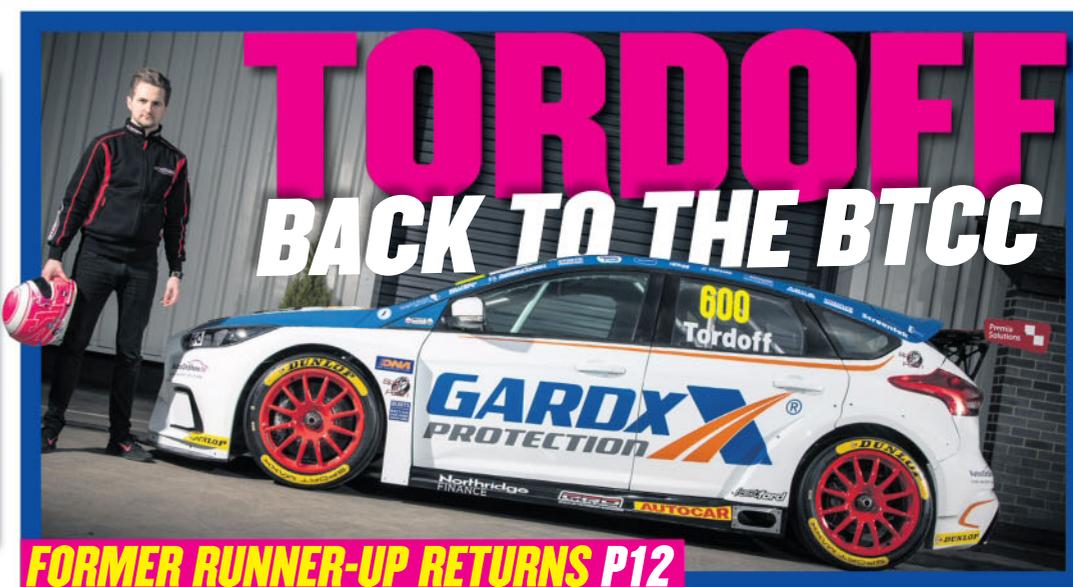


THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

# MOTORSPORT NEWS



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INVESTIGATION**

Leading figures call for a shake-up in the UK scene

# WHY BRITISH RALLYING NEEDS A RADICAL OVERHAUL



By Jack Benyon

British rallying needs a rethink to bring back healthy entries and a sustainable plan to return to its glory days, according to category insiders.

In a special *Motorsport News* investigation, leading figures within rallying have called for an alteration in the order cars are run on events to tempt people back on to the stages.

Former WRC co-driver and UK event organiser Nicky Grist said: "There's a good case that we should change the seeding rule. There's a place for another 20 or 30 crews to come out with good clean roads. We shouldn't be too restrictive, we need to encourage more entries."

*Motorsport News* has put together a five-point plan to rescue national rallying, as well as investigating the historic scene and the Rally4Wales stage repair scheme.

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**"The date change hasn't impressed many drivers"**



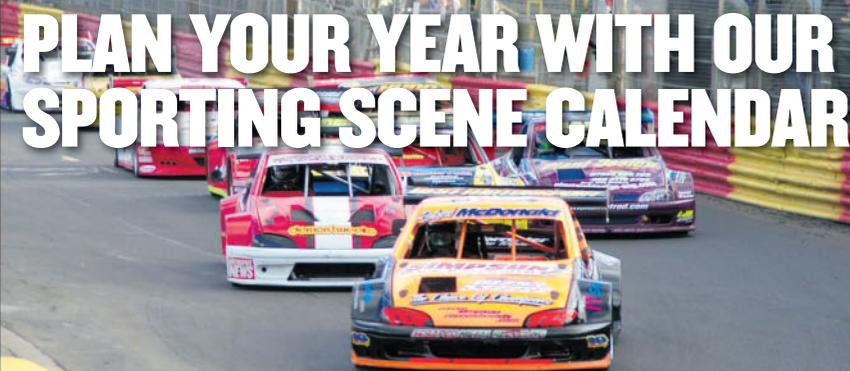
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**STATE OF NATIONAL**

**Why UK rallying must see the bigger picture**

**R**allying has gone through a rapid period of change in recent years thanks to factors from both inside and outside of the discipline. Some of those alterations have improved the sport, and some have been to its detriment.

After two fatal accidents in 2013 and 2014, the Scottish Government instituted the Motorsport Event Safety Review (MESR). It was immediately adopted by the UK sport's governing body, the Motor Sports Association, and it was designed to brush up all areas of safety in this branch of the of rallying.

While that has undoubtedly been successful, it has added cost to competitors and extra work for already strained event organisers.

The MESR suggested a raft of changes, which the MSA began to implement almost immediately. Many people inside rallying believe that the alterations should have been made over an extended period to give competitors, teams and organisers more time to react to the changes.

That is a debate without a tangible answer, because nothing can stand in the way of safety, particularly if its end result is to protect the future of this branch of motorsport in the UK.

There are still a number of issues plaguing national rallying. The MESR, combined with a mixture of other outside factors, mean the changes made have had a dramatic effect on organisers and competitors.

As the new season begins, national rallying needs to look at some of its problems. Many of them have been created by the sport's own inability to see the bigger picture, as well as understand the reasons behind the changes being made by the governing body.

Motorsport News has set out to identify the problems and suggest some solutions. Not everyone will agree but the time has come for rallying to put the debate in public and start reacting to changes happening around it instead of merely complaining. While the latter is far more enjoyable and self-soothing, it doesn't solve anything.

It's not the purpose of these features to single out people or areas of rallying that are not good enough. The idea is to highlight areas where improvement could have wider implications for bettering rallying in the UK.

So sit back, relax, identify the areas where you think we might be wide of the mark and send us a letter ([letters@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:letters@motorsport-news.co.uk)) explaining why.



**By Jack Benyon**

**Leading figures in British rallying have called on UK motorsport's law makers to revisit the seeding rule due to falling entries, particularly on gravel events.**

A change was made by the governing body, the Motor Sports Association, in 2015 after a Scottish Government-instigated review into rally safety following fatal accidents involving spectators and media on the 2013 Snowman Rally and the 2014 Jim Clark Rally.

That move forced rally organisers to run a road order based on the anticipated performance of cars and drivers, which has pushed two-wheel drive and historic entrants further back in the seeding. It means they often run on stages that have already been made rough and rutted.

While the performance-based order is used on MSA-permitted

events, FIA-sanctioned rounds like the Circuit of Ireland in 2016 have been allowed to run different seeding. In that event, a round of the European Championship, competitors could pay for priority seeding to run at the front of the field.

That has left national rallying competitors and organisers confused as to why MSA events should run differently.

The seeding rule change has coincided with a dramatic drop in two-wheel-drive entries, especially in the BTRDA Rally Series, which previously had strong support at this level.

Historic rallying has also been badly hit by the move (see page 4).

Former world championship co-driver and event organiser Nicky Grist said: "The BTRDA has suffered because the class [1400cc cars] has diminished. There is a place for another 20 or 30 crews to come out if the stages were good, clean roads.



Nicky Grist wants change

Fastest cars currently run first, but that hits clubmen

"There's a good case we should reintroduce [being able to run two-wheel drives and historics further forward]. The sport needs it. We need as many competitors as we can get. We shouldn't be too restrictive: we need to encourage more entries."

Many national rallying insiders have suggested that the event bosses should be the ones to decide on how to seed their running

**"Getting a car through is a skill also"**

**Malcolm Wilson**



# RALLYING

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, chasingthecars.com, Paul Lawrence, FIA ERC

Rallying's leading lights call for a running order rules rethink

# FRESH CALLS FOR SEEDING CHANGE



The world of historic rallying is also facing pressure on running order rules



Two-wheel-drive machines suffer from rutted stages, and entries dropped off

order, decided on their competitor base and the organisation of their particular rally.

Because of the more favourable conditions associated with running at the front in the stages, every championship and class of competitor wants to run in that slot.

"Seeding never formed any part of the documents from the Fatal Accident Inquiry [FAI] into the deaths in 2013 and 2014," explains British Rally Championship manager Iain Campbell. "I'd like to think the MSA is reviewing its stance on it for changing in 2019. It will make a difference. The trouble is we all want to run first..."

"The biggest thing from a BRC perspective is then the juniors could compete in a group, the Cadets would all compete in a group. That brings the camaraderie for the competitors and they can compare their times as well. At the moment, they are mixed because of the

performance of the different cars.

"From a promotional point of view, the spectators will have a better idea of the classes of cars if they were all running together."

The reason the seeding order was changed was to stop an influx of spectators arriving halfway through a stage to see the faster competitors, causing danger for those already live in the test.

Matt Endean, a 1400 competitor and member of the MSA Rallies Committee, argues otherwise.

"It needs to be looked at," said Endean. "What I fundamentally don't agree with, and there's very differing opinions on this, is the safety angle. There's people on the committee with very fast cars and are vocal saying they drive their quick car and there's people in the road. That's obviously not safe."

"But I've done Wales Rally GB running at the back of the field and we have the same problem because people are walking out because they've seen all the fast

cars. I don't buy the argument.

We've got to manage spectators and acknowledge they are going to move around. We need to work on educating people. One of the outcomes of the FAI was that both incidents were made worse by a sudden influx of people into a small area.

"It should be within the organiser's power to choose what's best for their event."

Further supporting the argument that events should choose where to seed cars, Malcolm Wilson of M-Sport agrees that the BTRDA has been hit hard but says putting two-wheel-drive cars at the front would not be beneficial for championships like the BRC.

"If we allowed two-wheel-drive cars to run first on the road at BRC level then they would get used to pretty perfect road conditions," said Wilson. "Then, when they step up to the World Rally Championship, they would find

the road in a completely different condition.

"As much as driving a car quickly is so important, learning how to get a car through a rough stage is a real skill as well. But I'm talking at the upper levels of rallying in Britain: I would imagine the case might be different further down the order."

Despite the support for a rethink on how events are seeded, especially given that FIA events are allowed to run a different procedure, the MSA appears unlikely to change for 2019.

An MSA spokesperson told *MN*: "The MSA's position on running order has been subject to regular review ever since the 'single field, fastest first' seeding philosophy was reinforced nearly three years ago."

"It remains a topic of ongoing debate at the MSA through RallyFuture but, at this time, there are no plans to deviate from the current position."



Events like Circuit of Ireland used different system

# STATE OF NATIONAL RALLYING

Photos: Paul Lawrence

How the historic world is waking up to a new era. By **Paul Lawrence**



Ford's mighty Escort leads historic scene

## ONE STEP BACK FOR A GIANT LEAP FORWARDS



Big ruts can cause damage to older cars



Numbers will grow under new scheme

**W**ind the clock back around a decade and historic special stage rallying in the UK was booming. There have been turbulent times since then but finally, as the 2018 season approaches, there is a tremendous buzz once more within the historic fraternity.

The 2007 Robin Hood Stages in the Clipstone complex in Nottingham was the opening round of that year's MSA British Historic Rally Championship and it drew 99 entries. Such was the level of support that there was talk of stand-alone historic rallies.

But the fizz never grew into an explosion and growing unrest over the running of the championship by the Historic Rally Car Register eventually led to a split. Headed by a group of prominent competitors, a breakaway came in 2012 amid a deal of acrimony. The established Roger Albert Clark Rally Motor Club joined forces with the rebel competitors to create a new championship and, when the tender for the BRHC came

up, duly won a five-year contract to manage the championship, starting in 2015.

However, just as peace started to break out, historic rallying was dealt a devastating blow. In response to the fatal accidents in Scotland, the permission to run split fields was removed by the sport's governing body, the Motor Sports Association.

Now, all cars would run in one block in performance order.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of such a move, it very quickly decimated historic gravel rallying. The Category 1 (pre-'68) cars, used to running first on the road, were now at the tail of the field behind the 4x4s and big power 2WD cars. Crews from across the historic field voted with their feet and walked away, unwilling to risk damaging cars on cut-up stages.

Until then, the repair and rebuild of the BHRC under the RACRMC wing had been working and the opening historic event of 2014, the Mid Wales Stages, featured 86 historic entries. Three years on, at the 2017 season-opening Red Kite,

that number was down to 30. The future was not looking good: some crews had switched focus to asphalt but many had simply parked their cars and were sitting on their hands.

One bright light amid the gloom was the HRCR Mini Cup, which galvanised support from the Mini ranks like never before. A calendar of events on sealed surfaces saved the cars from being wrecked in ruts and the numbers have grown and grown like topsy. A remarkable tally of 30 cars will contest the opening event of 2018.

However, in terms of historics on gravel, the picture was not at all good and it was clear that something had to change. Step in three enthusiasts with the concept of Rally 2WD: a

novel way of splitting events into two parts to allow the 2WD cars to run first while still meeting the requirements of the MSA and its safety delegate process. The 4WD field would follow in the afternoon for their stage mileage.

The response to Rally 2WD, which starts on Rally North Wales in late March, has been nothing short of amazing. The entry was filled in five days with over 120 two-wheel-drive cars, including 90 historics.

It is a comeback of Lazarus standards and has created a buzz in historic circles that has been sadly missing in recent times. The 2018 BHRC will start with more than double the number of crews compared to just 12 months earlier.

This year, Rally 2WD will effectively feature on three events and two more will run partly to the format. But that needs to advance in 2019 and the very real possibility of 2WD-only gravel rallies is starting to be talked about. If achievable, it would not only secure the future of historic gravel rallying, it would be very likely

to increase numbers of both modern and historic 2WDs.

The logical blueprint is a one-day gravel rally covering 45 stage miles for a maximum field of 120 2WD cars, both historic and modern. Add in minimal double use of stages as far as possible within available stages, costs, manpower and logistics and it is a winning package.

It can only work on events with a very compact format and, of course, must be fully in-line with MSA regulations regarding the safety delegate process. No one doubts that having the safety delegate pass through the stages ahead of the first car is anything but vital in the on-going quest to improve spectator safety.

Perhaps four or five 2WD events a year would be ideal and it would be even better if one or two new, or reborn, rallies joined that list, rather than take away from the pool of existing events running both 4WD and 2WD.

The sport has a big opportunity here and the next few months will dictate just how far this can develop. But what is certain is that historic gravel rallying is on the up again, and that has to be fantastic news. ■



Two-wheel-drive cars will headline

# STATE OF NATIONAL RALLYING

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Rally4Wales is helping shape the future of gravel rallying. By **Jack Benyon**

## SAVING FOREST RALLYING



Rally4Wales repairs Welsh roads

**I**n 2017, Welsh gravel rallying changed forever. It was saved from ruin by a small company in the north-east intent on its defence. It was labelled Rally4Wales.

The previous year it looked to be doom and gloom. The body responsible for looking after government-owned forest roads, Natural Resources Wales, revealed that it had been making huge losses on repairing roads for rallies, and that its next contract would need an increase in price to the tune of almost 100 per cent. That cost would have come back to competitors and made entry fees so high, rallying would have almost certainly crumbled.

So, in stepped Rally4Wales headed up by Jamie Edwards, a rally competitor with a black belt in business, and Richard Ceen, a rally competitor who owns a specialist road repair contracting company.

The part that hasn't been well publicised is what Rally4Wales has had to do, and the context of which it has had to do this in, during 2017.

Rallying is, in a way, under siege in Welsh forests. Firstly, rallying doesn't pay NRW anything for the use of its forests. So in its purest form, having cars on the stages is a burden, at best.

Secondly, Rally4Wales taking over the road repairs in Welsh forests has coincided with a redoubled effort by NRW to ship more timber out of its forests. That means more logging trucks in and out of the area, worsening the roads for rallies.

"There's a lot of challenges ahead in terms of scheduling and logistics," says Edwards, contemplating an interesting 2018 ahead.

"A lot of that is to do with harvesting and the implications of it. Under the old agreement, any major felling in the forests would be suspended for two weeks before a rally.

"That doesn't happen anymore, work wouldn't be suspended until the Friday before the event in most cases.

"That obviously has massive implications for events. NRW's stance on it since this new project has started is 'take it or leave it'. The roads are there, if you want to use them, use

them. If they're in a poor condition, tough. And they've been completely transparent about that since the beginning. NRW aren't against rallying, far from it. But it's a business that needs to make money like any other. Things have changed."

Currently, organisers submit their route requests a minimum of six months before the event in Welsh forests. But under the new circumstances of increased felling, Edwards and Rally4Wales know that can't continue to work.

When asked how long in advance NRW can decide to go into a forest and fell, Edwards says: "It can be a matter of two or three days to go from an idea, to a contract being drawn up and being sent to a timber merchant.

"We have been having discussions about looking at different ways of deciding on routes. It's all well and good saying six months before the event what roads you're going to use, but you may end up having to change your route three weeks before the rally.

"There's a lot of challenges for organisers, but at the same time there's no immediate scenario where this goes away. Harvesting isn't going to stop. It needs to be looked at more dynamically and planned more fluidly.

"To a degree, it's going to need organisers to have a route A, route B and route C. Another challenge is trying to get the information out of NRW quick enough to react."

All this adds up to one thing. A need for multiple aspects of rallying to work together to save events.

As you will read further on, the number of events is also a sticking point for people arguing about the health of rallying.

But what Wales needs is a collective and combined approach in working out who uses which road and when. With a less forgiving NRW now using roads longer for logging – and repairing them less – quality will be at a premium. And it needs to be looked at in a different way than previously.

Edwards says: "We're not suggesting organisers or anyone is at fault. In 2016 there may have been leeway to work with NRW to repair roads. But that has gone, consigned to history in 2017. They're not allowed to do that work now under any circumstances.

"We've all got through 2017 pretty much unscathed, but we need to plan for the future so that we have a more dynamic process for choosing routes for events. It's not a criticism of the MSA or organisers, but things have changed and we need to plan accordingly.

"There should be a better collective view on what stages are available and what's going on in them, and we need to get the information about harvesting out more, so that clubs can be more aware.

"Is that a job for the MSA, to liaise with NRW, or should it be us? I don't know. These are the questions that need to be asked.

"People need to talk: we're not ramming ideas down people's throats, but there's a need to have these conversations for the good of the sport."

The way the calendar has fallen this year, the spread of events is good. The unfortunate non-running of the Somerset Rally has allowed the Severn Valley to run at an earlier date, meaning there's more space between that and the Nicky Grist Stages, which both use similar roads.

If rallying is successful in solving some of the problems it has and entries increase, they need a good clean road to compete on. That's where co-operation between events, associations and the governing body are key for the future.

The financial predictions made by NRW for 2017 proved correct, and the appointment of a new project manager at Rally4Wales proves it is stable financially. England and Scotland's equivalent of NRW have taken great interest in the Rally4Wales model and if it could work there. It's unclear if they will follow a similar path to Wales. At the minute, details of how things work could be very different from Wales.

What Rally4Wales is suggesting for the future now is key. Make a change to how events select routes and make sure there's a backup plan. Become proactive instead of reactive, and the future of Welsh forest rallying can be safeguarded, in no small part down to Rally4Wales.

But more can be done. Rallying isn't out of the woods yet. ■



The machinery needed to repair the roads is considerable



The state of the stage surface is vital for competitors and their cars



Rally4Wales firm has taken over the road repair job from NRW

## STATE OF NATIONAL RALLYING

## HOW TO SAVE

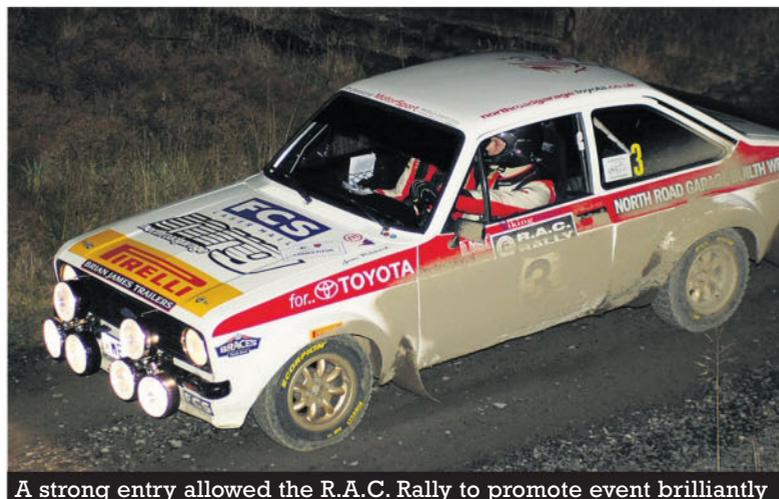
We all need to pull together, and agree, to ensure its future. By **Jack Benyon**

**T**here's no doubt you won't agree with everything you read here. But *MN*

has compiled the views of some of rallying's leading figures in order to explore some of the major problems facing the future of the discipline and, in some cases, suggest how they could be fixed. Not everyone is quoted, but a huge number of people have been consulted in compiling some of the biggest problems it faces moving forward.

Let us know what you think about the state of national rallying and the ideas in this week's *Motorsport News* by tweeting us @MNmotorsport, visiting the *Motorsport News* Facebook page and by emailing letters@motorsport-news.co.uk.

## TOO MANY EVENTS/CHAMPIONSHIPS



A strong entry allowed the R.A.C. Rally to promote event brilliantly

It's the debate that will divide every single service park, bar none. On one side, there are those who say less events will make the bigger ones stronger. On the other side, there are the organisers who agree, but don't want their event to be axed.

"There's far too many events," explains Rally GB clerk of the course and British Rally Championship organiser Iain Campbell. "The problem is all the organisers would agree, but say that their event shouldn't be culled. That's completely understandable."

It's worth pointing out at this stage that the problem is mainly related to gravel rallying, and not so much asphalt events.

Also, the idea of fewer events was touted in the initial Motorsport Event Safety Review, which outlined changes for the future of rallying based on findings from the 2013 Snowman and 2014 Jim Clark Rally tragedies.

The issue lies in how to fix the problem, and who should fix it?

Mike Broad chairs the MSA Championship Steering Committee, which is there to offer advice when events run. But it has no power to say an authoritative yes, or no, to an event running or the date on which it runs, or even where it is staged.

Should it have that power? "It would make my life a lot more difficult," says Broad. "I think if that happened there would have to be a deadline for the clubs to put their dates in so that it could be sorted very early in the day. If they have to decide a date 18 months prior it's tough. There's no easy solution to this."

Most of the trouble actually doesn't come from there being too many events, it comes from too many events in the same area, particularly in gravel forests in Wales. As pointed out in the Rally 4 Wales feature (page 5), that simply can't happen anymore and the way events pick dates and communicate needs to change.

The other argument for fewer events is that, providing a rally is removed from a saturated timetable or from an area where there is another rally on at the same time, there is likely to be an increased entry for the remaining event. That will allow it to become financially stronger, to put that money back into promotion to make local people and

businesses more aware of the event so that they can (hopefully) gain sponsors and create more revenue. It's a chicken and the egg situation.

It would also help with volunteers. Fewer events means less stretched marshals, organisers and safety and radio crews. As they continue to become thin on the ground, fewer events could help.

Who says less events needs to be a permanent thing?

Clubs could join together to run events for a short period while rallying numbers increase from some of the changes suggested on these pages. While losing an event undoubtedly casts its future into doubt, if it was poorly supported in the first place, should it even really be scheduled?

"There are too many events: there always has been. There are too many championships too," says Martin Wilkinson, a team boss who relies on customers being out rallying most weekends. If he's backing a change that is contrary to his business, surely it's time to listen? "If an event is not well supported there's no need for it to be there," he adds.

So, should the Championship Steering Group be given the power to make those calls? No.

The Championship Steering Group should be absorbed into a wider event committee, with ultimate power on whether, where and when events can run. There are too many cooks in the kitchen, each with their own agenda. Rallying needs a fresh approach and it needs to favour stronger events—at least in the short term. The current system of allocating where and when events take place is clearly outdated.

If there isn't a new committee to look into this, there must be other solutions put forward before it's too late. Allowing events to fail through natural selection doesn't work as those entries could have gone to a bigger event and made it stronger. Currently, everyone loses, not least the competitor.

Campbell adds another dilemma: "Would you like to be the boss of the MSA who stands up and tells an event no more? It's easy to say that's what's required. No one is willing to be the one who makes the call."

*MN* is calling. It needs someone on the other end to answer.



Rallying needs to unite to protect forest roads

Photos: Writtle Photographic, Chicane Media, Jakob Ebrey

# NATIONAL RALLYING

## VOLUNTEER NUMBERS

Organiser numbers are falling all the time. It's another issue which rallying will struggle to *agree* on how to solve, never mind actually solve in practice.

The average age of organisers and marshals is well north of 30, *MN* was mocked recently for referring to David Towns as being a young organiser at 34. But sadly, it's the truth. Towns was the clerk of the course for Wales Rally GB National and has a major role in the closed-

road rally in Tendring in April with his club, the Cheltenham Motor Club.

"The reason I'm doing what I'm doing is because there were proactive people looking for people able or interested to get into the sport," says Towns. "Not many people put themselves forward and say 'I want to be a clerk of the course'. It was down to Tony Clements and Gary Nicholls [Cheltenham MC] who were looking for people and got me involved. I think the onus has

to come from the people doing those roles. There could be some more stuff out there on how to get into the sport, but the big thing is it has to come from the people in the roles."

One thing that could be done is for events struggling for marshal numbers, to enforce a conscription-style scheme where each team competing in the event has to bring a marshal. It's a controversial idea but one that works in road rallying. If that's what it takes for competitors to get out on

the stages, why aren't we doing it already? Especially as the initial training can be done online.

At all levels, from clubs to the governing body, more can be done to campaign for marshals and to give something back to them.

*MN* will launch a marshal prize scheme in the coming weeks. As for the rest, it needs a co-ordinated approach to campaign on behalf of getting organisers onboard, at all levels.



More promotion needed for marshals

## RUNNING ORDER



Two-wheel drives have suffered from changes

You've read about this in the news section, but what does *MN* think? Looking at the MSA's quote regarding its status on seeding, it's not going to change its mind for 2019. However, there are ways around it.

Events like the Pirelli and Rally North Wales have engineered routes where two-wheel-drive

cars can run first on the road.

"The initiative with Rally2WD has shown on Rally North Wales, that's what competitors want, which is why they've had a full entry and a load of reserves for some time," says Colin

Heppenstall, one of the people who helped push the Rally2WD system. "I spent six months

working with the MSA last year to get the concept approved, and I'm really pleased with what we've been able to achieve. It doesn't fit everybody and every championship, but those that it does, it's the right way to go."

This shows the ingenuity that is out there with organisers in rallying. However, the fact that

these cars can run first on the road on an event surely undermines the safety justification as to why we have performance-based seeding in the first place?

It's time for a seeding and running order rethink, based on the number of contradictions to the rule in itself.

## BARRIERS TO ENTRY

The number of letters and complaints *MN* receives about seats and belts is unbelievable.

Yes, it's more stringent than circuit racing to have a five-year life span on a seat. The animosity is understandable.

Around 30 years ago, this wouldn't have happened, but you have to consider the times.

"I think what some people don't

realise is that in rallying there's two people in the car and from an insurance point of view, that's more than doubling the risk," says clubman competitor Matt Edean. "Therefore the control measures you put in place are going to be more than they are for a race."

If that's what insurers want to see, that's what will happen.

Or rallying won't go ahead. Rallying can be done on a modest budget, particularly if events had more entries. Then fees would decrease and it would become affordable.

Two things do need to happen: There needs to be better communication as to why safety changes are being made, and also, rallying could benefit from a safety plan when it comes to

equipment for the future. Finding out in November you need a new extinguisher for January is tough for the clubman.

Two things do need to happen though. There needs to be better communication as to *why* safety changes are being made, and also, rallying could benefit with an idea of a safety plan when it comes

to equipment for the future. Finding out in November you need a new item for January is tough for the clubman.

Better communication, and where possible more lead time for clubmen to prepare for changes, would make a massive difference. With safety that isn't always possible, but it would certainly help.



Cambrian could have had a bigger entry

## COMMUNICATION

This feeds back into the debate about the number of events and championships, but events and championships must communicate to combine and boost entry numbers.

If everyone insists on having their own event, rallying will continue to struggle. Look at the

Cambrian. Had the event had the backing to combine the BTRDA and British Rally Championship together, as was the initial thoughts, it could have had up to 40 more entries. That's 40 multiplied by the £545 entry fee – £21,800 more that the Cambrian could have

had this year, if everyone backed the change and saw the need to support it, and that's not to mention the increased publicity. It didn't happen. Everyone needs to compromise.

If these events and series manage to work together, then the ability to do different events

becomes achievable. Compromise for a better future.

Also if Rally4Wales is successful in persuading organisers to have a route A, B and C plan, the events will need to co-ordinate to stop usage of similar stages, or at least reduce it.

# STATE OF NATIONAL RALLYING

Photos: Gary Hawkins, Words PR, Writtle Photographic

MN takes a look at the rallies committee with the help of some inside men. By Jack Benyon

## DOES THE RALLIES COMMITTEE DO ITS JOB?

**F**rom conversations in various service parks it's clear that many rally folk don't know what the Rallies Committee is or does. So that's probably a good place to start when trying to demystify the top end of rallying.

The Rallies Committee discusses potential rule changes for all disciplines of rallying, which are then passed on to be ratified (or not) by the Motor Sports Council, a body independent of the sport's governing body, the Motor Sports Association, and made up of a variety of different people from all walks of motorsport who pass all of the MSA's rules. It's a real mixed bag.

"The members discuss everything and decide whether changes should be put forward," says Andrew Kellitt, an unsung hero of rallying. As well as chairing the committee, he knows every acre of forest gravel road in the UK and draws up the roadbooks for most events on the mainland. He's the one who gives you that epic Rally GB route every year.

"It considers required changes, mainly to vehicles or to organisers," he adds. "It's not just stage rallying, it's road rallying as well – albeit stage rallying will always grab the headlines."

It drafts in members of the MSA's special committees on historic, technical and safety regulations to advise its discussion in order to come to a consensus on whether a rule change should be implemented or not. The committee members present ideas to the group to be considered, while they also follow previous changes and trends to attempt to be proactive and not reactive when it comes to rally rule changes and amendments.

Matt Endean, who is a clubman competitor and hears the mumbles, is full of stories about delivering explanations to people within rallying about why changes are made. They quickly go from militant to understanding. But there aren't 1000

Endeans to go to every rally and chat to every competitor. So does that mean that communication is the biggest area the Rallies Committee needs to improve on in the future?

"The Rallies Committee is there to safeguard the future of the sport," says Endean. "The difficulty for the lay person, and I was guilty of this before becoming a committee member, is a decision would come out and you wouldn't understand it."

"As much as I like the MSA, it is not always good at explaining the decisions it makes to the competitors on many levels."

Kellitt adds: "In any sport people don't have the best view of the governing body, they're not always going to like it as it will always make rules that could be deemed unpopular. We always want to show why we are making rules."

"There is a great need to show the background as to why things are being decided. People are clearer in their mind about things when they understand [why the key decisions have been made]."

Perhaps where people could be a little more understanding is in the safety department. There are unpopular rules made, but sometimes they satisfy the greater good. Yes, making decisions like giving a competition seat a five-year life span is a difficult one. But if, in the wider context, it makes an insurance company happy enough that they want to continue to look out for and cover rallying, it's actually a very easy decision.

A glance to the right will show just how experienced the members of the committee are (*see sidebar*). While every decision may not necessarily be the right one, there's certainly no area of rallying – from people with World Rally Cars to clubmen with Nissan Micras – that isn't heard, defended or rewarded at some point. Organisers, scrutineers and clubs are also well represented in the process.

As an example of how it works, at the latest meeting, the topic of an R-GT class was raised and the committee



Andrew Wheatley is one of many competitors that form the committee



RC chairman Andrew Kellitt

appeared open to the idea. It has asked for assistance from the technical committee in deciding how the new class could be policed, which cars will be permitted and of what capacity.

"We discussed the R-GT rules, do we want to do it, what should it look like?" adds Endean. "That's led by Andrew, the idea being we want more modern cars in the sport so it looks more like a modern sport."

"The whole emphasis on this is that it's not all Ford Escort Mk2s. We don't normally come to a genuine 'put your hands up' vote, we usually reach a consensus."

One thing that should help the committee become more transparent, and many others like it in the MSA, is the fact that the way people are appointed to committees is changing. In January, the MSA tweaked the rules on the make up of the committee.

The rule now states: "The Executive Committee of Motor Sports Council will cease to appoint members to the Specialist Committees representing the various disciplines of motorsport. Instead, the Committees themselves will select new members from the

nominations submitted following advertised vacancies. Retiring members will not have a vote, however the MSA will retain a right of veto."

That could lead to the Rallies Committee becoming more independent. Moving forward, that's important for the process and for its reputation. While the trust in governing bodies in many sports is at an all-time low due to what feels like revelation after revelation of wrong doing, there's a lot to be said for the MSA trying to be more transparent. Now it needs to clarify how it plans to change the process of adding committee members as one unnamed member of the Rallies Committee confirmed he didn't understand how the process works!

With greater transparency in how its members are selected and better communication in how it makes decisions, the rallying fraternity can have a better relationship with the committee. With more input from competitors, the Rallies Committee can do even more to help make relevant and acceptable rules while making sure it remains safe and sustainable. ■

### THE RALLIES COMMITTEE: WHO ARE THEY?

**Andrew Kellitt:** Chairman, Rally GB route chief, competitor and organiser  
**Matt Endean:** Organiser on multiple events and club competitor across multiple disciplines including stage and road rallying in his Nissan Micra and MG ZR

**Dorian Evans:** Competitor and Welsh road rally organiser, representing the views of the road rallying fraternity

**Matthew Fowle:** Experienced organiser, including as chief marshal on Rally Sunseeker, experienced navigator and engineer

**Andy Gilmore:** Chairman of the Association of Northern Ireland Car Clubs rallies committee, regular rally organiser including job as previous clerk of the course of the Circuit of Ireland Rally

**Bill Gwynne:** Well known successful rally competitor and BARS expert

**Sasha Heriot:** International licence holder and competitor, registered marshal

**John Hopwood:** High level scrutineer and representative of historic committee

**Steve Perez:** BTRDA Gold Star champion in 2014, regular modern and historic rally competitor

**Mark Quayle:** Manx Autosport chairman, marshal trainer

**Sue Sanders:** Co-driver and event organiser, chair of the MSA's Women in Motorsport group, health and safety specialist

**Paul Spooner:** International rally co-driver and MSA Co-driver Academy head

**Dave Weston:** Scottish rally organiser

**Andrew Wheatley:** BTRDA competitor and M-Sport employee  
**Kevin Whitton:** Forestry liaison officer and regularly runs service parks

**Chris Woodcock:** Representative of the regional committee and chair of Clitheroe and District Motor Club



Steve Perez rallies and is on the committee

GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

**DAVID EVANS**

# LEARNING THE LESSONS

**S**tanding outside the Aberdeen Exhibition Centre, I was full of bravado. Do your worst Neale 'Dangerous' Dougan. He did. Twelve hours on and I was considerably less full of bravado.

Dougan had finished third on the Granite City Rally. Big Al McRae was in town and I was invited to "tighten my belt" and join them in the bar as soon as they'd crossed the finish ramp.

Oh dear. A few years have passed now, so it's probably a good time to apologise for the report on the second round of the 1997 Mintex National Rally Championship. It wasn't my best work. Dougan, Deuchars and Dalwhinnie did for me.

I lived my life in British national rallying through the late 1990s and early 2000s and absolutely loved it. Working between 30 and 35 weekends a year, I covered the BRC, Mintex, BTRDA and National Tarmacadam (late EARS and early Safety Devices series) and was totally immersed in a world which revolved around a mushroom farmer from Bungay, Charlie Exton's Honda and Marcus Dodd's sandwiches. I wrote page after page about these folk, yet still argued fiercely that there wasn't enough rallying in *Motorsport News*.

Surely, there had to be room for another picture of John Price? And running on Wednesday without a Robin Bradbury (known back then as Dobin Plodbury) action shot was beyond my comprehension.

I'm away a bit more now and don't get the chance to get out and watch as many national rallies as I would like to. But those I have seen in the last few years have really surprised me. Where's everybody gone? Concerned slightly that I might have been engaged in some rose-tinted reflection, I dug out the entry list for the 1998 Kerridge Rally, formerly the Severn Valley and latterly something else no doubt. This was the fourth round of the Mintex series and offered eight mid-Wales stages from Llandrindod Wells (might have been Builth, I do remember spending an inordinate amount of time in the Little Chef in Builth during those years).

The entry comprised 110 cars. A week later and I was in Mansfield for the Sutton Auto Factors Dukeries Rally, round six of the BTRDA Rally Series, reporting on a 140-car entry.

Since then, of course, we've been through any number of recessions and global downturns with the upshot being an alternative – and more pressing use – for the rally car fund. Looking from afar, I'd also question whether there's the same year-in-year-out camaraderie there once was. On the Tarmacadam Championship, Steve Hendy and Chris Griffiths spent season after season plotting Pricey's downfall; Mintex-wise it was Roger Duckworth and Murray Grierson chasing first Chris Mellors then Bryan Lyall and for BTRDA, it was an epic 1600cc battle between Martin Meadows and Simon Chapman. And those scraps went all the way down the 100-odd-strong entry list.



Should BRC go back to two-wheel drive?



Hero: Andy Burton



Support the lower classes

Enough. When I embarked on this column, I promised myself it wouldn't descend into ramblings and rememberings. It's done both.

Equally, if British rallying hadn't slipped into the doldrums I wouldn't be writing this column.

Actually, forget the doldrums, it was the perfect storm which whacked our sport soon after the turn of the millennium that really did for us. The World Rally Championship was on a very steep downward spiral; Colin McRae was made redundant and, tragically, Richard Burns suffered the hideous astrocytoma which would take his life in 2005.

As a brief aside, the lack of a Peugeot Challenge is, undoubtedly, one of the biggest hindrances to British rallying's return to greatness. McRae and Burns were both products of the best thing to come out of Coventry since Steve Ogrizovic and nothing has come close to serving our sport as well as the Peugeot series since.

Without any British drivers at the forefront of an increasingly Sebastien Loeb-dominated championship and a home rally seemingly under constant threat of being dropped, Fleet Street turned its back on the series and prime time Channel Four became Dave, somewhere between a repeat of *Red Dwarf* and *Storage Hunters*.

Undoubtedly, there was a drip-down effect into British national rallying. Without heroes to aspire to, we lost a generation of would-be world champions.

And even those who came along in those years were hit by a lack of coherence in progression. The BRC sought to serve everybody, but ultimately fell flat on its face and had to spend a year on the championship naughty step.

Now the BRC's back, but still I'm curious about what to me looks to be a policy of stealing from the poor to feed the apparently rich. The National Rally Cup's great

and it gives drivers the chance to compete at Britain's top level in non-homologated cars, but that's not what the BRC's about. And that's proven in the low entry the class receives.

Surely we should be shepherding these crews and those cars towards the lower levels of the sport. The British Rally Championship should be about homologated cars and the stepping stone into the World Rally Championship.

If the BRC can't sustain R5 machinery then maybe we need to look outside of those regulations? Personally, I still can't believe it's beyond regulatory capability to make a workable frontline formula for less than £100,000 [a low BRC budget including buying an R5 is almost £300,000, if you do it properly]. We could talk about R4, but I think we need to be looking even lower than that. Dare I say it, maybe we need to look back to front-wheel-drive cars? In these days of increased tolerance in terms of homologation, we could write rules for light, loud, wide and fast cars with 300bhp and a real onus on the drivers to drive them.

Alternatively, we could write a letter to Mr A Burton of Hereford and ask him to give us his thoughts.

That, for me, was when national rallying lost its way. The day, just over six years ago, when Andy Burton's Peugeot-Cosworth (not to mention the Alfa-Ferrari before that) was banned from the forests, it was a very sad and bad day for our sport. Such engineering enthusiasm allied to some sublime wheelwork was what got people between the trees in Haye Park every September. A legion of fans followed Bertie's sensational creations up and down the country for years, watching as he humbled World Rally Cars fresh from the hands of world champions.

There's been far too much room between those trees since 2011...



**“We should be shepherding crews to the lower levels of the sport”**

# RACING NEWS

## F1 ROUND-UP

### Bull could rule

Max Verstappen reckons Red Bull could dominate F1 if it had Mercedes engines. Red Bull has repeatedly been one of Mercedes' biggest challengers, despite being hamstrung with a lacklustre Renault engine in recent seasons. Verstappen said: "I think if we had a Mercedes in the back, they would never see us again." He added that he felt his car "had less horsepower than the other manufacturers, aside from Honda" and that the ERS system was a particular problem for Renault. "Ours just isn't very stable compared to what Mercedes and Ferrari have, but it has to do with several things," he added.

### Force-it Felix

Felix Rosenqvist reckons success in Formula E is his best hope of forcing his way into F1. The Swedish driver is currently second in FE, behind ex-F1 man Jean-Eric Vergne. Rosenqvist won the European F3 title in 2015 and has won the prestigious Macau GP twice. "I made it quite clear that this [FE] is the championship I want to be in now," he said. "I also think it's my best shot at getting into F1, if there's any chance left now. It's where the best drivers outside of F1 are, so as long as you beat those then you should be good enough, right?"

### Push-it Ricci

Daniel Ricciardo has admitted to overdriving under pressure from Max Verstappen last season. The Aussie was second-best to the Dutchman in the qualifying stakes last season. "Sometimes I overdrove," he said. "I felt it [the performance] was there and I tried to get too much out of it. But then that's on me. I should know what the limit is. Sometimes I just tried a bit too hard. But I'd say it [the pressure from Max] pushed me more than anything."

### Sergey's cash

The millions used to leverage Sergey Sirotkin's Williams F1 deal for this year will be ploughed into car development, say his backers. Sirotkin beat competition from multiple drivers to land the seat alongside Lance Stroll. His deal, backed by Russian bank SMP, is believed to be worth around £15m for Williams. SMP Racing's Dmitry Samorukov said: "The financial side of the deal is top secret, but we're very hopeful - actually, certain - that the monetary part will be directed at the development of technologies to help the car go faster. We know the financial cooperation with Williams will go towards improving the car."



Photos: LAT

# WEC DEFENDS FUJI DATE SWAP

Change favours Alonso, but upsets a number of other drivers

By Rob Ladbrook

**World Endurance Championship bosses have defended the decision to switch the date of the series' Japanese round purely so that Fernando Alonso can take part, despite the move drawing widespread criticism from other drivers.**

Last week the WEC and the FIA announced they had reached an agreement to switch the date of round four at Fuji forward by a week to October 12-14 to avoid clashing with the United States Grand Prix. The move has come at the behest of Toyota, which owns the Fuji track, and is the team Alonso will race for.

However, the knock-on effect of the change is that the WEC round now clashes with both the Petit Le Mans IMSA race in America and a Japanese Super GT event.

That clash has affected many drivers' plans who already had deals to compete in the other classes, including Toyota's other drivers Mike Conway [IMSA], Kamui Kobayashi and Kazuki Nakajima [Super GT], as well as others such as Rebellion Racing's Bruno Senna, Dragonspeed's Renger van der Zande, Ford's GT pairing of Harry Tincknell and Olivier Pla and several members of BMW's new factory GTE programme.

Many drivers took to social media to vent their frustrations. Pla tweeted: "Many thanks WEC I can't believe you did it... your lack of consideration and respect for the drivers who had a contract with a team in IMSA are unbelievable. I'm sure I will not be the only one to be impressed with what you did."

Ferrari works driver Matt Griffin added: "Not sure about changing the WEC



date at Fuji around to suit one driver when it gives a date clash to many others..."

Even Alonso's former teammate Jenson Button, who will be competing in Super GT this year with Honda, said: "It's a shame that a race is changed for one driver when it hurts so many others who have contracts in place, but also other categories like IMSA and Super GT where a clash hurts their fan base."

In the wake of the backlash, WEC head Gerard Neveu has defended the decision, saying: "When you take a decision like this, you always know some people will be happy and some

won't be happy. [We wanted] to protect the interest of the championship, and this is what we have to take into consideration first. How can you imagine having somebody like Alonso, racing for the championship with Toyota, and then say we are going to Japan without him?"

"Fernando wants to fight for the world championship, he cannot miss one race. It was logical. There was no question of not having Alonso in Japan."

On the effect of the IMSA clash, Neveu added: "They had Alonso for the Daytona 24, so they have a good estimation of his added value."

## Ten-car LMP1 entry for WEC's season

This year's World Endurance Championship will feature a 10-car entry for the LMP1 category, with Toyota being joined by four privateer entries.

The two factory Toyotas will be joined by two Ginetta G60-LT-P1s from the TRS Manor operation [CEFC TRSM], two of Rebellion's new R13s, BR Engineering's two BRE-AER-BR1s run by the ART-operated SMP team, as well as an extra car from the DragonSpeed team, and the ByKolles ENSO CLM-Nissan P1/01.

Both Ginetta factory racer Charlie Robertson and F2 frontrunner Oliver Rowland have been confirmed as the first driver for each of the two Ginetta entries.

The WEC LMP2 entry has shrunk to just seven cars, but a healthier 20-car field will start at Le Mans.

GTE Pro features manufacturer efforts from Ferrari, Aston Martin, Porsche, BMW and Ford, and they will be joined by Corvette for Le Mans giving a total of 17 cars in the class for the showpiece event.

## Brown: Alonso is "restricted"

McLaren F1 team head Zak Brown has described Fernando Alonso's deal to race for Toyota in this year's WEC as a "loan" agreement and that he should be considered "a McLaren F1 driver first and foremost".

Brown said he'd asked for the deal to be a "very minimal" role for Alonso, to try and ensure the Spaniard's main focus stays on grand prix racing.

"Fernando is effectively restricted to just driving the [Toyota] race car," said Brown. "So as far as commercial appearances, sponsor commitments, things of that nature, it's very minimised. His relationship with Toyota is that he's on loan from us."

"We came to an arrangement with Toyota and that is to allow him to race the car, but not travel the globe with commercial commitments. It's everything from minimising his travel, to potential sponsorship conflicts. Toyota don't have many but if they did find a partner that conflicts he couldn't be walking around in competing sponsor attire."

"When you think of Fernando, you think of him as an F1 driver first and foremost."

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**'British F3 graduation for Lundqvist'**  
Swede steps up, p15



Photos: LAT

# MULLER WILL MAKE RACING RETURN IN NEW WTCR



Muller (l) will be joined by WTCR champion Bjork

Four-time World Touring Car champion Yvan Muller will come out of retirement to contest the World Touring Car Cup (WTCR) this year.

Muller, 48, will compete in a Hyundai i30 N TCR for his own Yvan Muller Racing squad and will be joined by reigning WTCR champion Theodor Bjork.

"I had announced my sporting retirement at the end of 2016 and

coming back as a full-time driver was not part of my initial plans, but it was necessary for me to see through this exciting project in the brand new WTCR championship," said Muller, who was also the 2003 British Touring Car champion and spent eight seasons racing in the BTCC. "I'm here above all to support the YMR team and Theodor's campaign."

Bjork added: "I am excited to be back for the 2018 season, especially with Yvan – we had a great cooperation last year [when Muller was a development consultant to the Volvo squad that Bjork raced for].

"To race together with him in the new regulations is truly motivating and inspiring."

Muller and Bjork are the latest

additions to a competitive grid that also includes Tiago Monteiro. The former Formula 1 driver was leading the WTCR points for much of last season before injuring himself in a testing crash.

He will now join the WTCR field in a Boutsen Ginion-run Honda Civic alongside Esteban Guerrieri – who was one of the stand-ins for Monteiro at the works Honda team last year.

## Formula E to still use grid girls at races

Grid girls will continue to be used for future Formula E races, despite a series statement claiming Formula 1 had only just joined the 21st century by dropping them.

F1 recently announced it would halt the tradition, which was met by a "welcome to the 21st century" message from FE and the claim it had "stopped using grid girls last year".

This was a reference to FE using 'grid kids' for its 2016/17 season finale in Montreal, a concept that has continued in the 2017/18 season for the races in Marrakech last month and Santiago earlier this month.

But the opening round of the season in Hong Kong featured grid girls at the request of the local promoter.

Series CEO Alejandro Agag said "grid girls should be part of motorsport" and could feature in the series again.

"For me, it's not the most relevant issue today," he said. "It should be a non-issue. Sometimes we use kids, sometimes we should use grid girls."

"Formula E will have grid girls. Maybe not in every race, but I think they are part of the tradition of motorsport."

The series has also considered races in Cairo, Beirut and Doha for its 2018/19 season, while a return to mainland China is all but guaranteed.



FE grid girls will remain

## QUICK LAPS THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

**Brad Keselowski claimed victory in the pre-season NASCAR Daytona Clash event last weekend. The Team Penske driver started last but worked his way into the lead early on and stayed there to the finish. The main NASCAR Cup season begins this weekend with the Daytona 500...** Sometime F3 Cup driver Zach Claman DeMelo will contest a partial IndyCar season

with Dale Coyne Racing this year. The Canadian will share the drive with Formula V8 3.5 champion Pietro Fittipaldi as neither driver had the backing to secure a full-season seat... **Fortec Motorsport's planned entry into Formula 2 for this season has been postponed. The category revealed a reshuffled team entry list last week with long-standing squad Racing Engineering also**

**absent. It had been in GP2/F2 ever since the category replaced F3000 but is now moving into the European Le Mans Series. Reigning teams' champion Russian Time has reversed its decision to withdraw from the series, and will have 2017 runner-up Artem Markelov and Honda protege Tadasuke Makino as its drivers, meaning 10 teams will contest the**

**season...** Formula E points leader Jean-Eric Vergne will also contest the ELMS this season. He will join Roman Rusinov and Matthieu Vaxiviere in a TDS Racing-run G-Drive ORECA... **Robert Shwartzman claimed the Toyota Racing Series title in a dramatic finale at Manfeild last weekend. Marcus Armstrong had led the points from the very first round but with two laps of the last race**

**of the season to go he made a poor restart and dropped to seventh. Second place for Shwartzman was enough for him to beat his fellow Ferrari junior driver to the title...** Mick Schumacher, the son of seven-time F1 champion Michael, will compete in European F3 again this year with the Prema squad. He was 12th in the standings last year in his rookie season...



Keselowski won Daytona Clash

## First IndyCar aeroscreen test 'exceeded expectations'

The first test of IndyCar's aeroscreen cockpit protection device "exceeded expectations", according to director of engineering and safety Jeff Horton.

The aeroscreen was tested last week by Scott Dixon in Phoenix ahead of a potential introduction before the end of 2018.

"It probably exceeded our expectations, Scott said there were no big deal-breakers," said Horton.

"As we anticipated, the screen prevents the airflow hitting the helmet, so it was really quiet, but it could [become] very hot in the cockpit.



Dixon tested the screen

"We understood that from the CFD studies we'd done, and we also understand there will be some helmet buffeting at some of the faster tracks like Indy because there's no air on the face of the helmet.

"So we may have to pump some air into the cockpit to fix that."

Horton said Dixon had also reported a small distortion in the screen but added that would be changed on any final version.

"Scott picked out a little area of focus change, really minor, and we are sure that will go away when [aeroscreen builder] PPG make the final piece for us," added Horton.



Wehrlein won DTM title in 2015 with Mercedes

## DTM return for ex-F1 driver Wehrlein

Ex-Sauber Formula 1 driver Pascal Wehrlein will return to the DTM this season after failing to land an F1 drive.

The German won the DTM title with Mercedes in 2015 and has rejoined the manufacturer's line-up for this year.

"I have fantastic memories with DTM, not least because of my title win in 2015, but also because of the strong team spirit and the many nice experiences with the guys," said Wehrlein. "I have followed DTM closely during my

time in Formula 1 and have been to some races to visit and support the team.

"Things have changed a lot in DTM since my last race at the season finale at Hockenheim in 2015. But I like challenges and I can't wait to get on track for the first time with our new car. The first tests can't be here soon enough."

Wehrlein will be joined at Mercedes by Daniel Juncadella, with Paul di Resta, Gary Paffett, Lucas Auer and Edoardo Mortara all remaining.

# RACING NEWS

Photos: David Moore, Gary Hawkins

## BTCC RUNNER-UP TORDOFF BACK WITH MOTORBASE



Tordoff to race Ford Focus

### Winner returns after a year away racing in British GT

By Matt James

**Former British Touring Car Championship runner-up Sam Tordoff will return to the series this year with Motorbase Performance.**

The six-time BTCC winner, who missed out on the overall crown to Gordon Shedden by two points in 2016, swapped to the British GT Championship in 2017 to drive a Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini Huracan. He finished fifth in the GT3 standings alongside co-driver Liam Griffin.

However, the 28-year-old has decided to switch back to the BTCC this year. He will drive a Gard-X backed car in a different livery to the other

two Shredded Wheat-supported Motorbase cars.

"I needed a break from the BTCC to recharge myself after 2016 when I was driving a WSR BMW," said Tordoff. "I enjoyed GT racing but found it hard to fit in with my schedule as a financial analyst at the JCT600 car dealership group.

"I didn't even look at the BTCC to begin with, but then I started watching races later in the year. I got the itch to compete in it again. I tested a couple of cars [AmDTuning.com Audi S3 and Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra] over the winter and that relit the fire. I knew I wanted to come back because there is some unfinished business. To

come that close to the title means there is only one goal for me in 2018: to win the title outright.

"When I found out Motorbase's plan with the new RS, that was the final seal of approval I needed." Team boss David Bartrum said that he was pleased Tordoff would complete his three-strong line-up.

"Sam stepped away from the BTCC at the peak of his career to go off and do something else, he's got that out of his system now and he's ready to come back and fight for the title," said Bartrum. "I'm very proud of the fact he's chosen Motorbase as the team to come back and carry on where he left off in 2016."

### BTCC ENTRY LIST SO FAR

DRIVER	TEAM	CAR
Matt Neal	Team Dynamics	Honda Civic Type R
Rob Austin	HMS Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta
Matt Simpson	Simpson/Eurotech	Honda Civic Type R
Jack Goff	Eurotech	Honda Civic Type R
Brett Smith	Eurotech	Honda Civic Type R
Chris Smiley	BTC Norlin	Honda Civic Type R
James Nash	BTC Norlin	Honda Civic Type R
Jake Hill	Team Hard	VW CC
Bobby Thompson	Team Hard	VW CC
Mike Bushell	Team Hard	VW CC
Michael Caine	Team Hard	VW CC
Tom Chilton	Motorbase Performance	Ford Focus RS
Mat Jackson	Motorbase Performance	Ford Focus RS
Sam Tordoff	Motorbase Performance	Ford Focus RS
Colin Turkington	WSR	BMW 125i M Sport
Rob Collard	WSR	BMW 125i M Sport
Andrew Jordan	WSR	BMW 125i M Sport
Josh Cook	Power Maxed Racing	Vauxhall Astra
Senna Proctor	Power Maxed Racing	Vauxhall Astra
Sam Smelt	AmDTuning.com	Audi S3 saloon
Ollie Jackson	AmDTuning.com	Audi S3 saloon
Tom Ingram	Speedworks Motorsport	Toyota Avensis
Adam Morgan	Ciceley Racing	Mercedes-Benz A-Class
Tom Oliphant	Ciceley Racing	Mercedes-Benz A-Class
Jason Plato	Team BMR	Subaru Levorg
Ash Sutton	Team BMR	Subaru Levorg

### Full year of Renault UK Clio Cup planned for Hamilton with WDE

Nic Hamilton will contest a full season of the Renault UK Clio Cup this year after taking part in five events last term.

Hamilton, the younger brother of four-time Formula 1 champion Lewis, will again drive for WDE Motorsport in what is set to be his first full season of racing since he competed in the Clio Cup in 2012.

Hamilton has secured an increased budget for this season allowing him to take part in pre-season testing, with the cerebral palsy sufferer driving a specially-adapted Clio.

Team boss Wayne Eason believes Hamilton can make a major step forward this year.

"He's got the right budget in place now – he hasn't got to

scrimp and save," said Eason. "Now he's going to hit the ground running and is aiming for consistent top 10 finishes, which he is more than capable of and the data shows that."

Hamilton took a best result of 13th last year and finished 20th in the standings.

● WDE driver Luke Reade won't return with the team but will race in the Mini Challenge.



Hamilton previously competed in the Clio Cup in 2012

### Thruxton 50th anniversary meeting to be headlined by Williams F1 car, Super Touring Car Trophy and historic

An on-track demonstration by a 1983 Williams FW08C Formula 1 car will be one of the highlights at the 50th anniversary meeting of the Thruxton circuit in June.

The Williams team is supporting the meeting and, as well as the FW08C, will provide other cars to be on static display.

No driver has yet been assigned to perform the demonstration laps, which will take place on both days of the June 2/3 meeting.

Thruxton Group managing director Bill Coombs said: "I have no doubt the FW08C will make for a quite incredible spectacle in June. It is what I would call a 'proper' F1

car – with its screeching V8 engine and wide rear tyres – and it will surely bring back many evocative memories for those like me who were lucky enough to have witnessed it competing during its heyday. This really will be very special indeed."

Other attractions at the special celebration meeting will include a full

roster of historic racing, including the HSCC Formula Libre event for cars including Historic F2 machines and the Super Touring Car Trophy.

During the meeting, the new hospitality centre, which is under construction at the moment, will be officially opened by a 'motorsport celebrity'.

### IN BRIEF

#### Hawley to Clio Jr

Fiesta Junior racer Jamie-Lea Hawley will contest Renault UK Clio Cup Junior this year with Finsport. It will be the team's first entry into the Clio category, having planned to move into it last season, and previously raced in a number of club championships. Hawley was 10th in the Fiesta standings last year.

#### Caterham sell-out

Caterham has suspended its championships from taking any more entries following high demand. Caterham's five British Racing and Sports Car Club categories (Academy, Roadsport, 270R, 310R and 420R) have all enjoyed record entry levels and have received 213 registrations – an increase of 18 per cent on this point last year.

#### Chamberlain back

Richard Chamberlain's iconic orange Porsche 935 will return to the GT Cup later this year despite the major fire it suffered last season. Chamberlain is in the process of rebuilding and improving the car but before the Porsche is ready, Chamberlain plans to compete in a Lotus. Race-winning duo Aaron Scott and Arwyn Williams will also be back in the series this year with a Lamborghini Huracan.

#### AMOC's GT expansion

Aston Martin Owners Club Racing has opened up its GT Challenge series for 2018, inviting FIA GT4 cars from other marques of similar performance, plus sports and GT machines from 1995-2007.

#### Nash returns to BTCC with BTC Norlin drive

Former British Touring Car Championship Independents Trophy winner James Nash will return to the category this year after securing a deal to race for BTC Norlin in a Honda Civic Type R.

Nash last competed in the BTCC in 2011 before concentrating on British GT, the World Touring Car Championship and the TCR International Series.

Nash will line-up alongside the team's other driver, Northern Irishman Chris Smiley. Nash scored an outright win at Rockingham in 2011 driving the Triple Eight Racing Vauxhall Vectra S2000 machine.

Nash, 32, said: "Over the winter I've been looking at opportunities for 2018 and Norlin made me an offer I couldn't refuse. Its new Honda Civic Type R cars also attracted me as they have proved that they are one of the cars to beat, ensuring the BTC Norlin Racing Team can be competitive from the go."

● Eurotech Racing has confirmed that Mini Challenge champion Brett Smith will return to the British Touring Car Championship this season. The 25-year-old took over the Honda Civic Type R drive midway through the 2017 campaign when his father and team owner Jeff was badly injured in an accident during qualifying at Croft in June. Smith took two wins in the Jack Sears Trophy for rookies last year. He said: "I want to build on the progress that I made last season and to be towards the front, challenging for podiums. With a little bit of reversed grid luck, I could even take a win."

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Photos: Jakob Ebrey, LAT



Turner (c) will race in Britain

### Factory driver Turner joins Beechdean team

Aston Martin factory driver Darren Turner says he's relishing the chance to learn more about British GT this season after joining the returning Beechdean AMR team.

Turner will share the team's Aston Martin Vantage GT3 with two-time British champion Andrew Howard, who makes his comeback after a year away.

Despite an expansive 13-year GT career, three-time Le Mans GT winner Turner has only ever contested a single British GT event – Silverstone in 2010 alongside Howard in a DBRS9. Turner is the fourth AMR factory racer confirmed for British GT this year, following Jonny Adam, Nicki Thiim and Marco Sorensen.

"British GT isn't something I've done much of so it's always exciting to learn more about a new championship," said Turner. "I've kept an eye on it over the last few years and the quality of the entry this season is pretty staggering."

"Andrew is a mega gentleman driver, so I guess the pressure's on me to uphold my bit against the other pros. There's a lot of pride at stake among the AMR factory boys this year, but at least I know the British tracks – unlike Nicki and Marco, who haven't done much here. Jonny will be the man to beat I reckon."



# MERC GT3 FOR MOWLE AND BUURMAN IN BGT

Lee Mowle will return the Mercedes brand to the British GT3 Championship grid this year as part of a programme with new team ERC Sport, and has signed AMG factory driver Yelmer Buurman as his team-mate.

Mowle's Mercedes AMG GT3 will be back for a full season this term, having only done a part campaign around the Michelin Le Mans Cup last season.

The car will now be run by new team ERC, which is headed up by former Trackspeed and Triple Eight engineer Keith Cheetham.

Dutchman Buurman, 30, will make his British GT debut as part of the deal. He has single-seater experience in GP2, Formula Renault 3.5 and Superleague Formula

before landing a factory role with AMG. He was part of the crew that won the Dubai 24 Hours earlier this year and his main programme last season was in the Blancpain Endurance Series.

"I've raced with Keith for years, so when I found out he was setting up his own team for this year it made a lot of sense," Mowle told MN.

"When I was looking at what to race this year I looked at Europe, but then when you see the stellar grid British GT is attracting for this year it makes you think, what's the point in spending the extra money on Europe? The calibre of drivers this season is higher than it's ever been and if you win you're beating the best in the game."

"I only wanted to come back

with a properly quick factory driver alongside me, so Yelmer is a great addition. We've had a few test days together already and he's great to work with so I think it'll be an exciting season."

Mowle has raced in British GT since 2012, with his best championship finish being third overall alongside Joe Osborne in a Triple Eight-run BMW Z4 GT3 in 2015.

ERC taking over the running of Mowle's Mercedes ends the AmDTuning.com team's spell in British GT. Shaun Hollamby's team had been a fixture since 2015, but will now cease its GT programme to instead focus on its expanded British Touring Car Championship commitment running two Audi S3s and the twin MG6 machines.



Mowle joins new ERC Sport squad



Ex-GP2 driver Buurman

### ENTRY LIST

#### British GT3 Championship entries to date

DRIVERS	TEAM
Rick Parfitt Jr/Ryan Ratcliffe	Team Parker Racing Bentley Continental GT3
Ian Loggie/Callum MacLeod	Team Parker Racing Bentley Continental GT3
Leo Machitski/Patrick Kujala	Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini Huracan GT3
Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen	Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini Huracan GT3
Sam de Haan/Jonny Cocker	Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini Huracan GT3
Mark Farmer/Nicki Thiim	TF Sport Aston Martin Vantage GT3
Derek Johnston/Marco Sorensen	TF Sport Aston Martin Vantage GT3
Flick Haigh/Jonny Adam	Optimum Motorsport Aston Martin Vantage GT3
Shaun Balfie/Rob Bell	Balfie Motorsport McLaren 650S GT3
Andrew Howard/Darren Turner	Beechdean AMR Aston Martin Vantage GT3
Lee Mowle/Yelmer Buurman	ERC Sport Mercedes AMG GT3



Pilot Endurance Legends race at Spa last year attracted an eclectic entry

### Masters Endurance Legends series to feature on the French Grand Prix support bill

The fledgling Masters Endurance Legends series for Le Mans prototype and GT cars built between 1995 and 2012 has earned a high-profile slot on the support programme at the revived French Grand Prix (June 22-24).

The series will have two races at Paul Ricard as the French GP returns after a 10-year absence. Masters Endurance Legends

started with a pilot race last September and gained immediate support as teams and drivers took the chance to use cars that had no other place to race in Europe.

The Paul Ricard race will add to an already announced six-race programme for 2018, with dates at Imola, Brands Hatch, Silverstone, the Nurburgring, Spa and Dijon.

"I'm proud that in its first year Masters Endurance Legends will be able to showcase its spectacular variety during the Formula 1 Grand Prix de France weekend," said Masters Historic Racing founder Ron Maydon. "The Paul Ricard circuit is perfect for these cars, as they will be able to really stretch their legs on the

straight while the technical return section is a true challenge for any driver."

The inaugural race at Spa featured a 22-car grid, headlined by the Peugeot 908X of Nicolas Minassian, with prototypes from ORECA, Dallara, Audi and Pescarolo. GT cars included examples from Aston Martin, Porsche, Ferrari and Dodge.

### Work progresses at Lake Torrent as new circuit attracts World Superbikes for 2019

The new Lake Torrent circuit has attracted its first high-profile event with the World Superbike Championship set to visit in 2019.

Work on the £30 million Northern Irish track is underway and those behind the project believe this is the first of many major events to be held at the Coalisland venue that is 40 minutes from Belfast.

"We are evaluating all potential race events including touring car, formula and GT race championships

and we will make further announcements as soon as we are in a position to do so," said David Henderson, the mastermind of the 2.23-mile circuit. "Lake Torrent has broken ground and we are now working towards completion in early 2019. We have a comprehensive programme of construction and a wealth of experience within the team."

Managing director of Driven International – the company that

has designed the circuit – Ben Willshire added: "On site we are doing a lot of earth moving and preparation work and it's full steam ahead now. I think it's important for the project to have got that [high-profile event]. Hopefully there's more event announcements to come over the next year. It's a blue-riband event and it gives everyone some focus too – we know that's happening and we know what standards to build the track to."



New track gets first high-profile event



Doran will race a Mk6 VW Golf

### Scottish racer Doran makes Britcar Endurance switch after contesting the VAG Trophy in recent years

Scottish tin-top racer Christie Doran will join the Britcar Endurance Championship this year.

Doran has competed in the VAG Trophy for the last few years, but will now step up to race a Volkswagen

Golf GTi Mk6 with the SlideSports Race Engineering team.

The 22-year-old from Falkirk proved herself as a frontrunner in Class B of the VAG series, and was third in the points last term.

She is planning to race the new Golf solo in the Britcar events.

"After a couple of excellent years I wanted a change, but I also wanted to stay with SlideSports because I've learned so much from them," said Doran.

"I had a few options and then spoke to the Britcar organisers at the Autosport Show and I can see the championship growing. The paddock there is full of talented drivers so it will be tough, but I can't wait to get started."

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# RACING NEWS



King graduates from Ginetta Junior

## Elite aiming to be GT4 Supercup Kings with Harry

Frontrunning Ginetta Junior team Elite Motorsport will expand into the GT4 Supercup for the first time this year, running a single car for Harry King.

King, 17, has been a race winner with Elite in Juniors for the past two seasons and finished sixth in the standings in 2017.

With Elite running six drivers in Ginetta Junior this term, team boss Eddie Ives believes now is the right time to move up.

"I wanted to be able to offer a step up for our Junior drivers – it seems a shame that after two or three years in Juniors to say 'we don't have anything for you'," said Ives. "I wanted another championship that we can grow into – it would be good to have a GT4 programme in the next few years.

"I'm really excited to get Harry in it, he tested a car from Ginetta at Donington Park and that went extremely well. We are out to win races – we are not in it just to make up the numbers."

● M3 Cup champion Adam Shepherd has confirmed he will also join the GT4 Supercup with Team Hard, after contesting Britcar races in a G55 at the end of last year in preparation. "It's probably a bit optimistic first year out but we're going out there with the intent to win," Shepherd said. "Realistically I think the top three is achievable if we have the reliability and we get some testing."

## Westbourne eyes Ginetta Junior return

Renault UK Clio Cup squad Westbourne Motorsport is planning a return to Ginetta Junior this season.

The team has extensive experience in both the Clio Cup and the Michelin Clio Series and is now looking to move into the Ginetta category for the first time since a one-off campaign in 2011.

It is the second Clio squad on the verge of entering the Ginetta series, which has lost a number of its top teams for 2018. WDE Motorsport recently confirmed Jamie Osborne as another new entry.

"If we can find a suitable driver with a budget we would like to enter Juniors," said Westbourne boss Richard Colburn. "It fits well with what we do on that package already and I'm a firm believer in trying to develop young talent. We did Ginettas before so have some experience."

Westbourne has confirmed it will run race winners James Dorlin and James Colburn in the Clio Cup this year.



Sharp was new to British F4 last year

# LUNDQVIST TO BRITISH F3 WITH DOUBLE R

## British F4 frontrunner makes the step up



Lundqvist made F3 debut at Spa



Hieatt (r) rates Lundqvist highly

By Stefan Mackley

### Linus Lundqvist will graduate to the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship with Double R Racing this year.

The Swede spent 2017 in British F4 with Double R, taking five wins and 11 podiums on his way to fifth in the standings, in a season that was blighted by bad luck.

He also made a one-off appearance in British F3 at Spa, securing a best result of seventh.

"I learned a lot from that one-off at Spa last year, and it remained one of the highlights of my season," said the 18-year-old.

"The car is so much fun to drive, and by the end of that weekend, I was down to just a few tenths off the fastest guys. Having done that race

at Spa also means I will be familiar with all the tracks on the calendar; I obviously know the British ones from F4. There will still be things to learn, but overall I'm feeling pretty confident going into testing."

He will join American Dev Gore in the Double R squad, which won the British F3 title in 2016 with Matheus Leist.

"Linus is a quality driver, a real genuine prospect, and our aim is to

be regularly challenging for podiums and race wins as the championship unfolds," said team boss Anthony Hieatt.

"We've got a fantastic relationship and everyone at the team is very hungry to achieve a lot of success in British F3 this season."

Elsewhere in British F3, Carlin has also signed Nicolai Kjaergaard – the Dane remaining in the series having raced with Fortec Motorsports in 2017.



Photos: Jakob Ebrey

**Billy Monger is targeting a drive with Carlin in BRDC British Formula 3 this season as he makes his comeback from the horrific crash he suffered at Donington Park last year. The 18-year-old had his first run in a single-seater since the crash at a snowy Oulton Park last week in Carlin F3 machinery and is now attempting to secure the budget to race in the series. Monger suffered amputations to both of his legs as a result of colliding with Patrik Pasma in the final British F4 race at Donington last April.**



## Ginetta GT4 Pro move for Constable

Ginetta GT4 Supercup Am class champion Jac Constable will graduate to the main Pro division this year.

He has joined the new Hart GT operation set up by Nick Hart, co-founder of Constable's former team Xentek Motorsport. Hart has extensive experience in the series, having previously been part of the JHR squad that powered British Touring Car racer Tom Ingram to the title in 2013.

He believes Constable – who regularly outperformed Pro drivers last season – can finish in the top three in the standings this year, especially as a significant number of last year's frontrunners have left the series.

"A driver always gets better in their second year

and I think it's game on," said Hart. "I would love for him to win it but I think he will finish in the top three which is massive."

Two other former Xentek racers – Jack Minshaw and Alex Taylor – will also race for the team in the Am class.

"It's a new challenge doing it by myself but I've still got a lot of the guys I worked with last year," added Hart, whose team has Ingram and 2001 Formula Palmer Audi champion Steve Warburton as driver coaches. "It's all systems go. I firmly believe we can win the championships this year, we've been working very hard. I've spent a lot of money on the workshop and getting all the logistics correct. This is all we're doing so we can really focus on it."

## Sharp confirms British F4 return and could get a team-mate for 2018

British Formula 4 racer Jamie Sharp will remain in the series this year with his family squad Sharp Motorsport – and could get a team-mate this season.

Sharp finished 15th in the 2017 standings, taking a best result of seventh, in what was his and the

team's first season. Both are now targeting a move up the grid.

"We've done lots of work on the car and with Jamie over the winter," said team boss Joe Sharp. "Jamie's got new management so this year could be a good year for us. We're doing lots of things differently –

we've had a year of learning now.

"We're in talks with other drivers so we may be running more than one car. Jamie needs a team-mate for the data and it makes us a team. At the moment a lot of people see us as a 'lad and dad' team but we're more than that."



Constable (leading) joins Minshaw (r) at Hart GT

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# HISTORICS

*'Seager is headed back to the forests'*  
MG Midget for BHRC, below



Photos: Paul Lawrence

## DOWN THE WORKSHOP

### AC/GN COGNAC

1925 vintage racing car  
Current owner: Tony Lees



Cognac is a "fiery" car

#### It dates back to the 1920s

"It is said to be a 1921 GN chassis with a 1925 AC engine in it. The name came from the guy who first put it together, a Mr Cohen. So it was CO-GN-AC. He was competing in it by the 1930s, at the Lewes Speed Trials."

#### It ended up with Ron Footitt

"It then went to a Mr Lowe from Byfleet, who supposedly entered it at Brooklands but there is no record of that. After the war it went to David Holland, John Grice and then Ron Footitt bought it from him in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Ron had the engine dated by AC when he owned the car. When Ron first bought the car it had a two-seater body but he converted it to single-seater and it is quite a narrow cockpit. It weighs 607kg."

#### Lees acquired it seven years ago

"He drove the car until his death in the 1980s but sadly I never met him. Freddie Giles was a great mate of Ron Footitt and they had agreed that Freddie could buy Cognac. Freddie sold it to his son John, who then sold it to Trevor John, who had it for about 10 years and I bought it in 2011."

#### It is a fiery spirit

"I was looking for a vintage racing car and I'd never heard of Cognac. But someone said it was for sale and I had a look at it at the VSCC Prescott meeting in August 2011. I thought it was fantastic. I've broken it quite a few times and it has endless engine troubles, but the third engine builder seems to have got it right. It has done a lot of events in nearly 80 years of competition. Cognac is a fiery spirit, and that's how I'd describe the car."

#### It is very original

"It is still pretty much in original specification. At some point, Ron fitted hydraulic brakes because it had cable brakes before that and at one point he tried some hydraulic dampers but the VSCC told him he couldn't use them. It has a GN bevel box, GN back end, 1991cc AC engine and drum brakes. It has a strange radiator on the front, which is a Hampton. That was a car company based in Birmingham, which made very few cars."

# RARE GROUP B ESCORT SET FOR RACE RETRO

*One of just five RS1700Ts will be in action*

Escort RS1700T was never rallied



By Paul Lawrence

**One of the five surviving Ford Escort RS1700Ts, Ford's cancelled Group B rally project, will run on the live action rally stage at Race Retro on February 24/25.**

The rear-wheel-drive project from the early 1980s was abandoned before the cars ever ran in public in the UK, but BGMsport has spent the last

five years restoring one for owner Steve Rimmer.

"There are probably only five left of the 18 that were built," said Ian Gwynne from BGMsport. "Some went to South Africa when Ford abandoned the project. We don't know of any being actively used and they have rarely, if ever, been seen in public action in the UK."

Only five are known to still exist and one of them is owned

by M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson.

The rear-wheel-drive early Group B project was developed from the Mk3 Escort by the Ford Motor Company at Boreham and Ari Vatanen drove one as a course car on the Portuguese Rally. However, the RS1700T was dropped when the Audi quattro arrived and rewrote rallying's parameters.

Ford turned to the RS200, using some of the technology used on the RS1700T, including

the 1700cc turbocharged Cosworth BDT engine.

"This car has been undergoing a long-term restoration here in the BGMsport workshop and it is absolutely fabulous that we are able to get this car out onto the rally stage and demonstrate it," said Gwynne. "We've made a big push to get it ready for Race Retro. It has been a five-year project, on and off, to fully restore it."

## McRae family signs up for Race Retro rally stage performance

Jimmy and Alister McRae will join Miki Biasion in the 100-strong field of cars for the Live Action rally stage at Race Retro next weekend.

The biggest entry of period rally cars to date will perform on the short demonstration stage

within the grounds of Stoneleigh Park near Coventry.

Biasion will handle a Lancia Delta Integrale with customary aplomb while Jimmy McRae will be reunited with a Vauxhall Chevette HSR and his son Alister will drive a Subaru Legacy.

Other star performers will include Rob Dennis (Subaru Impreza), Ben Mellors (Proton Iriz R5), Warren Philliskirk (Metro 6R4), Tony Worswick (Ferrari 308GTB) and Mick Strafford in the crowd-pleasing Vauxhall Firenza Can-Am.



Subaru will do demo runs

## Ford rally star Eric Jackson passes away

Eric Jackson, 1964 British Rally champion, has died aged 94.

Jackson fought in the Second World War and then returned to live in Barnsley where he developed a small garage business into what was, at the time, the largest privately-owned Ford dealership in Europe.

He contested his first rally in 1954, at the age of 30, and competed for 20 years before retiring in 1974. A serious accident

on the 1973 Chieftain Rally left him with considerable injuries. During two decades at the top of national rallying he also contested some of the toughest marathons, including the London-Sydney. The 1974 World Cup Rally was his final event.

Jackson was also one for demonstrating his endurance driving prowess. He famously drove a Ford Corsair around the world in just 43 days.

## Woolmer duo to run rally car at Goodwood

Father and son Paul and Richard Woolmer will team up to race a famous Austin Healey 3000 in the Moss Trophy event at the Goodwood Members' Meeting.

The Woolmers will share the ex-Morley brothers Austin Healey 3000 'XJB 876' works rally car. The 1961 Alpine Rally winner has been owned by Michael Darcey for 40 years.

"It is still a rally car, complete with spotlights," said Woolmer senior. "Richard raced it at the 2017 Revival but we're sharing it for the first time." Richard, who recently turned 22, starred at last year's Members' Meeting in his Sebring Sprite.

The Healey is tended by the family's Bedford-based business, Woolmer Classic Engineering.



Alexis is back with a bang

## Rare trials Alexis chassis returns to action with Stuart Roach

The first trials car built by race car manufacturer Alexis has returned to the discipline recently in the hands of Formula Junior racer Stuart Roach.

The 1962 Mk1 trials car, chassis HF101, was used extensively in

period and is now back in action after a major restoration.

"Quite a few were built and others are still about, but this is the only one currently running," said Roach.

The now immaculate car had

not run for several decades before Roach acquired it from Duncan Rabagliati about 10 years ago. Rabagliati, another Alexis enthusiast, rescued it from a farm where it had been living outside.

## IN BRIEF

**New Crossle FFord**  
Formula Ford veteran Stuart Kestenbaum will campaign a Crossle 16F in Historic FF1600 and had planned to shake the newly-rebuilt car down at Mallory Park until testing was lost to bad weather. The car is being run by fellow Formula Ford veteran Don Hardman and the project starts the 30th season for the Kestenbaum/Hardman alliance.

#### Classic Monte win

The Italian crew of Gianmaria Aghem and Diego Cumino won the 21st Rallye Monte Carlo Historique in their Lancia Fulvia when the regularity event finished in Monaco last week. Aghem repeated his 2005 victory by seeing off the challenge of the Greek-entered VW Golf GTi of George Delaportas.

#### Seager's plans

After a couple of seasons concentrating on asphalt events, Bob Seager is taking his MG Midget back into the forests to contest this season's British Historic Rally Championship. Seager has been encouraged back to gravel by the Rally 2WD format and is now looking for a co-driver for the Category 1 car.

#### Whizzo's colours

In honour of Barrie 'Whizzo' Williams, who announced his retirement from racing in last week's MN, Andy Harrison will race in the same crash helmet colours this season. Renowned Mini expert Harrison, who regularly shared historic Minis with Williams, has christened his newly-built FIA specification racing Mini as 'Whizz'.

#### John Smith

Former leading Irish racer John Smith died recently at the age of 81. In the 1960s and 1970s, Smith was a well known racer, starting with his own Smith Special which he later converted into a Formula Ford. He then raced F2 and Formula Atlantic, including the March 722 now raced successfully in Historic F2 by his son Darwin.

#### Rally ride prize

Irish historic Mini ace Ray Cunningham will give at least one lucky winner a passenger ride during the Mini Magic event at the Pallas Track, Tynagh, on Sunday, July 15. Cunningham's Galway Mini Centre will display several competition Minis and anyone arriving in a Mini will be entered into a draw for the memorable passenger run.

#### Coughtrie runs

The Mitsubishi Galant VR4 of Tom Coughtrie and Baz Green will be the sole historic Category 4B entry on Saturday's Cambrian Rally. The BTRDA has opened its Historic Cup regulations out to include the four-wheel-drive cars of the late 1980s for this season. Coughtrie will be one of seven historic contenders to compete on the North Wales event.



Coughtrie is lonely in 4B

# SCOTTISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Photos: Writtle Photographic

## IN BRIEF



Masterful McKnight: Top Escort

### McKnight on form

Top two-wheel-drive runner on the Snowman was Greg McKnight. He finished eighth overall in his Ford Escort Mk2 on a day in which conditions greatly favoured the four-wheel-drive brigade. Paul McElean was 16th overall in his Mk2 after making the nine-hour trip on Friday from Bellaghy in Northern Ireland. He finished just 18 seconds clear of the Mk2 of Paddy Munro.

### Retson seals Class 3

Scott MacBeth had been leading the 1650cc Class 3 at the halfway point until his Citroen C2 R2 MAX slid off the road in the snowy Ben Wyvis stage, leaving Finlay Retson to take the honours. First time out in the ex-MacBeth Vauxhall Nova, Thomas Gray was second ahead of Steve Ross, who nursed his Nova over the finish line with a burst head gasket. Steven Bellshaw was fourth in class in his Citroen C2 VTS winning the Ecosse Challenge and struggling through the final stage in pitch darkness: "I don't have a light bar," he admitted, "I couldn't see a thing with the standard headlamps!"

### History repeats

Emotions were running high at the conclusion of Saturday's Arnold Clark Snowman Rally. It was 39 years since the name 'Gallacher' last appeared on the winner's trophy. Andrew's dad, and four-time Scottish champion Drew Gallacher, last won the Snowman in 1979 with the late David 'Budgie' McHarg in their Ford Escort Mk2. There were tears too. A disconsolate Quintin Milne said at the finish: "I so wanted to win this for dad." His father, Donald Milne was killed in an aeroplane accident just last month. He last won the Snowman in 1994 with Bob Wilson in an MG Metro 6R4.

### MacDonald's car

Ross MacDonald appeared at the Snowman Rally with a 'new' car and scored his best result to date with 10th place overall. He had 'borrowed' a Mitsubishi Lancer E9 from his uncle (and employer) Donnie MacDonald in place of his own E8. "It was a one-off," said Ross. "No doubt any future drives will be decided at the bar after the rally." There would appear to be one other proviso: "If I beat any of his times in the Fiesta on the rally then it will be no car, no job and no prospects!"

### Class Cowan wins

Niall Cowan Jr won the 1450cc class by almost six minutes in his MG ZR. Steven Crockett was second in his Peugeot 205 after breaking his sumpguard in a ditch in the third stage. Scott Sloan was third in his Vauxhall Corsa despite having to stop at the end of the second stage to repair a broken gear linkage (see Rally News).

### SRC at 50

The Scottish Rally Championship was sporting a new logo at the weekend to commemorate the fact that this year marks the 50th anniversary of Scotland's top rally championship moving into the woods. Until 1967, the national series had majored on 'selective' rallies in the seven round series, but in 1968, the competition became forest based.

# GALLACHER TAKES FIRST SRC WIN

New faces lead the way in Scottish Championship opener. By **John Fife**



Gallacher survived hairy moments

**A**ndrew Gallacher and Jane Nicol won the opening round of this year's Scottish Rally Championship at Inverness on Saturday.

It was the double Scottish Saloon Car Racing champion's first outright victory on a forest rally, but at the end of 44 miles of stages, Quintin Milne and Sean Donnelly were only six seconds adrift in the runner-up spot in their Subaru Impreza S11 WRC.

Donnie MacDonald and Andrew Falconer completed the podium line-up, finishing just 14 seconds behind Milne.

In fact, less than two minutes covered the whole top 10 by the finish of the 44-mile event over which the 87 cars sped. Conditions ranged from hard, dry perma-frost, to mud on top of ice and deep snow, and all with added ice. Picking a winner on this event was as difficult as picking the right tyre for each stage.

A last-minute change of plan saw Mark McCulloch at the wheel of a Ford Fiesta R5 instead of the anticipated Mitsubishi Mirage entry, but his lack of familiarity with the machine did little to faze him. He set equal fastest time over the opening Meall Mor stage with Gallacher in the Ford Focus WRC. Only three seconds behind was 2016 Snowman Rally winner, MacDonald, in his Fiesta R5 despite a spin, but the treacherous conditions had already claimed their first victims.

Shaun Sinclair's Subaru Impreza appeared at the stage finish with a wrinkled front end and two punctures. Another potential victory contender, Bruce McCombie, limped out with a punctured front tyre on his Mitsubishi losing nearly half a minute. And fresh from his stunning debut on last November's Wydean Stages Rally where he finished fifth overall, the 18-year-old Lawrence Whyte came up against the harsh realities of forest rallying when his Fiesta R5 spent over

three and a half agonising minutes stuck in an icy ditch.

The second stage at Millbuie had more chicanes than a pinball machine, but 2009 Snowman winner Reay MacKay snatched fastest time in his Focus WRC by two seconds from MacDonald's more modern Ford. McCulloch's valiant push for glory suffered a major setback when he selected the launch-control system at the start of the stage and was plagued with a persistent misfire all the way through, which cost him over half a minute.

At least he was still in the competition. Another fancied pre-event favourite fell by the wayside when Mike Faulkner slid his Mitsubishi sideways off the track on an icy bend. Little damage was caused but he was well off the road. Barry Groundwater followed him off at the same bend, but managed to regain the road only to slide off, and stay off, three corners later.

Sinclair called it a day at the end of the stage too when the intercooler sprung a leak, courtesy of his earlier first stage misdemeanour.

His second-fastest time of the day moved Gallacher into the rally lead after three stages with Milne holding second place, 20 seconds behind, only to lose it on the next stage when Steven Clark went fastest over the snowy Ben Wyvis test in his elderly Lancer E5 by two seconds from MacKay.

In the penultimate test at Rogie, MacDonald scored his quickest time of the day by two seconds from John Wink in his Hyundai i20 R5, who might have been more in the frame but for a spin on the first stage of the day. Milne was third quickest pushing Clark back into third place overall and MacKay into fifth behind MacDonald. Gallacher was further back after a couple of "hairy" moments well documented on social media.

Ahead lay a re-run of the first stage of the day and as the survivors headed south back over the Kessock Bridge thoughts turned again to the weather. Had conditions improved as the sun



Milne wanted win for his late father

## RESULTS

Snowman Rally, Scottish Rally Championship, round 1/7, Feb 10

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Andrew Gallacher/Jane Nicol	Ford Focus WRC	46m28s
2	Quintin Milne/Sean Donnelly	Subaru Impreza S11 WRC	+6s
3	Donnie MacDonald/Andrew Falconer	Ford Fiesta R5	+20s
4	Reay MacKay/Keir Beaton	Ford Focus WRC	+23s
5	Steven Clark/Paul Gribben	Mitsubishi Lancer E5	+41s
6	John Wink/John Forrest	Hyundai i20 R5	+45s
7	Bruce McCombie/Michael Coutts	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+1m03s
8	Greg McKnight/Harry Marchbank	Ford Escort Mk2	+1m44s
9	John Morrison/Peter Carstairs	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+1m48s
10	Ross MacDonald/Matthew Johnstone	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+1m57s

Class winners: Niall Cowan Jr/Thomas Bruce (MG ZR); James Campbell/Kevin McIver (Talbot Sunbeam); Finlay Retson/Tom Hynd (Fiesta R2); Paddy Munro/Seumas MacLean (Escort Mk2); Eddie O'Donnell Jr/Chris Lees (Escort Mk1); Martin Crombie/David Law (Peugeot 306); Paul McElean/Niall McKenna (Escort Mk2); McKnight/Marchbank; Fraser Wilson/Craig Wallace (Lancer E9); Clark/Gribben; Gallacher/Nicol

rose over the forests? No. Not at all.

Milne was quickest. "That was the first stage today I felt at home with the car," said Milne, "it just proves I should have made time for a test beforehand. I took 20 seconds out of Gallacher in seven miles."

It wasn't quite enough. Going into that final stage, Gallacher's lead was 24 seconds. Milne missed out by four.

Clark also lost out. Going into the

final stage he was holding third overall, but his turbo failed halfway through the final test and MacDonald swept past for the final podium slot.

The result earned Gallacher his maiden rallying victory, all the more remarkable for the fact. "I didn't have any new tyres," said the rally winner. "My sponsor Tom Blackwood bought all of Shaun Sinclair's used tyres - that's what we were using today."

# RALLY REPORTS

Photo: M&amp;H Photography, Kevin Money



Last-stage dash netted a big win

## FITTING GOODWOOD WIN FOR JONES AND FERRARI 308 MICHELOTTO

### South Downs Stages

By Ian Harden

Organiser: Southsea MC/Bognor Regis MC When: February 10  
Where: Goodwood, Sussex Championships: ACSMC, ASEM/AEMC  
Starters: 55 Stages: 9

In a fitting tribute to the circuit's racing history, a Ferrari won the South Downs Stages after an all-out final stage charge by Lee Jones/Daniel Boshier in their 308 Michelotto.

Jones/Boshier managed to turn a one-second deficit into a seven-second victory over Ian and Oliver Hucklebridge (Ford Escort Mk2) and provided the climax to an exciting scrap

for the lead, which involved four crews.

Significant stage layout changes from previous years negated local knowledge, so that 2017 winners Paul King/Alicia Miles (Escort Mk2) were challenged for the early lead by Jones, Hucklebridge and Dean Thomas/Mark Burt's unique Toyonda MR2. Close behind, Christopher and Anthony Newton's 1400cc Vauxhall Nova held Paul Baile/Loic Ditchburn (Subaru Impreza) at bay while the Escort Mk2s of Tim Mewett/Liz Jordan (Escort Mk2) and Kevin Jones/Jack Didcock locked horns over sixth position.

Persistent drizzle from mid-morning onwards meant on-stage grip decreased

rapidly and Thomas took the lead, his confidence boosted after fitting new suspension that, he said, had transformed his car's handling after the recent Brands Hatch Stages.

King retired with a broken half-shaft on SS2 and Jones spun onto the wet grass infield and dropped to fourth, while Hucklebridge – with son, Oliver, making his co-driving debut – smilingly admitted to “a couple of daft mistakes” including forgetting to put his car into gear at the start of SS3.

The leading trio remained locked together into the afternoon, never more than four seconds apart while the battle for fourth eased slightly when Kevin

Jones retired with gearbox problems.

With three stages left Lee Jones suddenly picked up pace. Having suffered intercom failure on SS6 he fought back, storming through the fading light on the following two tests to move into second place, while Thomas emerged from SS7 with a rear puncture and dropped to third.

The final test ran in full dark and despite not having auxiliary lights, Jones set his third-fastest time in a row to seal victory, believed to be the first overall win for a Ferrari since Tony Worswick in 1985.

Runner-up Hucklebridge lost time due to over-driving his Escort late on and stated: “I'm gutted that Oliver hasn't got

a win today; he has done a fantastic job.”

Behind third-placed Thomas, Newton outpaced Baile in the closing miles to retake fourth and win the 1400cc class after a trouble-free run. Mewett took sixth despite a fourth-stage spin and having to run on intermediate tyres in the wet weather.

### Results

1 Lee Jones/Daniel Boshier (Ferrari 308 Michelotto) 36m 51s; 2 Ian Hucklebridge/Oliver Hucklebridge (Ford Escort Mk2) + 7s; 3 Dean Thomas/Mark Burt (Toyonda MR2); 4 Christopher Newton/Anthony Newton (Vauxhall Nova); 5 Paul Baile/Loic Ditchburn (Subaru Impreza); 6 Tim Mewett/Liz Jordan (Escort Mk2); 7 Stuart Cogger/Ade Summers (Escort Mk2); 8 Richard Seal/Alistair Flack (Escort Mk2); 9 Anthony Robinson/Mark Witherspoon (Citroen DS3 R3); 10 Roland Brown/Terry Luckings (Escort Mk1).  
Class winners: Newton/Newton, Ernie Graham/James Potter (Escort Mk1), Thomas/Burt, Jones/Boshier, Baile/Ditchburn.

## No sign of rust for Tom Morris as the Metro 6R4 proves as competitive as ever at Blyton Park

### Jack Neal Memorial Rally

By Peter Scherer

Organiser: Clitheroe & District MC When: February 10  
Where: Blyton Park, Lincs Championships: ANEMMC, ANWCC, SD34, EMAMC, GwynneSpeed Starters: 53 Stages: 10

Despite having been out of the car for seven months, Tom Morris and Colin Harkness proved unbeatable as they took their third successive win on the Jack Neal Memorial Rally.

Morris's Metro 6R4 was never headed, but after Mark Roberts/Stephen Landen's Ford Escort Cosworth was balked on stage three, Matt Edwards/Tom Murphy's Escort was into

second, with Graeme Bell/Russ Radford's Proton Millington only a second down in third.

Edwards began to close on the lead, having set two fastest stage times. But with the rear wheels locking up at hairpins and a slight excursion, the British Rally Championship driver – replacing Peter Smith, who had stayed on in Australia after the Bathurst 1000km and drafted in the Welshman to replace him – started to lose ground again and eventually stopped on stage with the brakes locked on and a misfire.

Roberts had managed to retake Bell on SS5. Following Edwards'

demise he eased himself to a clear second over Bell, but 48 seconds adrift of the victorious Morris.

Steve Simpson/Dave Jackson gradually worked their way up the top 10 in their new Subaru Impreza, clinching fourth on the last stage from the amazing Fred Field/Josh Davison in their Opel Adam R2, who ran as high as third overall in their front-wheel-drive machine.

Brandon Smith/Terry Martin's Darrian completed the top six.

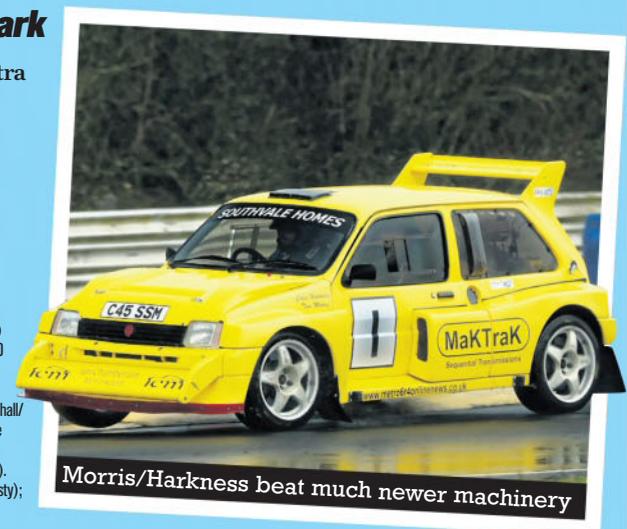
David Thorpe/Megan McCarron took maximum points in the opening round of the GwynneSpeed Challenge for

Citroen C2s, boosted by five extra points for playing their joker.

Jon Shepherd and Chris Bullock were second on their debut in the series, in last year's championship-winning car previously owned by Mat Wheeler.

### Results

1 Tom Morris/Colin Harkness (MG Metro 6R4) 41m02s; 2 Mark Roberts/Stephen Landen (Ford Escort Cosworth) +48s; 3 Graeme Bell/Russ Radford (Proton Satria S2500 Millington); 4 Steve Simpson/Dave Jackson (Subaru Impreza); 5 Fred Field/Josh Davison (Opel Adam R2); 6 Brandon Smith/Terry Martin (Darrian GTR); 7 Chris Marshall/Simon Hunter (Mitsubishi Lancer E5); 8 Lee Allen/Louise Allen (Lancer E3); 9 Martin Farrar/Andy Ward (Subaru Impreza); 10 Andrew Morris/Chloe Thomas (Escort Mk2).  
Class winners: John Deegan/Shane Smith (Subaru Justy); Field/Jackson; Morris/Thomas; Smith/Martin.



Morris/Harkness beat much newer machinery

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**National Hot Rods, England 2017/2018 season**

RD	PLACE	DATE
8	Birmingham	March 3
9	Hednesford	March 18
10	Northampton	March 30
11	Ipswich	April 2
12	Hednesford	May 7
13	Ipswich	May 28
14	Aldershot	June 10

**National Hot Rods, England 2018/2019 season**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Birmingham	July 21
2	Ipswich	Aug 27
3	Aldershot	Sept 2
4	Northampton	Sept 30
5	Hednesford	Oct 14
6	Ipswich	Oct 20
7	Hednesford	Nov 4

**National Hot Rods, Scotland 2017/2018**

RD	PLACE	DATE
7	Lochgelly	March 3
8	Cowdenbeath	March 31
9	Lochgelly	April 7
10	Cowdenbeath	May 5
11	Crimond	May 20
12	Crimond	June 10

**National Hot Rods, Scotland 2018/2019**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Lochgelly	July 21
2	Cowdenbeath	Aug 25
3	Crimond	Sept 8
4	Crimond	Sept 9
5	Cowdenbeath	Oct 6
6	Lochgelly	Nov 5

**National Hot Rods, Northern Ireland 2017/2018**

RD	PLACE	DATE
8	Ballymena	March 30
9	Aghadowey	April 2
10	Ballymena	April 13
11	Tullyroan	May 5
12	Tullyroan	May 12
13	Aghadowey	May 18
14	Ballymena	June 1

**National Hot Rods, Northern Ireland 2018/2019**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Ballymena	July 20
2	Ballymena	Aug 11
3	Aghadowey	Aug 18
4	Tullyroan	Sept 1
5	Ballymena	Sept 14
6	Ballymena	Oct 5
7	Aghadowey	Oct 26

**One-off events**

EVENT	PLACE	DATE
European Championships	Lochgelly	April 22/23
Thunder 500	Ipswich	June 23
Spedweekend World Final	Ipswich	July 7/8
National Championship	Hednesford	Aug 4/5
British Championship	Tullyroan	Sept 22/23
Ulster Championship	Tullyroan	Oct 13



**One-off BriSCA F1 events**

EVENT	DATE
Scottish Championship, Cowdenbeath	June 16
British Championship, Belle Vue	July 5
European Championship, Northampton	July 29
World Cup, Venray, Holland	Aug 19
World Masters, Northampton	Sept 16
Gala Night, Birmingham	Nov 18

**BriSCA F1 World Championship qualifiers 2017/2018**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Stoke	March 31
2	Mildenhall	April 7
3	Birmingham	April 14
4	Hednesford	April 15
5	Sheffield	April 22
6	King's Lynn	April 28
7	Skegness	May 12
8	Belle Vue	May 28
9	Buxton	June 3
10	Cowdenbeath	June 16
11	Lochgelly	June 17
12	Ipswich	June 23
13	Northampton	June 24

**Semi-finals**

SF1	King's Lynn	Aug 4
SF2	Birmingham	Aug 11

**Final**

Final	Skegness	Sept 15
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**BriSCA F1 World Championship qualifiers 2018/2019**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Buxton	Sept 30
2	Sheffield	Oct 7
3	Skegness	Oct 13
4	King's Lynn	Oct 20
5	Birmingham	Oct 27
6	Northampton	Oct 28
7	Stoke	Nov 3
8	Belle Vue	Nov 11

**BriSCA F1 Shoot-out Series**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Belle Vue	Aug 27
2	King's Lynn	Sept 22
3	Buxton	Sept 30
4	Sheffield	Oct 7
5	Skegness	Oct 13
6	King's Lynn	Oct 20
7	Birmingham	Oct 27
8	Northampton	Oct 28
9	Stoke	Nov 3
Final	Belle Vue	Nov 11



**FIA World Rallycross Championship**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Catalunya, Spain	April 14-15
2	Montalegre, Portugal	April 28/29
3	Mettet, Belgium	May 12/13
4	Silverstone, UK	May 25-27
5	Hell, Norway	June 9/10
6	Holjes, Sweden	June 30/July 1
7	Trois-Rivieres, Canada	Aug 4/5
8	Loheac, France	Sept 1/2
9	Riga, Latvia	Sept 15/16
10	Circuit of the Americas, US	Sept 29/30
11	Estering, Germany	Oct 13/14
12	Killarney, South Africa	Nov 24/25

**British Rallycross Championship**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Silverstone	March 17
2	Lydden Hill	April 2
3	Croft	May 6
4	Pembrey	June 23
5	Pembrey	June 24
6	Croft	July 29
7	Lydden Hill	Aug 27
8	Pembrey	Sept 23
9	Silverstone	Nov 3

**BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Blyton	March 25
2	Pembrey	May 12
3	Pembrey	May 13
4	Blyton	June 17
5	Pembrey	July 14
6	Pembrey	July 15
7	Lydden Hill	Sept 8
8	Blyton	Oct 14
9	Croft	Oct 27

**Irish Rallycross Championship**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Mondello Park	March 4
2	Mondello Park	April 21/22
3	Tynagh	May 27
4	Mondello Park	July 21
5	Mondello Park	July 22
6	Tynagh	Sept 16
7	Mondello Park	Oct 21
8	Mondello Park	Nov 25

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**MSA British Hillclimb Championship**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Prescott	April 28/29
2	Craigantlet	May 5
3	Harewood Hill	May 12/13
4	Gurston Down	May 26/27
5	Shelsley Walsh	June 2/3
6	Loton Park	June 9/10
7	Doone	June 23/24
8	Barbon Manor	July 7
9	Harewood Hill	July 8
10	Bouley Bay	July 18
11	Val des Terres	July 21
12	Wiscombe Park	July 28/29
13	Shelsley Walsh	Aug 11/12
14	Gurston Down	Aug 25/26
15	Prescott	Sept 1/2
16	Doone	Sept 15/16
17	Loton Park	Sept 22/23

**Scottish Sprint Championship**

RD	PLACE	DATE
1	Kames	April 7
2	Kames	April 8
3	Kames	May 5
4	Kames	May 6
5	Golspie	June 2
6	Golspie	June 3
7	Boyndie	June 30
8	Boyndie	July 1
9	Kames	July 28
10	Kames	July 29
11	Alford	Aug 1/2
12	Golspie	Sept 8
13	Golspie	Sept 9
14	Boyndie	Sept 29
15	Boyndie	Sept 30
16	Kames	Oct 7



**BTRDA Sporting Trials**

RD	EVENT	DATE
1	Charles Pollard, Northamptonshire (Peterborough Motor Club)	Feb 25
2	Walsingham, Hampshire (750 Motor Club)	March 4
3	Peter Blankstone, Shelsley Walsh (Midland Automobile Club)	March 11
4	Stuart Butterfield, Yorkshire (Yorkshire Sports Car Club)	March 17
5	Stone Trough, Yorkshire (Yorkshire Sports Car Club)	March 18
6	Presidents Trophy, Hampshire (Southsea Motor Club)	March 25
7	Geoff Taylor, Staffordshire (Hagley and District Light Car Club)	April 8
8	JB Taylor, Somerset (Kentish Border Car Club)	April 15
9	Pennine, Derbyshire (Airedale and Pennine Car Club)	April 22
10	Jiggers Jug, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Car Club)	May 6
11	Raymond Baxter, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Car Club)	May 7
12	Four Turnings, Cornwall (Camel Vale Motor Club)	May 13
13	Spring Sporting, Oxfordshire (Midlands Trials Car Club)	May 20

**SUMMER BREAK**

14	Robin Jager, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Car Club)	Sept 9
15	Robin Alexander, Cornwall (Camel Vale Motor Club)	Sept 15
16	David Ayers, Cornwall (North Cornwall and Launceston)	Sept 16
17	Peter Fear, Gloucestershire (Ross and District Motor Club)	Sept 23
18	John Southern, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Car Club)	Oct 7
19	Mercian, Oxfordshire (Coventry and Warwickshire Car Club)	Oct 21
20	Tulleys Farm, Sussex (Kentish Border Car Club)	Nov 4
21	Roy Fedden, Avon (Bristol Motor Club)	Nov 11
22	Loughborough (Loughborough Car Club)	Nov 18
23	Gloster, Gloucestershire (750 Motor Club)	Dec 2

**BTRDA Autosolo Championship**

RD	EVENT	DATE
2	Cotswold Airfield, Kemble (Devizes and District Motor Club)	Feb 25
3	Mitcheldean (Ross and District Motor Club)	March 18
4	Cotswold Airfield, Kemble (Bath Motor Club)	April 8
5	Finmere Aerodrome (Oxford Motor Club)	April 22
6	Cheltenham Race Course (Sixty and Worcestershire Car Club)	May 13
7	TBC (Farnborough and District Motor Club)	May 13
8	Lymm Services (Boundless/CSMA)	May 20
9	TBC (Bristol Motor Club)	May 26
10	Abingdon CAR-nival, Dalton Barracks (TBC)	June 9
11	Lymm Services (Boundless/CSMA)	June 24
12	Loughborough Car Club	June 24
13	Under 17 MCNW	July 22
14	Bath Motor Club	Aug 5
15	Under 17 MCNW	Aug 19
16	Bristol Motor Club	Sept 9
17	Ross and District Motor Sports Club	Sept 16
18	Oxford Motor Club	Oct 7
19	Cheltenham Race Course (Sixty and Worcestershire Car Club)	Oct 14
20	Booths Hall (Knutsford and District Motor Club)	Nov 4
21	Curborough Sprint Course (BTRDA)	Nov 18

**BTRDA Autotest**

RD	EVENT	DATE
1	John MacKenzie (Hagley and District Light Car Club)	March 11
2	Foxley (Herefordshire Motor Club)	April 8
3	Juniper (CSMA NE London)	April 21
4	Staffordshire Knot (Wolverhampton and South Staffs Car Club)	May 20
5	Big Autotest (Hartlepool and District Motor Club)	June 10
6	Tim Sargeant Memorial (Knutsford and District Motor Club)	June 24
7	Nic Ayres Memorial (Alwoodley Motor Club)	July 8
8	Maximum Attack (South of Scotland Car Club)	July 21
9	Kennings (Caernarfonshire and Anglesey Motor Club)	Aug 5
10	Firefly (Whitchurch Motor Club)	Aug 19
11	Loughborough (Loughborough Car Club)	Sept 2

**British Autograss Championship**

RD	EVENT	DATE
1	York	May 26/27
2	Cwmdu	June 23/24
3	Scunthorpe	July 21/22
4	Yorkshire Dales	Sept 8/9
5	Stroud	Sept 22/23



**MSA Drag Racing Championship**

RD	EVENT	DATE
1	Festival of Power, Santa Pod	March 30-April 1
2	FIA Main Event, Santa Pod	May 25-28
3	Summer Nationals, Santa Pod	June 30-July 1
4	Euro Nationals, Santa Pod	July 27-29
5	Euro Finals, Santa Pod	Sept 6-9
6	National Finals, Santa Pod	Oct 6/7

**One-off events**

EVENT	DATE
Motorsport at the Palace, Crystal Palace	May 27/28
Pikes Peak International Hillclimb, Colorado, USA	June 24
Chateau Impney Hillclimb, Droitwich	July 7/8
Goodwood Festival of Speed, Goodwood	July 12-15
Global Rallycross, Lydden Hill	Oct 27/28
London to Brighton Veteran Car Run	Nov 4



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# RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, LAT

## RALLY SWEDEN PREVIEW



Latvala is feeling very happy with the Yaris

# CAN TOYOTA BE TOP OF THE WORLD ON HOME GROUND?

Tommi Makinen's team is favourite, Jari-Matti Latvala explains why

By David Evans

**The very thought of a Toyota Yaris WRC winning 12 months ago was laughable. So laughable, in fact, most people did just that. Right up until the point when it became clear Jari-Matti Latvala wouldn't buckle under pressure from M-Sport's Ott Tanak.**

They stopped laughing then. And took Tommi Makinen and his band of Finns from Puuppola much more seriously.

Now, the Toyota is the stand-out favourite for victory on this week's second round of the World Rally Championship. And it's Latvala who's in the box seat for back-to-back success in the snow.

"We had a good test for Sweden," said Latvala. "The only problem was too much snow. We had really a lot after the first half day, we had to plough the road again – but this is OK, it gives me a good feeling for the car in these conditions. I'm happy with the set-up."

There's a real energy about Latvala at the moment. He came away from Monte Carlo with his first podium in seven months, joking about how he'd forgotten

the finish procedure as it had been so long since his Rally Italy runners-up spot in June.

"I have a good feeling," he said. "I feel relaxed. I know the suspension is working. I know what we can do with this car and, I must say, I know this car is better than last year – even though we won last year. I know everybody else has made progress with their cars..."

His voice trails away. He's caught himself just before he made the sort of prediction he knows people are fishing for. He knows he can win, but he's not about to say that. Instead, he goes back to the test and offers a deeper, Latvala-style analysis of his current good feeling.

"You know when you're at the test," he said. "You just know. I remember in 2015, I went and did my test and I came away and I was all the time thinking to the set-up: 'Should I have done this? That didn't go so well.' In the end I took the set-up from Ogier and when the rally started I went to the snowbank."

"After this test, I was happy and didn't come away wondering what other people had done. I didn't need to think about it anymore."

You can only imagine how good that

test and Latvala's feeling must be if he's come out of it and stopped thinking about every last detail.

### Toyota is favourite

At the end of the opening round in Monte Carlo, Toyota team boss Makinen talked about round two and his team's chances. He told *Motorsport News*: "Now [champion] Sebastien Ogier has to come to our back yard."

In a nutshell, it's that back yard that makes Toyota the favourite in Sweden.

Based in central Finland, the natural habitat and permanent test base for the Yaris is close to Jyväskylä; for two-thirds of the year those roads are perfect for Rally Finland. And for the final third, when winter comes, they're transformed to give the best possible prep for Rally Sweden; snow's snow and fast roads are fast roads, regardless of their Nordic nationality. And being able to tune a car to the precise requirements using key knowledge offers an invaluable edge.

On top of the potential for endless hours of snow running, Toyota's off-season engine and suspension work has clearly paid dividends.

### Latvala: a decade on

"I can't understand that it's 10 years since I won my first-ever World Rally Championship event," said Latvala of his 2008 Rally Sweden victory.

"The time has gone so quickly since then, but it was an incredible feeling for me to do that and to beat my idol Henri Toivonen to become the youngest ever winner [of a WRC round]."

"Marcus Gronholm had retired at the end of the previous season and I got his place in the works team. I wanted to do it right, but the Monte [Carlo Rally] was a disaster. I had no performance, I had a puncture and then damaged the suspension, a real disaster. But Malcolm [Wilson, Ford team principal] told me to relax and remember I would have the good place to start on the road in Sweden."

"On the way to the first stage in Sweden that year, I remember, I felt really, really nervous. The first corner in that stage was slippery, but after that I felt the grip and the grip was coming more and more. My confidence grew and the feeling was really nice."

"I had such confidence in the car. Nobody expected me to win, I didn't expect to win, but I did it."

### The conditions

Two years ago, Rally Sweden was dead. It was hard to imagine a way back from the continued question marks over conditions on the Karlstad-based event. Moving the service park north to Torsby helped, a bit of latitude can go a long way to changing attitudes.

But what always works best in Sweden is a storm. And not just any old storm, it's got to be the perfect storm. At the time of writing (a necessary literary safeguard against the potential for some sort of tropical upturn melting everything), the conditions on the road are what the drivers dream of year-in-year out: good ice and solid snowbanks.

These conditions aren't the work of a moment, perfection has evolved over the last month. First thing you need is snow, and an awful lot of it. We're talking the proper, metre-deep stuff. And then you need the same again. After that, you plough the road to compress the surface snow and build the walls. A rise in temperatures is vital at this point.

It might sound odd, but a couple of days of plus four or five with some sunshine melts the snow into the road teeing us up for the pivotal moment: the

## WHAT'S ON NEAR YOU THIS WEEKEND? LISTINGS

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## 'The Safari Rally is set to return'

Marathon event is back, p24



Latvala (left) and Makinen have high hopes for the Swedish rally

## Ostberg hoping conditions and experience can help him shine

Mads Ostberg is hoping perfect winter conditions at this week's Rally Sweden will offer him an edge to make up for his lack of experience of Citroen's C3 WRC.

The Norwegian drives a third Citroen at round two, but comes in short on experience of the car having driven it for an acclimatisation test at Citroen's Satory track in Paris and a day in the snow in Sweden.

Ostberg said: "I've had a lot to learn in one day, but I feel I've adjusted the car more to suit my style of driving. Of course, there is never enough time to test, but I'm happy with what we've achieved in one day."

"Rally Sweden is a special event for me and I have always been quick here, so I'm very happy to have this opportunity to rejoin the team. I'm already up to speed in these conditions, having contested two winter rallies in Norway, the second of which I won. "With the bigger snow banks this year, the roads are likely to be narrower and more technically demanding, so perhaps we Scandinavians may be able to take advantage of our greater experience in conditions like these."

Citroen Racing team principal Pierre Budar welcomed Ostberg's experience of 11 Swedish starts.

He added: "With the addition of Mads Ostberg, who has five podiums at this event, we have certainly strengthened the team, especially as experience is critical here given the very limited number of kilometres covered on this surface every year."

## Latvala warms up with ice outing

Jari-Matti Latvala wheeled out his ex-works Toyota Celica GT-4 and a new co-driver for Saturday's Autopirtti Rally in Finland.

Latvala's team-mate and fellow driver from last year Juho Hanninen guided him through the stages around the town of Ahtari, north-west of Jyväskylä. Unfortunately for the Finns, a broken wheel bearing on the Celica ruled them out of a big lead in the event's historic class.

Latvala told MN: "We had really good fun and

really enjoyed the event. The first three stages went well with a lot of snow and the perfect conditions. We were leading by 2m30s when we had the problem on the front-left wheel. The bearing was so badly broken, even though we had the spare part, we couldn't get it out of the upright. We had a plan, we thought we could use 15 minutes of lateness [and still win], but in the end we couldn't fix it and we missed the last two stages. But anyway, the Celica was nice to drive and we had a good time."



Juho Hanninen (left)



Celica was on form

deepest of deep freezes. This is when a great Swedish stage is made, with temperatures plummeting to minus 20 and lower, the compacted snow is frozen rock solid and snow banks essentially cemented. A dusting of snow to follow provides the icing on the cake.

But... if that snow comes on Thursday night, it could all-but rule Ogier out of the running for the podium's top step. In the days of narrower (145mm) tyres, snow was less of an issue, but on today's 205mm boots, it's much harder for the drivers first into a stage to cut through the snow and bite into the ice beneath.

Latvala confirmed this thinking and said: "If we see a lot more snow coming on the night before the rally, then Sebastien will suffer. It's so hard with the snow on top of the road. When you are running on the ice, you can generate so much grip - sometimes more grip than you get even on the gravel. It's an amazing feeling to drive like this and this is what we want this weekend."

## Using the snowbanks

You'll hear plenty of talk this week about the drivers 'using the snowbanks', but what does that actually mean?

Latvala's going to explain it to us.

"When the conditions are right you can take so much more speed into the corner - sometimes you can't believe how hard you can go," he says. "It's complicated when you try to use the bank, you want to lean the rear of the car on the bank and let the car run around the outside of the bend."

"But you have to be very, very careful. When the rear of the car is on the bank, you must, *must* have the wheels straight because what you don't want is to hit the bank and for that to send the front of the car in. If you hit it too hard, the car will twist and spin."

Or worse, go through the bank and into the inevitable ditch that will lie beyond.

Given that the conditions are so good this year, will Latvala be tempted to tweak his notes to make them a bit quicker to take advantage of the snowbank safety net?

"I did that when I won in 2008," said Latvala, "and I got away with it, but I won't do it this year. I don't do it anymore. What I want from the notes is a consistent description of the angle of the corner, when I get to the corner then I can decide whether to speed it up or not."



Snow, ice, a bit warmer, then snow again - that's the perfect recipe

## GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

# DAVID EVANS

"Who remembered that he was a fighter pilot?"



**H**ood up as the temperature dropped further south of zero, Henri Toivonen was up for it. He might just have stepped out of a Lancia Delta S4 at the end of the first day of the 1986 Swedish Rally and he might have fancied talking to his engineers about how he stayed out front.

But he fancied winding his second-placed countryman Juha Kankkunen up more.

Having completed his own end of day interview, Toivonen was asked a final question: "How about going and interviewing Juha Kankkunen for us?"

The response came with a grin. "Why not? I could make a few things for him, let's go..."

"Here is Juha Kankkunen who is second, of course after me... How do you feel that this Toivonen is so fast?"

KKK's right back at him though: "Ah, Toivonen has been lucky today. It's no problem for us, only one minute."

The banter goes on. Before it's back to Group B cars at their absolute best.

Why am I talking about a rally that happened 32 years ago? Because it - along with a whole load of other rallies from days past - has just come back to life for me. You might have heard that Motorsport Network has taken over Duke Video, and you might have overlooked the significance of that deal.

That's a mistake.

What happened last week will have a very serious impact on your social life. The best rallies in WRC history will now be shown - starting with this very Swedish Rally (along with the 1988 and 1991 events) - on Motorsport.tv every evening that this week's Rally Sweden is running.

And if you can't wait that long, go to the motorsport.tv website and fill your boots (admittedly for a small fee) from there.

But for now, I'm back in 1986 to see Ford's RS200 make a long overdue debut. Stig Blomqvist made the early running but it was Kalle Grundel who completed the job with a maiden podium for the Boreham-built beauty.

Watching these videos reminds you of how much had been forgotten about this crop of drivers. Who, for example, remembered Grundel was an ex-fighter pilot?

This film also reminds you just how bad Citroen's BX 4TC was. Watching this underpowered monster of a thing understeer its way from corner to corner is shocking. No matter how tough things get for Kris Meeke, Craig Breen and Mads Ostberg with the C3 WRC this week, it won't come close to the frustrations of Jean-Claude Andruet and Philippe Wambergue. True enough, Andruet made points in sixth, but he was 23 minutes behind eventual winner Kankkunen.

Toivonen's hopes were dashed with an engine fault aboard the S4. But still, leading on his first ever Swedish was an entirely fair reflection on the immense natural talent he possessed.

It was, however, haunting to hear him refer to a "young Juha Kankkunen," as one who will remain forever young himself.



Timo Salonen won in Canada in 1977

## Canada unveils plans to pitch for WRC winter event slot

Canada has emerged with a potential candidate event to become a winter round of the World Rally Championship.

Canada was one of the countries talked about as a potential replacement for Sweden when Karlstad failed to deliver much in the way of winter two years ago.

Ironically, news of Canada's intentions come in a week when Rally Sweden is enjoying its best conditions in years.

Keith Morison, the founding director of Rally Promoter Association of Canada, said: "We started looking at this idea in 2011. Recently things have started coming together and we think this is the right time to put a real effort into making this idea a reality."

Canada is, however, looking five years into the future to deliver its first WRC qualifier since 1979. The country has hosted four WRC rounds, in 1974 and the 1977-'79.

Morison added: "A WRC event needs the support of all levels of government as well as the development of some meaningful corporate partnerships to be viable. The next year will be spent meeting with a wide range of officials and potential partners to make sure this foundation exists."

# RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

# SAFARI TARGETS 2020 WRC COMEBACK

## Event has budget from Kenyan government



McRae won Safari in '02

By David Evans

**The Kenyan Government has earmarked a budget of close to £2 million to ensure the Safari Rally returns to the World Rally Championship by 2020.**

The Safari Rally hasn't run as a round of the WRC since 2002, but FIA president Jean Todt – who is understood to have discussed the potential for a Safari return with Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta three years ago – has always made plain his desire to see Africa as part of a more global world championship.

A new event is expected to be run in Kenya this year, reestablishing the necessary organisational structure in Nairobi. Before that, offices of the new WRC Safari Rally Project are being readied in the capital city.

Kenya's cabinet secretary for sport Hassan Wario said: "The sanctioning of the Safari Rally as a premier continental rally by the FIA to be held in Kenya in 2018 [comes] with the hope of achieving full WRC [status] by 2020."

Wario was instrumental in garnering the support of president Kenyatta in the nation's bid to bring world rallying back to Africa.

Kenyan newspaper the *Daily Nation* reported the government's budget is £1.8m and it was expected to be allocated last month. Well within that is the WRC Promoter

payment, reported to be in the region of £570,000.

The Kenyan bid has been further boosted by the news that neighbour Uganda is also supporting the effort, with Motorsport Uganda chairman Dusman Okee talking the plans through with WRC Promoter's Oliver Ciesla late last year.

The Safari Rally isn't just high on Todt's WRC wishlist, but also for WRC Promoter and the manufacturers. The teams will, however, be keen to avoid the costs associated with competing in Kenya through the 1980s and 1990s, when multi-million-pound budgets had to be set aside, along with months of testing, to build a specific Safari car.

For the promoter, the appeal of returning to some of the most epic and inspiring backdrops in motorsport is enough to bring them to talks with the WRC Safari Rally Project.

Ciesla said: "We recognise the Safari's long and proud history in the FIA World Rally Championship and the place it holds in the hearts of Kenya's population."

"We are committed to hosting a WRC round on the African continent in the near future and will continue to work closely alongside the government and federation with the goal of seeing the Safari Rally back on the WRC calendar."

## More pace from reworked Hyundai i20 R5

Hyundai has delivered upgrades for its i20 R5 in an effort to boost the car's customer appeal and to threaten the established WRC2 class leaders.

Skoda's Fabia R5 and M-Sport's Ford Fiesta R5 have dominated the World Rally Championship's second tier, but more grunt from the Korean's 1600cc motor could be the key to unlocking the i20's potential.

That power hike comes from engine upgrades with variable valve timing introduced alongside a revised engine map. Aside from the under-the-bonnet tweaks, improved

suspension and differential settings are also available from March 1.

Hyundai Customer Racing department manager Andrea Adamo said: "These latest improvements are the most important we have made since the car's debut, and will allow our customers to again challenge for rally wins and championship titles around the world. This season our customers are competing in a wider range of championships, so we have to make sure we continue our work in order for them to be on the pace in all conditions."



i20 has potential



Biasion: Last Italian champ

## Pirelli to help hunt for next Italian champion

Pirelli has begun the search to find Italy's first World Rally champion since Miki Biasion's back-to-back titles in the late 1980s.

The Milan-based tyre firm officially returns to the WRC as Junior WRC tyre supplier at this week's Rally Sweden – but head of car racing Mario Isola has told *MN* he is ready to commit to a five-year support programme to find, develop and deliver Italy's first world champion since Biasion's 1989 glory with Lancia.

The loss of Italian manufacturers Lancia and Fiat hit local drivers hard and the last Italian victory at WRC level was Piero Liatti's sole success on the 1997 Monte Carlo Rally.

Isola said: "We are working with the Italian ASN to find a way for a

scholarship programme to find a real talent in Italy and support him at the highest level. Experience is so important in rallying, so when we find the right guy we will support them not for two or three years, but for at least five years – we have to commit to doing this otherwise we could lose them. This is what we are trying to explore at the moment."

Isola was instrumental in his firm's Pirelli Star Driver programme which ran in 2008 and 2009 and delivered drivers like Ott Tanak and Hayden Paddon.

"You can make a good selection," said Isola, "but also you can sometimes get it wrong. You can find the driver who is good at lower level, but maybe he's not there at the top. We have to be honest in this process."

## Paddon to Estonia for Finland preparation

Hayden Paddon will prepare for this year's Rally Finland with an entry on Rally Estonia a fortnight earlier.

Paddon and British co-driver Seb Marshall were confirmed for the Tartu-based event, which takes place on July 13-15, last week. In addition to the Hyundai, there's already speculation that Toyota will field a Yaris WRC for Ott Tanak on the biggest event in the Estonian's homeland.

Paddon, who makes his first start of the season in Sweden this week, said: "I've always

followed it closely and have really liked the look of the fast, flowing roads – which are my favourite type. It will also be a great preparation for Rally Finland and we will use this opportunity as a test session in competitive conditions."

Paddon's team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen will swap seats with his co-driver Anders Jaeger for next week's Rally Numedal, where Jaeger will drive a Hyundai i20 R5. Mikkelsen is no stranger to co-driving having shared with Thierry Neuville at last year's Monza Rally.

## DMACK supports Tour European series

DMACK is backing this year's Tour European Rally series with the offer of a prize drive and €40,000 (£35,000) for the winning junior driver.

TER runs a five-round calendar including Rally Transilvania, Antibes, Ypres, Madeira and Valais, with the Cumbrian company backing the DMACK TER2 Cup. The winning crew

will be rewarded with a rally in an R5 car and €40,000 towards contesting TER 2019 in an R5 car. There will also be €10,000 (£8,800) on offer for the second-placed crew.

● Marijan Griebel, who won last year's ERC Junior U28 title, will return to the European Rally Championship for a six-round campaign in a Peugeot 208 T16.

'First closed-road event under new rules gets strong entry'  
Rally Tendring and Clacton latest, p27



Photo: Writtle Photographic



Bird won 2017 Woodpecker

## BIRD TARGETS BTRDA TITLE BID ON RETURN TO SERIES

Paul Bird is "confident" he can fight for the BTRDA title on his return to doing a full-season after two years out.

Bird will drive his usual Ford Focus WRC07 with co-driver Jack Morton. Bird won the Woodpecker Rally, the penultimate round of the BTRDA in 2017, and also contested three other rallies following a two-year drug ban for testing positive for banned substances after the 2015 Nicky Grist Stages came to an end.

Starting with this weekend's season opener, the Cambrian Rally, Bird said he thought he could battle for the crown: "We'll see on Saturday! I'm confident enough. We're not going to make the numbers up."

"I'm looking forward to doing a full season, I've missed it."

Bird will face strong opposition for the title, headed by defending winner Stephen Petch in his championship-winning Ford Fiesta RS WRC, while perennial frontrunner Luke Francis makes a switch from a Mitsubishi into a similar Fiesta WRC.

British Championship frontrunner Matt Edwards will dovetail that campaign with a full season of BTRDA in a Fiesta R5, while Francis' team-mate and previous champion Hugh Hunter

will also be in the mix. Charlie Payne, the 2016 champion, struggled to get to grips with a new Fiesta WRC last year but also returns.

Over 110 cars are expected to start the Llandudno-based 45-mile event. It is also the first round of the inaugural R2 Cup, which is set to start with 11 cars, spearheaded by one-off entrant and Junior BRC runner-up William Creighton.

The Fiesta ST Trophy is due to contain six cars, while one of the most hotly contested clubmen championships in the country, the NR4/Production Cup for Group N cars, starts with eight entries. Tom Naughton returns for the first time since 2015.

The 1400 classes receive a small boost from last year with 14 entered. Last year's 1400 champion Ed Fossey doesn't return (see story below), neither does Silver Star champion Ashley Davies and Rally First champion Bart Lang.

The Welsh Rally Championship also starts on the Cambrian. It has revealed a substantial new TV deal on Frontrunner TV (Sky and Freesat) and with Motor Trend On Demand, which is available through Amazon Prime. It will be available via Special Stage TV on its Facebook and YouTube.

### ENTRY LIST

#### Cambrian Rally seeded entry list

DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1 Stephen Petch/Martin Wilkinson	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
2 Luke Francis/John H Roberts	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
3 Paul Bird/Jack Morton	Ford Focus WRC07
4 Matt Edwards/Darren Garrod	Ford Fiesta R5
5 Charlie Payne/Ian Windress	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
6 Hugh Hunter/Rob Fagg	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
7 Julian Reynolds/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta R5
8 Ian Joel/Graeme Wood	Ford Escort Cosworth
9 Pat Naylor/Ian Lawrence	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
10 Russ Thompson/Andy Murphy	Mitsubishi Lancer E9

### Conwy confirms Cambrian BRC bid

Conwy County Borough Council has confirmed its backing of the Cambrian Rally's plan to join the British Rally Championship in the future.

The event revealed its intentions to use closed roads in a bid to join the BRC as a round in 2019 last week.

Councillor Louise Emery, Cabinet Member for the Economy said: "An enhanced Cambrian Rally will further boost the local economy during a traditional quiet time of the year."

"Becoming a round of the

BRC will bring extra profile nationally for the event as well as the county. These points fit with aspirations in our Events Strategy 2018-2022, such as extending our winter tourism offer."

The BRC remained coy on the Cambrian's inclusion. Championship manager Iain Campbell said: "Our focus at present is on the 2018 BRC that starts next month in Jedburgh. We haven't discussed 2019 with anyone so far, but we remain committed to finding the best events to make up the championship."

### Kakad makes R5 switch for 2018 attack

BTRDA Production Cup and NR4 frontrunner Sacha Kakad will step up to a Ford Fiesta R5 this season.

Kakad has entered the Cambrian Rally this weekend in the new car, but is likely to enter other events outside of the BTRDA Rally Series later in the year. The Pirelli International Rally is one event the driver is looking forward to.

"It was a shame not to win NR4 last year but Pat [Naylor, champion] had other ideas," said Kakad. "It was good, fun, hard rallying and it was the same the year before."

"We want to do some

different stuff this year, some of it may be BTRDA, some of it may be different championships.

"It seems like a logical step for us now. The only problem for BTRDA is that it doesn't have an R5 class. For the first few rounds we'll be finding our feet. I don't expect to be on it straight out of the blocks."

Kakad will join three other Fiesta R5s on the entry. Simon de Banke, Matt Edwards and Julian Reynolds are leading R5 entries. Reynolds will also be making his event debut in a Ford Fiesta R5.

### Fossey gets Peugeot 208 for MSA Asphalt

Ed Fossey aims to build on the success of last year's BTRDA 1400 Championship title, by stepping into an R2 car for the MSA Asphalt Rally Championship.

Jerseyman Fossey, 19, will drive a Peugeot in the relaunched championship which features rounds in Belgium, Ireland and the Isle of Man.

He will be rejoined by his 1400 Championship co-driver Chris Sharpe-Simkiss.

"Last year the focus was on gravel as I had never driven on the surface before," said Fossey.

"Now I really want to gather as much experience on the Tarmac as possible with a bit of gravel in between just to keep me sharp."

"I have done the Jersey Rally a few



Fossey: ready for asphalt bid

times before but I wanted to broaden my experience on all types of Tarmac and there is no better way to do that than by taking part in the MSA Asphalt Championship."

Fossey is aiming to reach British Rally Championship level in the coming years. The MSA Asphalt season gets underway with the Tour of Epynt on March 10/11.

### GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

# JACK BENYON

"What is the state of asphalt rallies in UK?"



**I**t's a big issue of *MN* this week, and one that hopefully provides food for thought on what can be done to stimulate entries in rallies across the board.

That being said, the pages further forward did little to represent the asphalt area of rallying, of which this column is the perfect opportunity.

Wow.

What a reaction to Rally Tendring and Clacton. Fundamentally the success of the event will be judged afterwards, but whatever happens it's a huge undertaking for one of the most mobile motor clubs in the country, Chelmsford Motor Club. The work being done behind the scenes is massive, and it's great to see that it has been matched by a strong entry. It deserves it.

Now all that is left is Scotland. In the same way Wales and England have passed law changes, Scotland's government needs to follow if we're to see the Jim Clark Rally and the Mull Rally back. Imagine those three events on the calendar? And possibly more?

Given the outcome of the Fatal Accident Inquiry and the benefit closed-road events bring to the local economies of the Scottish Borders and Mull hopefully, with a bit of local backing, change will come soon.

Elsewhere, the MSA Asphalt Championship is back with a bang. An ambitious calendar has been rewarded with a lofty entry to which I doff my cap. I thought it was a brave calendar for year one, but looking at the entry my concerns were unfounded.

There are over 40 registrations at the first round, with many set to sign up on the event adding additional entries. Things are looking good. An even prize structure and attractive TV package will no doubt help.

Then there's single venues. Of course, *MN* gives column inches to the championship that bears its name, the MN Circuit Rally Championship, and that has proved a revelation since its inception in 2015. Its events regularly sell out in minutes and provide a good entry point to rallying at a lower cost, with the benefit of good facilities for local sponsors. It's not forest rallying, and no one would attempt to convince you otherwise. But it has its place.

So, what does that all mean? We're in a state of flux. The MSA Asphalt Championship looks good, albeit a full conclusion as to its standing in rallying will need to come after it has started. Most single venue events in and out of the MN Championship are well backed.

The real area for improvement now is in Scotland, and a fresh push for closed roads to bring back two of the country's biggest events in Mull and the Jim Clark. The rally calendar doesn't feel the same without them, and with the safety steps made since those events, we're in a much better place now.

Lets hope they do return, as asphalt rallying is much more cost effective than on the loose, and can be just as fun. Just ask the Mull-to-WRC-appeal brigade...

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# RALLY NEWS

Photos: Nicholas Bhajan, Jakob Ebrej

## CLOSED-ROAD TRAILBLAZERS GET STRONG ENTRY

Rally Tendring and Clacton is five cars away from a full entry on event debut

### LEADING ENTRIES

Rally Tendring and Clacton

DATE	TRACK
Kevin Procter/Andrew Roughead	Ford Fiesta
Ashley Field/TBA	Darrian T90+
Paul Bird/Jack Morton	Ford Focus WRC07
Chris West/Keith Hounslow	Peugeot 306 Maxi
Damian Cole/Jamie Edwards	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
Melvyn Evans/Sean Hyde	Subaru Impreza S12B WRC
Meirion Evans/Jonathan Jackson	Ford Fiesta R5
Jason Lepley/Tom Woodburn	Ford Escort
Jamie Jukes/James Morgan	Mitsubishi Mirage
Niall Moroney/Elgan Davies	Subaru Impreza WRC



Procter prepares for Barbados...in Clacton

By Jack Benyon

Rallying competitors have shown support for the first closed-road rally under new laws, as Rally Tendring and Clacton was five entries short of selling out in less than 24 hours as MN went to press.

Thanks to a law change in Parliament in April 2017, the right to grant a closed-road permit now lies with the Motor Sports Association and ultimately the local authority for that area. Previously an Act of Parliament was needed for the permit which was both costly and time consuming.

The Chelmsford Motor Club event on April 22 will be the first to run as a full closed-road rally taking in 45 miles in the Tendring Peninsula.

As well as a strong entry up front, a diverse entry of two-wheel-drive and historic cars has also been received.

Kevin Procter, Paul Bird and Ashley Field headline

some of the likely frontrunners on the event, with Procter relishing the prospect as a warm-up for his Barbados Rally entry.

"There isn't going to be loads of closed-road rally events [in the UK]," said Procter. "It interests me because it's different and it isn't just going around a circuit. It's going to be much more technical."

Event director Tony Clements added: "We're very pleased we're getting support from crews all around the country and we're also very happy to see some of the top national drivers from around the country entering. It's really encouraging that all the hard work we've put in is being rewarded with a good entry. We certainly hope it will run with a full entry."

The event could be the only full closed-road rally on the mainland this year, as Scotland have yet to pass a similar bill which is restricting the Jim Clark Rally and Mull Rally from running.

### IN BRIEF

**Lyons makes R5 step**  
Having campaigned a R2T-specification Ford Fiesta for the last two years, Keith Lyons has announced his intention to move up to a Fiesta R5 for this year's Irish Tarmac Rally Championship. The Lyons family are long-established Ford dealers in Limerick, and Keith's father Ken is an experienced competitor in his own right. Keith will be joined by co-driver Sean Hegarty.

### Gogledd Cymru

Gavin Edwards and Michael Gilbey took victory on a mud-covered Rali Gogledd Cymru, in a reworked event from the Rhyll and District Motor Club. Competitor feedback led to the event becoming all-asphalt, which worked well for the Ford Escort Mk2 of Edwards/Gilbey. However, water ingress on the first standard section caused the starter motor of their car to fail, with the pairing having to take care to avoid stalling for the rest of the event. Top seeds Guto Ifan and Max Freeman took second in their Ford Escort Mk1 ahead of Simon Summers and Alan James.

### Stockdale debut

Following in the footsteps of his father Martin, Tom Stockdale made his rallying debut at Blyton Park last Saturday. He took third in class in his ex-circuit racing BMW Compact on the Jack Neal Memorial Rally. Stockdale Sr is a veteran of a number of RAC rallies. More recently he has competed on single venue events and is into double-digits for Rally Barbados appearances.

### Nenagh Stages

Fermanagh's Garry Jennings, Donagh Kelly and Declan Boyle have all shown support for the Nenagh Tarmac Stages Rally this weekend by adding to a strong entry, with the organiser making a late call to go ahead with the struggling event. Also on the entry list are 2016 Irish National Rally champion Roy White and Tarmac Championship frontrunner Joe McGonigle for the six-stage event in County Tipperary.

### MN series to Snett

The fight for the MN Circuit Rally Championship moves past the halfway point on Sunday's Snetterton Stages. Chris West is car number one and leads the chase by 18 points from car number two, John Stone. Mark Kelly took his first overall win on the last round at Brands Hatch and is car three.

### Junior BRC frontrunner Meirion Evans to France and the Peugeot 208 Cup

Prestone Motorsport News Junior British Rally Championship frontrunner Meirion Evans will compete in France this year as he chases the Peugeot 208 Rally Cup.

The eight-round series features gravel and asphalt, as well as an attractive prize structure that has lured European Rally Championship Under27 winner Chris Ingram in the past.

"It's really competitive and there's good prizes for the year," said Evans.

"I'm under no illusions that maybe I won't have the experience to fight at the front all the time. A lot of the boys out there know the rallies. It will also be tough on the gravel as it's only a one-pass recce.

"You still get €1000 [£800] or so for finishing fifth or sixth. We were there or thereabouts last year [in the BRC], it just didn't quite click."

The Welshman will tackle the R2-based series with regular co-driver Jonathan Jackson.

He will kick off the season in a Ford Fiesta R5 for a one-off outing on the Tendring Rally Clacton closed-road event on April 22. His father Melvyn is also expected to compete with his eponymous team. "It's a great chance to be able to drive the Fiesta R5 on a special event for British rallying," added Meirion. "It fits in to our schedule with the 208 Cup and every mile will be important to us as we'd like to move into the R5 class on a more permanent basis in the future."



Evans was unlucky in BRC and heads to France in R2

### Haydn Minay Stages Manx opener is cancelled

Next month's Haydn Minay Stages Rally has been postponed by organiser Manx Auto Sport after only 12 paid entries were received for the gravel event.

The rally was set to run on March 9/10 and be the opening round of the Manx Rally Championship.

The inaugural event last year, won by Nigel Cannell (Mitsubishi Lancer E9), was the first multi-venue loose surface rally on the island since 2010.

A statement from the club said: "This has been a very difficult decision to make and a number of options have been considered to try and keep the event running on its original date. The club understands that it will come as a massive disappointment to all those who

have submitted paid entries as well as those volunteers who have been so passionate in putting the event on. Manx Auto Sport thanks all those who submitted and paid entries for the event for your support of the event."

The statement also offered hope that it can be rescheduled: "The club will be entering into discussions with those who entered the event and also other competitors and volunteers to explore the feasibility of putting the event on later in the year."

The Manx Rally Championship will now start on May's Manx National Rally. There is due to be a further gravel round, the Summer Stages on August 4, organised by Druidale Motor Club.

### MSA reiterates: no 'Proto' cars in UK

The Motor Sports Association has clarified a rule which confirms 'Proto' rally cars are not eligible to compete.

A Proto car is the modern bodyshell of a hatchback, like a Ford Fiesta or VW Polo, attached to a Group N-spec rally car like the Mitsubishi Lancer E9 or E10.

The cars have been very popular on the continent as they look like R5 cars but are cheaper to run and source parts for with the Group N car underneath.

An MSA spokesperson said: "Any stage rally car with a non-original floorpan and/or bulkhead would not comply with MSA regulations, which have been static on this issue since 2009.

"The MSA has given scrutineers advice on what to look out for when inspecting cars for a logbook, to help ensure that non-compliant cars do not find their way into competition."

### Harper Adams makes R2T step

The Harper Adams University team will return to the British Rally Championship, upgrading to the Prestone Motorsport News Junior class.

James McDiarmid, who steered the team to a class win in the Cadets last year in its Ford Fiesta R2T National, will return with a full R2 car, with new co-driver Gareth Clarke after Max Haines-Messenger graduated from the university.

"Last year we almost had a fairytale year with a first in class on the Isle of Man, which is more



McDiarmid will return for the Harper Adams team

than we've hoped for," said McDiarmid.

"I'm excited about stepping up to the R2T, our mechanics have been out to Poland to build the engine so hopefully

they know every inch of the engine now.

"We have a test day coming up and we'll take it from there. We're hoping to give everyone a fright."



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# SPORTING SCENE

Photos: GRC, Hal Ridge

## Wadge commits to BTRDA Clubmans bid

BTRDA rallycross committee member Jordine Wadge will race in at least six rounds of the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship this year driving a JDG Performance-run Citroen C2.

Wadge, who made her rallycross debut in a Toyota Paseo in 2015 and has also made a one-off appearance in a Ford Fiesta, contested three rallycross events in a JDG C2 in the Production category last season.

She achieved a best finish of second in the C final of the Production class at Croft.

She also co-drove for Alex Hawkins in the GwynneSpeed Rally Challenge in a Citroen C2 in 2017 and will continue to navigate in selected events alongside her rallycross programme.

Stephen Gaunt and Dale Ford will also race in the Production category this season in a Citroen C2 and Saxo respectively, while father-and-son pairing Tony and Jonny Chrisp will switch from autocross to race in the series with a pair of Ford Kas.

Irishman Keith Kerrshaawe will compete in the class in a Peugeot 106 and Lee Keeler will switch from racing in the defunct British RX Hot Hatch category to the Clubmans Production category in a Citroen Saxo.



Harrold's iconic VW Beetle racer

## Harrold to return in upgraded VW Beetle

Former Stock Hatch rallycross champion and Retro Rallycross event winner James Harrold is set to return to the Retro RX series this year with his unique Volkswagen Beetle.

Harrold has been absent from the series since early 2016, when a broken camshaft put the rear-wheel-drive machine out of the opening round of the season at Lydden Hill.

Since then, Harrold and father Paul have been making significant developments to the car made famous by a BBC F1 feature in 2015 when Jenson Button drove it.

The period mechanical fuel injection system and distributor have been swapped for more modern MoTec engine management, along with a new gear selection system for the rear-mounted Hewland gearbox.

"We needed a bit more reliability and a bit more control in terms of looking after the engine," said Paul Harrold. "By running an ECU you can control everything more closely and hopefully that can give us more reliability and make it more driveable."

Power is expected to remain around the 600bhp mark. "We're not going to get a lot more power out of it, but we don't need more power," added Paul Harrold. "The problem was always being able to use what we've got."

The car is undergoing final rolling-road development running and is expected to be ready for the first round of British RX at Silverstone next month.

# GLOBAL RALLYCROSS GETS LYDDEN HILL DATE

## Championship finale to be held at Kent venue in October this year



Speed is the reigning GRC title holder

By Hal Ridge

### The double-header final rounds of the Global Rallycross Championship will be held at Lydden Hill on October 27/28.

The Lydden circuit is set to be adapted to include a 70 foot table-top jump for the first GRC event held in Europe since 2013, when the series joined X Games events in Barcelona in Spain and Munich in Germany.

"I'm delighted to finally confirm Lydden Hill as the venue for the final round of the GRC," said

Lydden Hill boss Pat Doran. The GRC's 12-round calendar was released last month, but didn't disclose the venue of the European finale.

"Lydden has been at the forefront of rallycross for more than 50 years and we've invested in the sport throughout that time," said Doran. "It's fitting therefore that the GRC's return to Europe is at Lydden, where rallycross fans will get the opportunity to see the best GRC has to offer including the series' signature 70ft table-top jump on our purpose-built rallycross track.

"We always receive great support from

the motorsport fraternity, and I'm sure the fans will be out in force once again as we pull out all the stops to ensure the GRC season finale is a sell-out success."

It is not yet known where the new jump will feature on Lydden's rallycross layout. Former GRC champion Tanner Foust has twice won at the British circuit in the European Rallycross Championship in 2012 and 2013. He is expected to return for the new event alongside reigning GRC champion Scott Speed in the Volkswagen Andretti team.

"Bringing Global Rallycross to Lydden Hill's historic venue makes

perfect sense for the series' long-awaited return to Europe," said GRC boss Colin Dyne. "Our teams and drivers are looking forward to battling it out for the championship on the circuit where the sport first began."

Lydden hosted the British round of the World Rallycross Championship from 2014 to last year, before the event moves to Silverstone for 2018. Lydden will also continue to host its two traditional rounds of the British Rallycross Championship on Easter and August Bank Holiday Mondays this season.

## Bakkerud realises a dream with deal to join Ekstrom's factory-backed Audi WRX team

New EKS recruit Andreas Bakkerud says he almost joined Mattias Ekstrom's team for its inaugural season in the World Rallycross Championship in 2014.

Ekstrom finished second to Bakkerud on his maiden European Rallycross appearance at Holjes in Sweden in 2013 and subsequently tried to secure the Norwegian driver for the following year.

"I was kind of the guy that destroyed his dream debut," said Bakkerud. "Then Mattias wanted to make his own team and

wanted me to drive one of his cars. The problem was that his team wouldn't be ready before the mid-season of 2014. I had a contract proposal from Olsbergs MSE, which I joined for a two-year deal. We stayed in touch.

"When my two-year deal with OMSE ended Mattias and EKS were again eager to sign me up. I had a contract proposal from Hoonigan Racing Division. I told Mattias all about it, and asked him 'what would you do?' He told me to join Hoonigan.

When I got the news of Ford pulling out of World RX on Sunday at Estering in Germany [last season], I immediately told Jan-Tore Brustad [Bakkerud's manager] to get a meeting with EKS."

Bakkerud has signed a multi-year deal to race a new Audi S1 quattro alongside Ekstrom in the works-backed team. "It's a pro contract and in motorsport that doesn't come often, so I'm a very lucky person. I'm basically now living the dream I've had since I was a little kid," said Bakkerud.



Bakkerud has inked EKS deal



Heathcote (inset) took part in RallyX on Ice event

## British champion Heathcote makes RX2 step up with Team Faren

Reigning British Rallycross champion Nathan Heathcote will switch to racing in the RX2 International Series this season, the single-make support category to the World Rallycross Championship.

Heathcote has signed to drive for Team Faren in the seven-round series, alongside American driver Conner Martell and is using the Scandinavian RallyX on Ice series to prepare for the rallycross season.

Heathcote said: "RX2 is a good step up from what I did last year.

Conner has a lot of experience in the cars so I'm looking forward to working with him. Hopefully we can share knowledge and help each other."

Heathcote joins the team that 2016 British RX champion Dan Rooke drove for last year to finish second in the RX2 series. "The amount of experience that Team Faren has got is massive," he added.

"It showed last year coming in as a new team that it can quite easily go and win races."

Heathcote qualified for the semi-finals and was classified 17th in the RallyX on Ice event at Holjes in Sweden last weekend.

"I did better than I thought I might do," he said. "The competition is massive here so this race can be put down more as practice, and the next one can be more of a race."

The event was won by World RX race-winner Kevin Eriksson, while British RX runner Oliver Bennett was sixth for the second event in a row in the RX Academy category.

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

### MN SAYS...

# Get ready for a bright rallying future

## With the right people in place and steps to be taken, prospects can look positive

From the information contained within the opening eight pages of this week's *Motorsport News*, readers might think that there is doom and gloom surrounding the future of national rallying.

However, the nail has not been hammered into the coffin lid just yet. There are measures that can be taken to put the sport back onto an even keel, and we have highlighted a number of them. Initiatives such as Rally4Wales and the new Rally 2WD show that there is a desire and a passion to protect and even galvanise the competition in the UK. On page 6-7, *Motorsport News* has come up with a number of issues that need addressing to put rallying back on the right track. We hope those in power take heed.

There is another glimmer of hope for rallying in the UK, and that is the new chief executive of the governing body, the Motor Sports Association, David Richards. There aren't many people around who know more about rallying, so the future should be in some very safe hands.

**Matt James, Editor** (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



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Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S  
**FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!**



Cotswold Clouds Classic Car Trial, photo taken by MN contributor Duncan Stephens



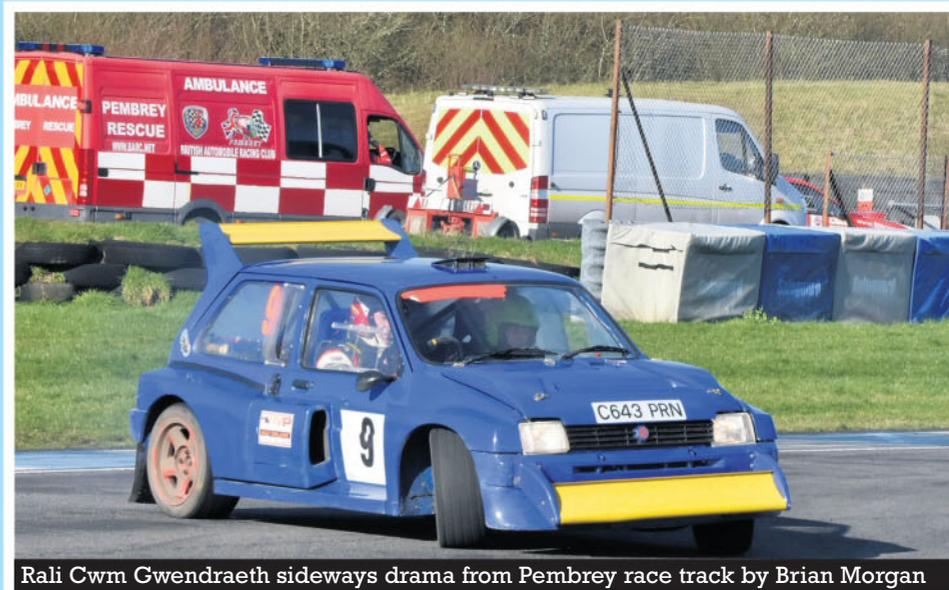
Knockhill winter testing, by John Henderson



More Cotswolds, by Duncan Stephens



Sywell Trials pic, taken by Mike Griffin



Rali Cwm Gwendraeth sideways drama from Pembrey race track by Brian Morgan



Peter Atkins' Jackie Stewart chassis



Bob Sketchley's Sporting Trials action



More from Bob Sketchley, at Sywell Trial

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# TV GUIDE



Coulthard was Race of Champions star

It may be winter, but there's still been some British drivers triumphing around the world in recent weeks.

Take the **Race of Champions** event in Saudi Arabia earlier this month, where David Coulthard was able to secure his second victory in the unique contest. Find out how he took the win on Monday night (2100-2200hrs).

Another Brit to claim a title that weekend was Harrison Newey, who was one of the drivers to secure the **Asian Le Mans Series** crown.

Catch highlights of the season-closing round from Sepang on Saturday (1930-2030hrs).

Immediately after that comes action from one of the more prestigious races in the winter: the **Bathurst 12 Hours**. Again, there was a British winner here too with Stuart Leonard among the winning crew. Tune in to catch all the best bits (Saturday, 2030-2230hrs).

But if that's too much contemporary motorsport for you, then there's two programmes featuring some excellent archive footage this

week. First up, on Wednesday is the latest instalment of **The Great History of the Le Mans 24 Hours** series, where the Ford GT40 invasion of 1967 is recalled (2200-2230hrs).

It's Rally Sweden this week and while we're in an era of some of the most impressive World Rally Cars, 1986 marked the end of the incredible Group B period. To have a look back at an enthralling **Rally Sweden** from that year, be sure to tune in on Friday night (2300-0000hrs).

## LISTINGS

### RACING SUNDAY

#### ■ Mondello Park, Ireland

#### Fiesta Endurance Race

Starts racing from 1200hrs

(qualifying from 0900hrs)

Admission adult Euro 15, child

free Web [mondello.ie](http://mondello.ie)

### RALLY SATURDAY

#### ■ Llandudno, north Wales

#### Cambrian Rally

Starts 0801hrs

Admission free

Web [cambrianrally.co.uk](http://cambrianrally.co.uk)

### SUNDAY

#### ■ Snetterton Circuit,

#### Snetterton Stages

Starts 0857hrs Admission

online £13, gate £16.

Teen online £9, gate £10.

Web [snettertonstagerally.co.uk](http://snettertonstagerally.co.uk)

#### ■ Nenagh, County Tipperary

#### Nenagh Tarmac Stages Rally

Starts 1000hrs

Admission free

Web [birmmotorclub.com](http://birmmotorclub.com)

*Details correct at time of press, but please check before travelling*

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## LIVE TV

### NASCAR:

#### Daytona 500

■ Race: Sunday, 1900-0000hrs, Premier Sports



NASCAR begins

## LIVE TV: WRC

### Rally Sweden, BT Sport Friday

■ End of day 1 review: 2200-2230hrs, BT Sport 1

### Saturday

■ SS14: 1400-1500hrs,

BT Sport ESPN

### ■ End of day 2 review:

2200-2230hrs, BT Sport 2

### Sunday

■ SS19: 1100-1230hrs, BT Sport 2

### ■ End of day 3

review: 2200-2230hrs,

BT Sport 2

### Red Bull TV

#### ■ End of day 1 review:

Friday, 2100-2130hrs

#### ■ SS14: Saturday,

1345hrs

#### ■ End of day 2 review:

Saturday, 2100-

2130hrs



Rally Sweden

### ■ End of day 3 review:

Sunday, 2100-2130hrs

### Channel 5

■ Highlights: Tuesday, 1900-2000hrs

## REVIEW: GRAND PRIX DRIVER

Back in 1993, the BBC broadcast a seven-part series entitled *The Team: A Season With McLaren*. It offered an insightful behind-the-scenes look at the Formula 1 squad during a dramatic campaign made all the more remarkable by the relative information-desert of the era compared with the access-all-areas reach of a social media world.

A quarter of a century on, *Grand Prix Driver* is very much its successor, both spiritually and with its subject matter; albeit the off-form McLaren of the past few years rather than the powerhouse it was in the 1990s. But this does set the bar high for this four-episode *Amazon Prime Video* offering, which is available now.

Focusing on 2017's pre-season, this documentary confronts the

struggles of McLaren and Honda head-on. In the first few moments, McLaren racing director Eric Boullier explains it can take just six months to kill an F1 team, while in the episode focusing on car build, chief operating officer Simon Roberts lists several key areas in which McLaren is behind with the MCL32. He describes a combination of three of these as "a massive miss right across the organisation". Any fears that this will be a purely positive spin on a difficult year are immediately dispelled.

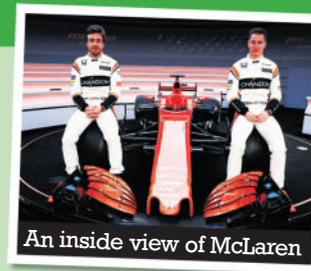
"It's mildly out of control around the factory," Roberts says later. "I've never seen it quite as bad as this. Things are not on plan, things are late, people are doing the best they can. Technically we haven't got enough time to get the job done, there's just so

much stuff in the system and you think, 'Oh my god'. So, we're never sure what the outcome's going to be, but we'll keep going. When that car goes out, you've got to know it's right."

The documentary doesn't shy away from the key plot points. The final episode focuses on pre-season testing and offers some remarkable insight into the Honda engine troubles that ruined the test. Fernando Alonso, an episode earlier hoping the new McLaren will be a "fantastic car", is caught over the radio saying "this is really a sh\*t engine". The resulting fear that he'd walk before the start of the season is also reflected, setting the stage for what everyone watching knows will be a terrible campaign in which the only highlight was the McLaren-Honda divorce.

Just as with the 1993 documentary, the access to key players – those at the top of the company, the middle management and the rank and file – offers a fantastic insight into goings-on at McLaren. It's rare for the public to see these people in what might be termed their natural habitat, and when it becomes clear that the McLaren-Honda package is not a good one, there are some frank words.

This is all put together well, with sweeping drone shots combining with intimate handheld cameras, and trackside and in-car footage from Barcelona giving a genuine access-all-areas feel. Add to the mix an often gently urgent soundtrack, with voiceover from Michael Douglas, and it's slickly produced.



An inside view of McLaren

The main criticism is that the scope of the documentary is narrow, covering just a few weeks of pre-season. After watching the full series, you're ready for another dozen parts telling the full story of the year. But if you're wanting more, this is probably a good thing. And while *Grand Prix Driver* could be more expansive, any *Autosport* or *MN* reader will enjoy this well-put-together series.

Edd Straw

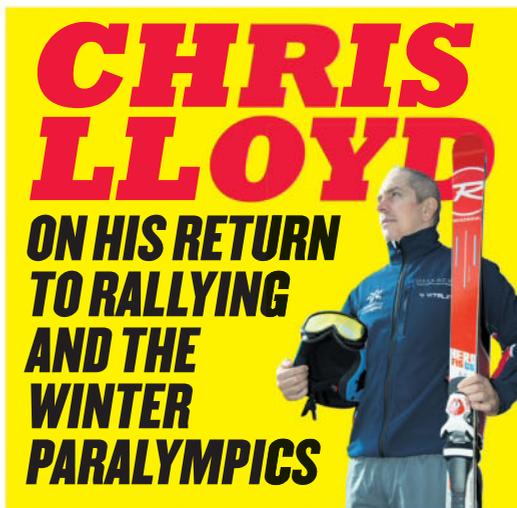
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## OUT WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21



## MN CIRCUIT RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP SNETTERTON REPORT

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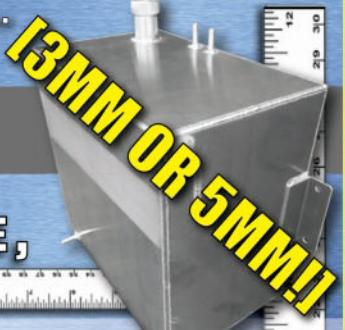
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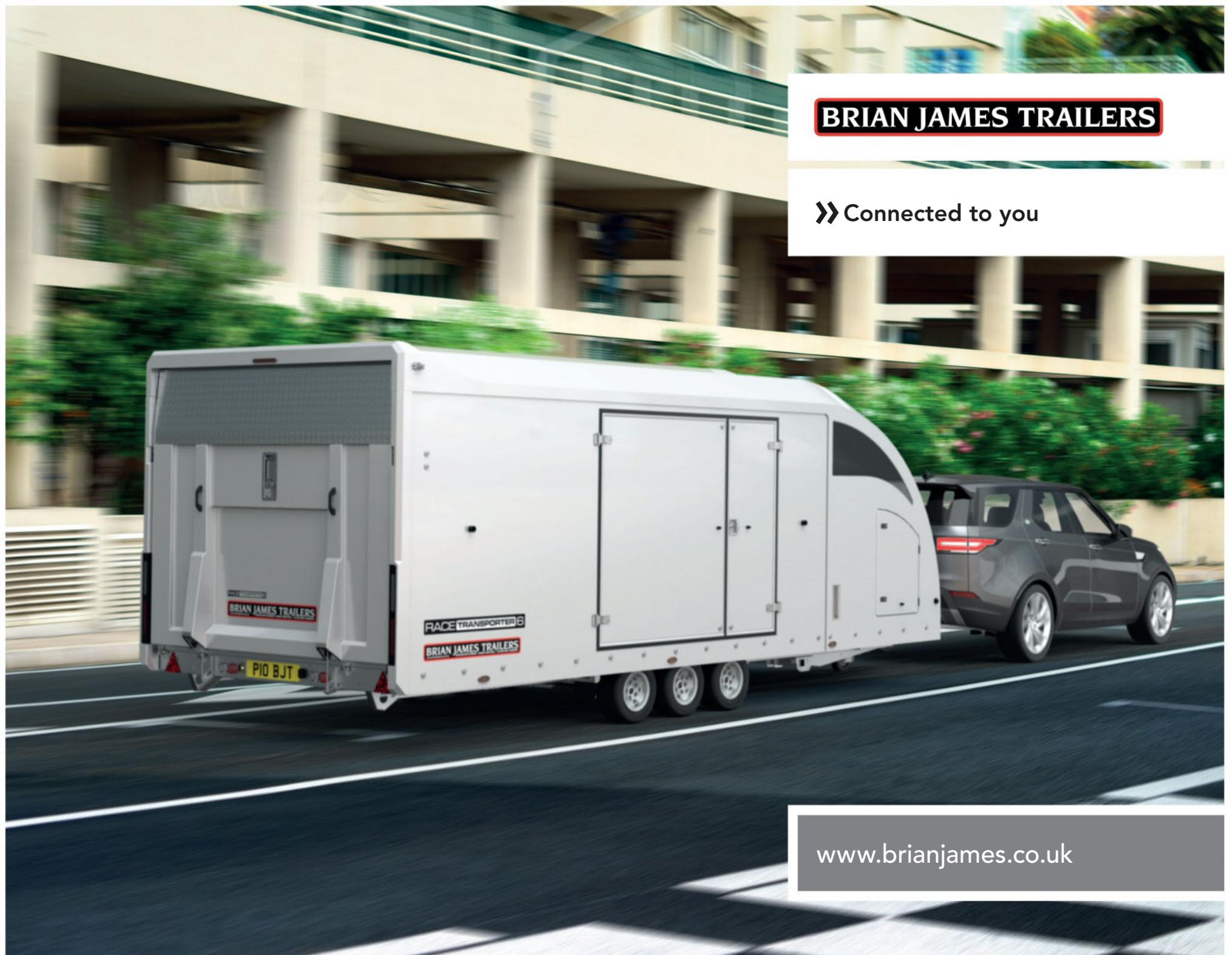
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