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8th November 2021

From the Secretary: The Marques de Portago Challenge 2021

Dear Member

I should like to put a question to you: do you want to be part of history?

Of course, the question is rhetorical. Some, perhaps many, Members may feel that they have already made their mark in life and will be feeling quietly confident that history will be kind to them.

If, on the other hand, you feel that you would like to make absolutely certain that you will be remembered, this coming winter season on the Cresta Run we will witness the inaugural Portago Challenge from Stream, and **the race will afford all those who take part a chance to break what we believe is the oldest sporting record in the world: the record from Stream (564 yards) set in 1956 by Alfonso, Marques de Portago.** His time of 28.9 seconds beat the previous record of 29 seconds, set 25 years earlier by J.G.Crammond. Incidentally, the Ladies' record of 31.2 , set in 1921, is also vulnerable as ladies are welcome to enter this open event. This, ladies and gentlemen, is your chance for sporting glory.

We expect the record will be broken, perhaps a number of times throughout the morning. There will be logistical problems getting Members' toboggans to Stream, but the Tower Team and the Seiler Team will overcome any difficulties.

The exact race conditions will be set nearer the time but you will be able to use your own toboggan and make a running start. It is envisaged that competitors will make at least three courses depending on the overall level of entries.

Marc Fischer has very kindly sponsored a truly magnificent solid silver cocktail

shaker trophy from Asprey in the form of a racing car with a race number that will resonate amongst racing enthusiasts. Marc is also working on take away prizes. In addition, it would not be the Cresta without a commemorative badge which will be given to all competitors.

Prizegiving will take place at the Palace Hotel on the evening of December 30th, after the President's *Welcome Back* drinks. Places will be limited so you are asked to e-mail me if you would like to attend the dinner. Places will be reserved for the first six in the event.

Who was Alfonso Antonio Vincente Eduardo Angel Blas Francisco de Borja Cabeza de Vaca y Leighton, 11th Marques de Portago, GE?

Fon, as he was known, was named after his godfather, King Alfonso XIII of Spain. He was born in London in 1928. His grandfather was governor of Madrid and his father was a talented sportsman and an audacious gambler.

Fon was an extremely talented sportsman, excelling at Jai alai, tennis, and was a world class swimmer, but most of all he loved speed and risk. He was three times French amateur steeple chase champion, and he rode in the 1950 and 1952 Aintree Grand Nationals. He took fourth place in the two man bob event at Cortina in 1956, standing third before the last course. He did subsequently win a bronze in the World Championships. He was fascinated by motor car racing and despite less than promising beginnings, he became an excellent driver, racing with some of the greats including Fangio, Collins, and Moss.



The Marques de Portago

Tragically, Portago was to lose his life in the last *Mille Miglia* in 1957. He was driving a 4.1 litre, four cam, V12 engined Ferrari 335S with his co-driver, fellow Cresta rider Ed Gurner Nelson, whom Portago had met when Nelson was working as a lift man at the Plaza Hotel, New York - they became great friends.

On that tragic day, Sunday, 12th May 1957 at 15:30, near the village of Cavriana, just under 20 miles from the finish, Portago's Ferrari's left front tyre burst. The driver and his companion were killed instantly, and in the ensuing crash nine others lost their lives, including five children.

The accident toll determined the end of the *Mille Miglia* in its original format and the prohibition of all other races on public roads in Italy.

The year before he died, Portago beat the 25 year old record from Stream, a record he had equalled the year before. **This record has stood since 1956.**

I am convinced that Portago would have wanted someone to break his record, and that is what you will have the chance to do on December 30th, 2021. Even if you don't beat the record, you will be able to say, "I competed on the day the oldest sporting record was broken". Imagine: who would have heard of Victor Brooks of Jamaica had he not been one of the competitors who lined up when Bob Beamon jumped out of the pit!?

If you would like to register for the event, please email me (gary.lowe@cresta-run.com) and add whether you would also like to attend the dinner.

Good luck



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Best wishes
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