that has survived the ravages of the local wars and brought glory and respect to Northern Ireland on the race tracks of the world!*

*In this book we hope to clear away some of the 'foliage' that has hidden the Crosslé Car Company and its almost recluse founder – John Crosslé, and to reveal the birth, growth and continuation of this small Ulster company that can rightly claim to be the longest surviving production racing car manufacturer in the UK, and almost certainly a lot further afield.*

### **A car is born**

*John's enquiring mind was always on the look out for solutions to make his racer faster, but also solutions that he could implement at the minimum possible cost. What's that old saying, 'necessity is the mother of invention'?*

*There were no drawings; everything was in his head. Motoring magazines were examined in great detail and Tommy Graham and others were frequently quizzed on wheelbase dimensions and many other subjects.*

### **The early years**

***"It was a hectic time. There was still plenty of demand for my daytime engineering activities, which paid the bills. I had met Rosemary and we'd become engaged. We were searching for a house and new premises for the business, and I was determined to win the Coulter Trophy for the third year in succession."***

**JOHN CROSSLÉ**

*John achieved all these goals. He took a hat trick of wins in the 1172cc Ford Championship, and won the prestigious Regent Trophy at Kirkistown.*

***John Crosslé proved that his single-seater model is not only the fastest in Ireland, but is now ready, after months of development and testing, to take on the best of the English opposition.***

**BELFAST TELEGRAPH – Newspaper**

### **Power and Some Glory**

***"The 8F was probably three times as powerful as anything we had tried before, and it was our first monocoque chassis. We had extremely little knowledge of this type of construction, and we more or less taught ourselves as we went along. But it seemed to stay together."***

## JOHN CROSSLÉ

On the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1965 the growling V8 Crosslé, still very much in prototype form, first appeared at Bishopscourt and it was literally a lap shattering experience! **Tommy Reid** reduced his own lap record by an amazing 1.6 seconds!

**“Tommy was telling me the speed he was doing down that straight and it was incredible! The Cutting was bumpy, but it was a nice corner. I remember when I was driving there hitting the bump at the wrong time and I suddenly found myself in the middle of a hay field! The grass was so long that I couldn’t see where I was and there was hay-seed everywhere!”**

JOHN CROSSLÉ

### **The Sportscar Years**

During the severe winter of 1962 – ‘63 John Crosslé was persuaded by a group of enthusiasts to turn his attention to sports cars, and their much-needed commissions would give John and Rosemary renewed financial hope.

The early ‘60s were a particularly creative period in sports-racing car design. To compete with his contemporary designers who had all produced exceptionally attractive machines, John spent endless hours on the preparation of the 5S bodywork. The reward was a design that sat proudly with the other icons of its age.

**“It really did take a long time to build those cars and there is no doubt that if you looked at them on a time-and-motion basis, they would have been totally unviable. We were just insane enough to do it.”**

JOHN CROSSLÉ

### **An honourable encounter**

The opening exchanges between the **Honourable Mervyn Wingfield** and John Crosslé were far from cordial and they happened at a very unusual place! Where in the world would you have found a circuit with two hump-backed railway bridges but in Ireland? The place was Dunboyne and the two horror leaps were the source of manys a racing tale!

**“On the bridge exiting Dunboyne Village, Mervyn’s Triumph landed on the back of my 5S and then disappeared into the hedge! Funnily enough it didn’t do me any harm, but I remember that Mervyn wasn’t very amused! My car had decided to leap into neutral in mid-air, so when I landed my progress was not as swift as might have been reasonably expected!”**

JOHN CROSSLÉ

Having cooled his heels and witnessed the success of the car that had

launched him into the County Meath undergrowth, Mervyn made his peace with the John and the two formed a friendship and partnership that would bring Crosslé into the international arena in England and on the Continent.

### **Continental caper**

Mervyn finished in sixth place with his team mate Jim Cooney ninth, but what the Autosport report failed to realise was that Jim had driven his 7S all the way to the German track from Rory's Wood in Northern Ireland!

Jim's car had been finished on such a tight deadline that it missed the normal transportation arrangements, but he really wanted to make the grid at Solitude, so he decided to take some drastic action.

A wiper blade was hurriedly grafted onto the windscreen and a set of trade plates taped to the bodywork. Then Jim, presumably wrapped in a warm overcoat, jumped into the 7S and set off on an exciting if somewhat uncomfortable journey of over six hundred miles to the German circuit. No heater, no cover, no car tax (the trade plate would have sufficed), and I am sure that a lot of the other road-legal requirements like a hand brake were also missing. Things were very different in those days!

### **Formula Ford**

It was two years before the Crosslé Car Company joined the growing ranks of Formula Ford manufacturers. Having studied the developing situation carefully, John not only saw a long-term future for the formula, but also the first signs of a proper mass market for Crosslé.

This however would require resources that Crosslé did not have at the time. Contact was made with C.T. Wooler Engineering in England, a company founded in 1911 by John Wooler to manufacture motorbikes. By the '60s Wooler's manufacturing had long ceased and they were running a Formula Vee team for the outspoken journalist and driver **Nick Britain** and a young Scottish driver called **Gerry Birrell**.

The next development in what was to become the world's most popular racing formula, was the announcement of the Johnston Wax European Formula Ford Championship. Gerry saw this as step up in his career ladder and the 16F as the right 'shoe' to take that step in.

### **Championship year**

It was a stroke of luck that the final round of the European championship was at Mondello Park. Crosslé knew the circuit well, Gerry had won there in August and **Brian Nelson** had recently broken the lap record at the County Kildare track on his first outing in a 16F Crosslé.

**“Gerry had to finish second if Trimmer won, so we thought we needed a bit of support. Brian Nelson, who had the lap record in his pocket, was the obvious choice. This was the start of a long association with Brian in our single-seaters, which lasted as long as Brian continued to race.”**

JOHN CROSSLÉ

*Brian’s first Crosslé commitment was in a 16F and his introduction to Formula Ford was nothing short of sensational! On his acquaintance with one of the little 1600cc racers, he broke the lap record at Mondello. Then when the Europeans came to town, he won his heat in a field that included two future World Champions, but that moment of glory was short lived as he was penalized for a jump-start!*

**“There was much lurking in caravans and things and eventually they decided that he had jumped the start, which I didn’t think he did. However he was put at the back of the grid for the final, but he managed to carve his way through to third place!”**

JOHN CROSSLÉ

*Sensational as this was, the attention was naturally on Gerry Birrell and the Championship. The two Crosslés were fastest in practice, and both the 16Fs were under the lap record.*

*Heat one was a real humdinger between the championship front-runners Trimmer and Birrell. They raced nose to tail with Trimmer always in front.*

**“John was pretty annoyed about that as he thought Gerry should have made the effort to get in front of Trimmer, but as it turned out in the end he didn’t need to, as he won the championship and that was that.”**

TONY DRON – Driver / Journalist.

**Gerry Birrell** had won the Johnston’s Wax Cortina European Formula Ford Championship by half a point, and in doing so he had become the first driver to win an International Championship at the wheel of an Irish car!

**“Yes it all seemed possible at the end of 1969. We had good orders, a victorious car and the logical progression seemed to be to Formula Two, and who knows even Formula One. Cars were relatively uncomplicated and I suppose I would have to admit that a Formula One Crosslé for John Watson to go Grand Prix racing in, was in the back of my mind!”**

JOHN CROSSLÉ

### **Globe Trotting**

*With the 18F and 19F doing so well at home, ambitious plans were made to contest the final two rounds of the European Formula Two Championship. The problem was that they were at the opposite ends of the Continent!*

*Who these days would dream of venturing into the European F2 series with a couple of drivers and their pals, some spanners, two tow cars with open trailers, and two Crosslés?*

*Brian qualified eleventh against the professionals in Sweden, many of whom were in works teams. Ken Fildes was less fortunate as his 19F had clutch problems and he just scraped onto the grid in nineteenth place.*

*In between the European expeditions there had been the annual pilgrimage to Phoenix Park for the Formula Libre thrash. This temporary track is perilous at the best of times but in the wet it was just plain frightening.*

***“Starts were complicated, as those FVA engines had high-pressure fuel pumps. There was an electric pump that you switched off after you got going. The pump switch was beside the ignition switch, so I went off the line and I flicked everything off! By the time I realised what had happened I had a real race on my hands.”***

***“The back section of Phoenix Park is not the happiest place to try and overtake, so patience had to be the virtue and I waited until I was coming down to Ratra hairpin. There was another car in front of us and I felt that Alan was trying to keep it between us. I saw a gap and thought I’d have to go. Next I was on the grass and I smacked the lamp-standard, which broke into three pieces. A wheel came off and luckily enough it turned the car around and it then proceeded backwards over a four-foot high wall!”***

***“When I returned to the paddock Mick Mooney came across, ‘Brian you know you nearly killed my driver!’ ‘Never mind about your driver, I nearly killed myself’, I replied.”***

*BRIAN NELSON – Works Driver*

*But there was one more outstanding and unexpected victory to come to Brian Nelson and the Crosslé Car Company before the year was out.*

*After a Mondello meeting John and Brian boarded a plane for Boston with two bags and two rear tyres as personal luggage!*

***“My first taste of Sebring was in official practice. The heat and the humidity was immense, but I qualified third. Initially in the race I took my time but then I set to work.”***

***“Eventually I was right behind Mike Eyerly, but not knowing where the finish line was with two laps to go, I went down the inside going into the hairpin. When I came out of the corner, he passed me like I had missed a gear! I caught up with him again coming out onto the straight and we both left our braking late and I got through on the inside. Unknown to me the finish line was half way round the hairpin!”***

*BRIAN NELSON – Works Driver*

### ***The Pinnacle of Production***

*The period between 1977 and 1979 saw the pinnacle of production at the Crosslé Car Company. Between those years one hundred and ninety eight Formula Ford 1600s; twenty-nine Formula Ford 2000s; five Super Vees and*

*one Sports 2000, an amazing total of two hundred and thirty three cars, were produced. As an average, that would appear to be more than two skilfully hand-built cars a week, but in reality, it was quite different.*

***“In those years we’d have been building four cars a week from January to June. The rest of the year was spent building up stock, designing for the following season, and generally drawing breath!”***

**JOHN CROSSLÉ**

*The vast majority of these cars were the 32F and 35F FF1600 models, and most of them are still lapping the circuits in the hands of their happy owners to this day.*

### ***Nigel Mansell***

*Following some early experience in karting, **Nigel Mansell** entered Formula Ford in June of 1976. He started in a Hawk DL11, then a Javlin JL5 and in 1977 he changed to a Crosslé 25F.*

*John Crosslé lent the up and coming Brummie a 32F, but he hardly had time to get used to it before Nigel’s plans received a serious set back in June 1977. Mansell broke his neck in a practice accident at Brands Hatch. It was an accident that could have easily ended his career, but showing that grit that the British bulldog became so well known for, he was back in the repaired 32F, having discharged himself from hospital within five weeks!*

*His recovery was remarkable. In some forty outings Nigel scored twenty-seven wins and he won the British Fusegear Formula Ford Championship in the year in which he had broken his neck!*

*The Crosslé family are justifiable proud that they played a significant role in helping the developing career of the driver who would go on to race for Lotus, Williams, Ferrari and McLaren in Formula One and become the World Champion in 1992 and the CART Indycar World Series in 1993.*

**Place your order now with a Crosslé dealer near you for a copy of this limited edition forthcoming publication!**