

Inspector defends Dundrod road race

By AP Maginness

AN OFFICIAL who carried out a technical inspection on the motorcycle ridden by Andy Wallace when he was killed during a race in Dundrod, Co Antrim last weekend has defended motorcycle road racing in the north.

Inspection officer for the Motorcycle Union of Ireland, Tony Harvey, said that the sport should continue despite the latest death.

Mr Harvey said the road races allowed motorcyclists to race in a controlled environment.

"Should the sport be curtailed many competitors who go road racing would fulfil their lust for speed on the crowded roads of our province," he said.

Mr Harvey also said he spoke to Andy Wallace's father shortly after his son's death.

"While I was carrying out the technical inspection Mr Wallace came and spoke to me, he was most philosophical about the death of his son.

"He said that road racing was what his son wanted to do and above all else he expressed his wish that the event and road racing should continue."

Andy Wallace who was from Inverness in Scotland lost his life while racing in the Ulster Motorbike Grand Prix meeting at Dundrod last Saturday.

Mr Wallace died instantly when he came off his bike after a collision during the initial lap of the first race of that day.

Two others were injured in the accident.

In the 82 year history of the Ulster Motorbike Grand Prix, Andy Wallace was the 32nd rider to lose his life.

Swimming pool gets reprieve

THE University of Ulster's swimming pool at its Jordanstown campus was given a temporary reprieve from final closure at the High Court last night.

The pool will close to the public, as the university had planned, from tomorrow. However, a lawyer for the university gave an undertaking that it would take no steps towards the eventual decommissioning of the pool – such as emptying it or switching off the pumps – over the bank holiday weekend. Mr Justice Morgan asked that the university make the agreement in response to an application for an emergency injunction against the university's decision to close the pool.

The application was made by Rynagh McNally, the president of the university's sport union, who was acting on behalf of the Save Our Pool Committee.

A lawyer for the applicant told the court that 10 schools and five public health groups used the pool and the university had encouraged them to rely on it. Mr Justice Morgan said the question was whether there was a "legal obligation on the university" to provide the facility and asked the parties to come to an agreement in relation to the pool closure until further representation could be made when the case was listed again on Tuesday morning.

Drugs find in city centre

FOUR men were being questioned by police last night in connection with a drugs find in Belfast city centre. The men were arrested in Donegall Street at around 6pm yesterday following the seizure of class C drugs. British bomb disposal experts were also called to the scene after two firearms were discovered during the operation.

US charity chief raises concerns over suicides

By Anne Madden
Health Correspondent

THE president of an American charity which supports Irish children met with health officials in Belfast this week over concerns at the high rate of suicide in the city.

Terry Ryan, founder and president of the Children of Ireland Group, said he had been "astounded" by a cluster of suicides in north Belfast earlier this year and came to see for himself what action was being taken to address the problem.

The charity organised a visit by two leading mental health doctors in May, which was welcomed by the Department of Health, to assess youth suicide in north Belfast and come up with recommendations on how to prevent them.

The recommendations included:

- properly funded substantive prevention programmes
- a comprehensive youth mentoring programme with peers and community leaders helping young people
- more cross-community dialogue tackling suicide specifically and sectarian issues affecting young people.

Mr Ryan said his visit was to see how these recommendations could be implemented by the Department of Health and the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust (NWBHSST).

"They understand the urgency of youth suicide but the recommendations are still under review by the North and West Belfast Trust," he said.

"We held some positive discussions. I sincerely hope the recommendations come to fruition, otherwise the incidence of completed youth suicide will continue to be at high rates in the months and years to come."

There are 19 suicides per 100,000 people in north and west Belfast – one of the



■ CONCERN: Terry Ryans, the founder and president of the Children of Ireland Group, met health officials in Belfast this week to discuss concerns over the high rate of suicide in the city
PICTURE: Niall Carson

highest rates in the world – compared to 13 per 100,000 for the whole of Britain and Northern Ireland.

John McGeown, NWBHSST director of mental health services, said: "The trust met with Mr Ryan and appreciates the interest and continuing concern of his organisation in the issue of suicide."

A Florida banker by profession, Mr Ryan started up the Children of Ireland

Group in 1999 following time spent as an international observer at the Drumcree protest in Co Armagh.

Mr Ryan said he was aware that people would say "here is another American who thinks he knows it all".

However, he added: "We have just taken the initiative to give a helping hand and give young people and their families some hope."

The Children of Ireland Group has helped more than 16,000 young people across Northern Ireland.

Most recently it has been working with projects organised by Habitat for Humanity in north Belfast.

One of its initiatives was to arrange for the shipping over of baseball equipment for teams in Coleraine, Portstewart and Belfast.

Boys are heartbroken after arsonists burn pet pig alive

TWO young Ballymena brothers have been left heartbroken after arsonists burnt their pet Vietnamese pot-bellied pig alive.

Sean Kyle said a shed containing Porky, the nine-month-old pet pig belonging to his sons Adam (10) and Andy (seven), was torched by vandals at around 10.30pm on Thursday.

Despite spotting the flames, Mr Kyle was unable to rescue the animal because of the heat.

Instead, he said he listened in horror as the pig squealed "for about 50 to 60 seconds" after being trapped in the flames.

The shed of the Sunningdale Park house, in the Carniny area of Ballymena, was burnt to the ground.

Mr Kyle said he had been told by a firefighter that had an adjacent oil tank exploded it would have caused considerable damage to nearby houses.

His children were not in the house at the time.

Mr Kyle said he had previously been visited by police after a "mystery" warning was delivered to the Samaritans advising that he had 48 hours to get out of Ballymena.

He said arsonists had tried to

"The boys are gutted. They can't understand why anybody would want to do this to Porky"

Sean Kyle

set his house on fire just a day earlier by lighting a wheelie bin and pushing it against a door. "I have not done anything on

anyone and I don't have dealings with anyone. The threats were made anonymously," Mr Kyle said.

"The boys are gutted. They can't understand why anybody would want to do this to Porky and they want the police to get the 'bad boys' who did it.

"We hope to get a new pig."

Police believe the arsonists opened the shed door to start the blaze, and would have known that the pig was there.

Police urged anyone who saw suspicious activity in the area to contact detectives on 028 2565 3355.

Roofer jailed for gun offence

A 35-YEAR-OLD roofer who admitted having guns and UVF uniforms has been jailed for four-and-a-half years.

The handguns, shotguns and cartridges were found at the Newtownabbey home of Stephen Pollock, who claimed that he had been ordered to keep them.

Belfast Crown Court heard that police discovered the arms cache by chance at Pollock's Jordanstown Road home in September 2003 after going to search it for documents relating to a BMW car stolen in England a week earlier.

In a portable building at the rear of the house police uncovered a pistol, a converted blank firing pistol, a sawn-off shotgun, a shotgun with a pistol grip and a number of cartridges, together with a number of jumpers with UVF badges on them, black combat trousers and several pairs of white gloves.

Prosecuting lawyer Tessa Kitson said a search of the kitchen in the house also uncovered documents containing oaths to be sworn to the UVF.

She said Pollock, who was detained the following day, claimed that two men had come to his home, threatened him and ordered him to keep the arms cache.

Defence QC John Orr said Pollock had been told he had to "mind this if you want to keep yourself and wife intact".

He said Pollock was interested in collecting First World War memorabilia and that some of the items uncovered could be obtained on the internet.

Mr Orr added that police were satisfied that there was no trace, intelligence or link between Pollock and any paramilitary organisation.

Jailing Pollock, Judge Mannin said it saddened him to do so, because while there was no suggestion that the accused had any connection with any paramilitary group, his offences could not go unmarked.

Three accused of Tohill abduction freed on bail

THREE Belfast men charged in connection with the alleged false imprisonment of dissident republican Bobby Tohill have been released on bail.

Gerard McCrory (32), of Dermot Hill Road, Harry Fitzsimmons (35), of St James's Gardens, and Thomas Tolan (32), of Ballymurphy Parade were each granted bail totalling £5,000 in the High Court yesterday.

A fourth co-accused, Liam Rainey (30), of New Barnsley Crescent, was granted High Court bail on Wednesday.

All four are accused of beating and unlawfully imprisoning Bobby Tohill on February 20 this year.

They are also accused of having items, including metal cudgels, pepper spray, disposable clothing and a van, in circumstances likely to be of use to "terrorists".

Lord Justice Nicholson told the court that he was granting bail until the preliminary inquiry into the case which will be held on September 22.

He said the magistrate who heard the case then would see the main evidence against the four, which was CCTV footage, and it would be "a matter for him" as to whether to grant bail then.

Lord Justice Nicholson added that it was a notorious case in which no witnesses from

the bar from which the injured party was allegedly abducted had come forward and that Mr Tohill himself had said the four accused did not assault him. The judge said the court could only deal with the cases in the way in which they were presented and he saw no reason not to grant bail.

The judge said the Crown would have to face the reality that the chances of any conviction on the basis of the evidence was evaporating.

The four applicants were instructed to report to police three times a week, to have no contact with Mr Tohill or their co-accused and to obey a curfew.

Former SAS captain convicted

FORMER SAS captain Simon Mann, who played a British army colonel in a 2002 film about Bloody Sunday, has been convicted in Zimbabwe of trying to buy weapons.

Sixty-six other suspected mercenaries were yesterday acquitted of the charges which are

linked to an alleged coup plot in oil-rich Equatorial Guinea, in southern Africa which Mann is accused of leading.

Mann admitted trying to order assault rifles, grenades, anti-tank rocket launchers and other weapons from the Zimbabwe Defence Industries, an offence

which is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

But magistrate Mishrod Guvamombe said prosecutors had failed to prove their case against 64 other men arrested when their ageing Boeing 727 landed at Harare International Airport on March 7 and two

who were already in Zimbabwe with Mann at the time.

He also acquitted Mann of an additional charge of taking possession of the weapons.

Mann played the part of Colonel Derek Wilford in the 2002 film *Bloody Sunday* which also starred James Nesbitt.