



Newsletter March 2004

INTRODUCTION by Bruce Lyle, Chairman

Emerging from another winter hibernation, (actually, I escaped to South Africa for five weeks) I got off to a great start to the Motorsport year by achieving a first – I attended Autosport at the NEC for the first time, thanks to my old mate Alistair Miller of AMTV. What a great event! Between us, we must have met everyone of significance in the sport. What a pleasure to meet George Donaldson again, now living in Japan and working for STI. Malcolm Wilson was in good form, Peter Foubister was deep in conversation with the Duke of York – well, it was opening day - and lots of Scots on the prowl joined us to watch Russell Brookes join the lovely Tiff Needell, and the gorgeous gals in the arena – not too difficult a choice of viewing! Ian Grindrod was his usual anorexic self, and Plum Tyndall is hoping to be back in Scotland for Mount Stuart. Talking of that, the change of date to 31 July/1 August is not quite finding universal support, but our own Veteran, Vintage and Classic Run has now been reprogrammed. We are hoping to give them a bit more help on the general Motorsport front this time round.

I was delighted to be able to visit Malcolm Wilson's M Sport facility in Cumbria as part of the tremendous initiative of the Scottish Rally Championship team to encourage our young rally talent. The New Pig Junior Rally Academy was set up to find two youngsters from the current crop to whom some special focus would be directed. I was really pleased to meet them all, and even more pleased when I heard that the SRC boys had decided that it was a better idea to support all eight. The young superstars were all gobsmacked – as was I – at the facilities, the development work and, most of all, the costs involved in rallying at WRC level. Well done to Raymond Munro, Jim Brown, Andy Kelly and the SRC Committee.

Most of you will know that I have found myself on Motor Sports Council and, as the only Scottish member, I am at your service, should there be any points you would like to discuss, or would like taken on board. I will be happy to help – just give me a call. I attended my first meeting as a Council member last week, and one of the presentations was a really interesting item by Ashley Pover, the Rockingham guru, telling us, in his mid Atlantic accent, just how he intends to recover from substantial debt to make his circuit pay. It seems it is not Motorsport which is seen as the salvation, it is rock music and, in particular, girl bands! Well, why not?

I was disappointed when Dunfermline and ourselves had to cancel the B52 Stages Rally to be held at Edzell late November, owing to lack of entries. The venue had been lost to us for some years, and the prospect of returning with a substantial thrash up and down miles of concrete appealed to the hooligan in me! However, all is not lost, and all the hard work put in by Martin and Angie Luke and the team will bear fruit this year, when the new event will feature within the Scottish Tarmac Championship. I look forward to that.

On a slightly humorous note, I attended Scottish Sporting's annual awards presentation a couple of weeks ago, and apart from some notorious old stagers like the Robertson brothers, Harry Merry, Derek McLean, and Nairn Brown all receiving awards, the premier award, the Club Championship, was won by Andrew Baillie. Andrew is the son of Jim Baillie and is only just 17 years old! Andrew does not even have a driving licence yet! Who says we don't start them young enough?

I recently attended the MSA Seminars for club officials and scrutineers at North Queensferry. They were extremely interesting, and very well presented by Allan Dean-Lewis and his team. As the groups split up into the various disciplines, it was really interesting to note that by far the greatest interest was in Rallying. The turn out was quite good, and around 40 club officials turned up. Top score went to Edinburgh University, with five. Second was Scottish Sporting with four (excluding me). Well worth the day.

CLOSED ROADS

We have at last received a response from the Scottish Executive regarding Dan Wright's proposal to change the law, allowing the closure of roads for certain Motorsport events. Further work now requires to be done to provide the back up information in support of the proposal. We will keep you informed

LOTTERY SPORTS FUND

As you probably know by now, the fund is drying up. Not only that, Sport Scotland has decided to move the goalposts, in a proposal which would effectively move Motorsport out of the range of sports eligible for grant. Needless to say, we have cried FOUL! in the biggest possible way, along with other sports similarly affected, and it seems that they now admit they have got it wrong. The changes may also affect our initiative to build a Rally Centre of Excellence at Dalquhandy in South Lanarkshire, but funding is being sought elsewhere for this.

CLUB NIGHTS

Despite having offered any of our team to come along and give a talk or presentation at your club nights, no-one has yet asked us. We feel pretty miffed about this, and can't believe that the list of available bodies are of no interest to you. The list of our Board members and management team appears at the end of this Newsletter. Let's see if you could make a more successful club night by inviting one of our lot along.

BELMONT ECOSSE 205 CHALLENGE

This month, all over Scotland, young, would-be rally drivers are spending their evenings in lock-ups and garages preparing their cars for the opening round of the Belmont 205 Ecosse Challenge, Scotland's newest rally championship.

The first event in the seven round series takes place at Knockhill on February 28 - when a dozen crews in Peugeot 205 GTi rally cars are expected to enter the Palmerston Trade Furniture Stages. Some of the crews took their cars out even earlier in the month, warming up for the season in the opening round of the County Saab Scottish Rally Championship in Inverness on February 14.

On the Knockhill event, drivers will cover 30 miles over the rallycross and race circuit,

aiming to gain valuable points in the one-make championship. All cars are prepared to the same specification which means it should be the best driver, not the best machinery, that will be first over the line. Most of the competitors are aged 17-25 and see the series, which is supported by Edinburgh based Peugeot dealers Belmont, as the first rung in the ladder which may eventually lead them to compete at world class level like fellow Scots Colin McRae, Derek Ringer and Robert Reid, who are all world champions. "From what I've seen already, this looks to be an ideal way to attract young Scottish drivers into the sport," Colin's father Jimmy, five times British champion, said. "The cars are quick, reliable, relatively easy to drive, cheap to run and relatively inexpensive to buy. It's the perfect platform from which to enter the sport."

It is a view supported by world champion co-driver Robert Reid from Perth, who is sitting out this year's world championship while his regular driver Richard Burns continues to have treatment in his battle against a brain tumour. "This has all the makings of a seriously fun championship which will be very competitive and also not break the bank", Reid explained. "It's important we do everything we can to boost rallying in Scotland and this looks a perfect way." The Belmont 205 Ecosse Challenge is only in its second year and is attracting young competitors from all over Scotland. Most are new to rallying, seeing the series as a good way to get started in the sport. "The initiative is aimed at ensuring young drivers can gain their first foothold and then progress through the sport for the first few years, driving competitively in Scotland", said Championship co-ordinator David Barlow.

Registered teams also benefit from a specially-developed training programme which will help the young crews both now and in the future. As well as driver and co-driver tuition at Knockhill, competitors will be taught the technicalities of tyre management, as important in club level rally as it is in Formula One. This year all competitors will use the same make and type of tyre manufactured by Dunlop especially for the loose surfaces typical of rallying. Very different from normal road tyres, they are designed to give grip and traction as the cars are driven at speed on gravel and broken tarmac surfaces. "Training is a key part of success in any sport and rallying is no different" said North Berwick's Robbie Dale, the 19-year-old winner of the inaugural 205 Ecosse Championship. "The training I was given was really productive. What essentially came out of it was that I was over-committing going into corners and scrubbing off speed on the exit. So I've made a couple of changes to my driving style and I'm definitely faster than I was before."

While Robbie climbs the rally ladder by competing in a bigger championship this year, the 2003 Junior Champion, 21 year old Jane Nicol from Duns intends to defend her title in the Belmont 205 Ecosse Challenge. She will be up against stiff competition, however, as former karters Lee Seager (17, Hamilton), Kevin Ross (17, Motherwell), Fraser Jones (22, Ayr) and Gordon Nichol (24, Newtown St Boswells) all qualify for the Junior category along with Jane. Lee Seager is one of the youngest and under pressure to pass his DVLA driving test before he can get his competition driving licence in time for the first round. Another youngster with a reputation to live up to is Paul McKinnon from Mull, son of Neil McKinnon, multiple winner of the prestigious Tour of Mull rally. Both he and Isle of Man based James Vickers will make the trip on to the mainland every month from February to September to take part in each event in the series. The qualifying rounds are all counters in either the forest-based County Saab Scottish Rally Championship or the Beatsons Building Supplies Scottish Tarmac Rally Championship, the two national level championships in Scotland, acknowledged world wide as the proving ground for rally stars from the last three decades. Dates and locations of all events are posted on www.ecosse205challenge.co.uk along with profiles of the drivers and information on how to get started in rallying.

KNOCKHILL - SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN 2004

With events running from January through to December Knockhill Racing Circuit truly has an action packed season ahead for all speed fans.

The return of the British Touring Car Championship on 7-8 August after a one-year absence is the icing on the cake for motor racing fans with a fantastic supporting programme including the new single seater Formula BMWs, the Porsche Cup, the very closely fought Seat Cupra Challenge and 150mph Formula Renaults.

For even more speed and vastly more power (650bhp 4wd saloons) the second visit of the British Rallycross Championship provides action with a capital 'A'. Last year's spectators were left speechless by the awesome acceleration of the supercars and thrills and spills are guaranteed. This is truly a 'must see' event so get 30 May in your diaries now.

The next breed of aspiring F1 stars will descend on Fife on 15-16 May when the British Formula Three Championship comes to town. This is real wheel to wheel stuff with every young driver out to prove himself against the very best world-wide competition. Backed up with TVRs, crazy Caterhams and a full SMRC grid this will be a feast of frantic speed.

Two wheeled motorsport figures prominently throughout the year and none more so than when the phenomenal British Superbikes make their annual pilgrimage to Scotland. July 3-4 will probably see the track's largest crowd of the season turn out to witness the unbelievable dices between the cream of Superbike heroes. Even car racing fans have been won over by the spectacle of 26 men and machines hurtling towards Duffus Dip at 155mph!

Before any of these four events, rally fans should head to the venue on Saturday 28 February when the opening round of the Scottish Tarmac Championship organised by Dunfermline Car Club takes place.

The Palmerston Trade Furniture stages will be run over eight special stages with a mix of Tarmac and gravel surfaces with action from 9.00 a.m. With all servicing taking place in the paddock and full catering on site this is an opportunity to see rallying in 'luxury' surroundings.

UK RALLY CHALLENGE 5

Plans are well advanced for the fifth UK Rally Challenge which is scheduled to take place at Knockhill on 25 July. This is the day after the McRae Stages, so we're hoping that the survivors will make the short journey down the M90 from Perth to Knockhill to take up the challenge against some of the UK's leading drivers, including the usual strong Irish contingent. The event will again be filmed by AMTV for BBC Scotland and will feature 40 miles of stages on the race circuit, rally school stage and rallycross track. It's an ideal opportunity to entertain your sponsors or even to give them the chance to see the action from the co-driver's seat. Regulations will be available shortly – contact RSAC Motorsport to reserve your copy.

WHO ARE WE?

The Board of RSAC Motorsport Limited consists of six Directors:

Bruce Lyle (Chairman) – former successful competitor in racing and rallying

John Cowan – experienced official at national and international level

Richard Davenport – competitor in historic rallies and experienced rally official

Mike Gascoigne - former RSAC and SMRC Chairman; race and rally official for many years

Colin Hilton – Chief Executive of the MSA

Jim McRae – five times British Rally Champion and winner of many international rallies

The Management team consists of the five Scottish-based Directors plus:

John Cleland – multiple British Touring Car Champion

Gordon Hastie – multiple navigational rally champion and experienced official

Jonathan Lord – executive Director of RSAC Motorsport and our Clerk of the Course

Andrew Wood – former works rally driver and Scottish Rally Champion

Barry Wood – regular successful competitor in historic racing and rallying

The staff at our Linwood office are Jonathan Lord and our Motorsport Administrator Catherine Higgins.

Don't forget – we welcome your views on matters mentioned in this Newsletter. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any opinions regarding articles which have appeared. If you'd like to suggest items we could feature in the next edition, just phone or send us an e-mail.

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KNOCKHILL RACE CIRCUIT 2004 PROVISIONAL DATES

28 MARCH	HOT HATCH
11 APRIL	SMRC RACE MEETING
17-18 APRIL	SCOTTISH MOTORSFAIR
25 APRIL	SMRC MEETING
9 MAY	HOT HATCH
15/16 MAY	FORMULA THREE BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP
22 MAY	SPRINT
30 MAY	BRITISH RALLYCROSS
19/20 JUNE	HOT HATCH FESTIVAL WEEKEND
27 JUNE	SMRC RACE MEETING
18 JULY	SMRC RACE MEETING
25 JULY	UK RALLY CHALLENGE 5
7/8 AUGUST	BRITISH TOURING CARS
14/15 AUGUST	BARC/SMRC RACE MEETING
22 AUGUST	HOT HATCH
5 SEPTEMBER	SMRC RACE MEETING
18/19 SEPTEMBER	HOT HATCH FESTIVAL WEEKEND
25 SEPTEMBER	CLUBMAN'S BRITISH RALLYCROSS
17 OCTOBER	SMRC RACE MEETING
24 OCTOBER	HOT HATCH
21 NOVEMBER	HOT HATCH
19 DECEMBER	HOT HATCH