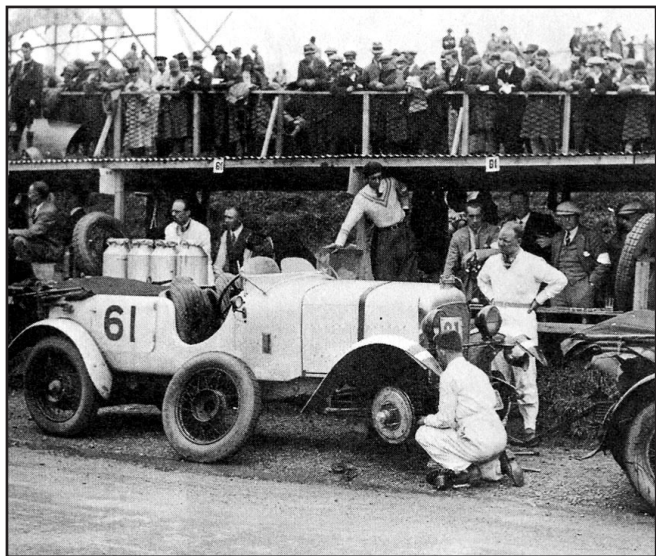


It was in 1928, that he founded what was to become his legend as a TT specialist. Eddie was the driver of a 1,954 cc Lagonda in the first of the Ards TTs. Eddie liked big, long races where his strength and stamina favoured him. Unfortunately he scored a DNF after 26 of the 30 laps when his engine seized through loss of oil. In 1929 he didn't have much better luck, attacking Newtonards Town Hall in the rain (*well it was Northern Ireland*) in his supercharged, sleeve valve 2362cc Arrol-Aster to the detriment of the car but not, apparently to Eddie as he was able to drive the damaged car on for a few more laps until it gave up the struggle.



Above: 1929 TT, in front of his Arrol-Aster while his mechanic makes brake adjustments

In 1930 Hall began his near single-handed campaign to continue the Bentley racing heritage, partially bridging the gap between the Le Mans wins between 1924 and 1930 and the 2003 Le Mans win (*courtesy of Volkswagen*). For that year's Ards TT he entered his own 4½ litre Bentley coming 12th overall and second to one of the Hon. Dorothy Pagets' supercharged cars in class. Probably because the race regulations favoured the smaller cars, by the way they were handicapped, he switched to a 746cc supercharged MG Midget for 1931 when he fell out after 6 laps and persevered with the little 'uns in 1932 with a Midget that got him 3rd overall and first in class.

Wanting something a little bit bigger he went for a 1,087 cc supercharged MG Magnette for 1933 which brought him home 4th overall and second in class. 1934 saw him return to Bentley (*albeit of the Derby kind*) a 3 ½ litre and his faith was rewarded as he came second overall and first in class. In 1935 he was back again, same type car and same result and that is what he did again in 1936 but this time with a 4 ¼ litre. He was one of the few drivers to compete in all 9 of the TTs on the Ards circuit.

The story is that Rolls-Royce, having won the 1906 Isle of Man TT and proved the sporting credentials of their motor carriages, were reluctant to help him with his racing efforts but ultimately decided that as it was a Bentley, if it all went pear shaped it wouldn't reflect on R-R. So confident was Eddie in his cars that he dropped a sports body on to his road car and trundled off to the Isle of Man to race with it. As I said, Eddie liked 'real' races and he drove for MG in the 1934 Mille Miglia where his wife Joan was his co-driver/riding mechanic. In his book on the Mille Miglia Count Giovanni Lurani remarks rather patronisingly 'The second car was in the hands of E.R. Hall and his wife. They were from the north of England and kept themselves to themselves.' He was clearly a man of character, famously driving his Bentley single handed in the Le Mans 24 hour event in 1950 despite his co-driver trying to get in the car and have a go. There is a story in Count Giovanni Lurani's '*Racing Round the World*' which exemplifies Eddie's approach to life. The Count had arranged with Eddie to organise a team of two Aston Martins for the 1935 Pescara 24 hour race, Eddie to drive one of them.

According to the Count, with the cars at Pescara and everything arranged for the race, as he was driving towards Pescara he saw a Bentley coming the other way. It was Mr and Mrs Hall. The Count asked them where they were going and Mr Hall told him that, as they had not received the welcome they expected and the hotel was not sufficiently comfortable, they had decided to go home, which they proceeded to do (*well he was a Yorkshireman*).

Eddie moved to Canada in the 1950s and he then relocated to Monte Carlo, a more suitable residence for such a larger than life character, where he died in 1982. Eoin Young tells a story of how he was with Denis Jenkinson at Eddie's flat in Monaco and, when asked by DSJ how he had coped, during his 1950 Le Mans 24 hour drive, with nature's insistent calls Eddie had replied '*Green overalls, old boy*'.

Eoin may recognise the autographed copy of the Brian de Grineau sketch of Eddie and his Bentley at probably the 1934 Ards TT - his car wore race number 7 in the last three events. Was it given to DSJ on the Green Overalls occasion? Eddie clearly liked speed. He bobsledded (if that is the word) competing for Great Britain in the 1927 European Championships and at the 1928 Winter Olympics.

As Sammy Davis said in the BRDC Silver Jubilee book '*Eddie Hall was a great driver with the exciting temper of one whose whole existence centred on the game and who did not suffer fools gladly, especially if they happened to get in his way.*' Maybe not the most lovable, but a hero none the less.