MOTORCYCLE (or “bike”) racing, rally-car racing, and carting seem to combine an ancient Irish love of horse racing with the region’s long-standing aptitude for heavy engineering.

“Rallying” is a type of motor racing held from point-to-point on public or private roads (temporarily closed to the public) rather than on purpose-built, circular tracks. Competing cars or bikes must be “road-legal.” Many competing vehicles are standard, production-line models that have been modified in small, family-owned shops and garages.

The North West 200 bike race is Ireland’s largest sporting event. Each May, more than 100,000 spectators line winding, two-lane roads along County Antrim’s beautiful north coast to watch bike riders race through “The Triangle” of towns formed by Portrush, Portstewart, and Coleraine.

The North West 200 is among the world’s fastest competitions, with speeds exceeding 200 mph. Although some street signs are removed and hay bales are wrapped around lampposts and telephone poles, the race is not without risk, and accidents sometimes occur.

The Smithsonian Institution thanks Northern Ireland’s 2 & 4 Wheels Motorsports Steering Group for assistance with this display.