

News release
March 21, 2018

The battle of the British Rally Championship revisited... (sort of)

In a year when Rallyday is celebrating the 60th anniversary of the British Rally Championship, two vital ingredients are needed.

Throughout the 1980s, two names dominated what was then known as the RAC MSA British Open Rally Championship: Jimmy McRae and Russell Brookes.

Be it a Lotus Sunbeam, Ford Escort RS1800, Vauxhall Chevette HSR or, of course, that brace of iconic Opel Manta 400s – one dressed in AC Delco and the other wearing the words Andrews Heat for Hire down its flanks – the names Brookes and McRae were synonymous with an annual battle for Britain's premier rally title.

That battle will be recreated at Rallyday on Saturday, September 22.

When we say battle... Rallyday won't actually be reenacting some of the BRC's finest scraps between these two legends of our sport. But we'll have a whole heap of fun getting the pair of them to talk about life as team-mates and rivals.

Jimmy, the father of the world's most famous motorsporting dynasty, is looking forward to putting on a show for the thousands of fans lining the Castle Combe circuit later this year.

"Rallyday is an event I always look forward to," said Jimmy, the most successful driver in the history of the British Rally Championship with five titles. "I haven't been for a couple of years, but it's a great chance to get out and about among the real enthusiasts of the sport. And obviously a really good chance to drive some great rally cars.

"I don't know what I'm going to be driving, but there's talk of the potential for a Metro 6R4 and a Ford Sierra Cosworth. I'd be more than happy with either of those. The Metro was always a real beast of a thing and I had a lot of happy times at wheel of a Sierra – which in full Tarmac Group A trim could be a real beast as well!"

Jimmy is very happy to take part in a celebration of the British Rally Championship turning 60; the British crown resided in the McRae household for eight years, with Colin and Alister winning the series in 1991/92 (Colin) and 1995 to back up their father's high five (1981/82/84/87/88).

"The British Rally Championship has always been really important, so it's nice to be able to help celebrate this milestone," McRae Sr added.

Brookes is also no stranger to Wiltshire in the early autumn and he too is ready to meet and greet friends and former rivals.

"There's always a good crowd at Rallyday," said two-time champion Brookes. "And the chance to go back and meet them all and say hello to so many old friends is very welcome."

The pair will also be reunited with one of the most influential co-drivers turned team managers of his era in Stuart Turner.

Turner managed the cars and the careers of the good and the great of the British and World Rally Championship. But before he did any of that, he co-drove Erik Carlsson to victory on a pivotal RAC Rally in 1960 – the year the event included its first ever special stage. Carlsson and Turner galloped up the Monument Hill stage faster than anybody in their Saab 96.

A year later and Turner was running BMC's Competition's Department, employing such stars as Timo Makinen and Rauno Aaltonen. During Stuart's time at BMC, the glorious Mini won the Monte Carlo Rally three times.

In 1969 he headed to Ford, where he remained at the top of Blue Oval's European motorsport programme for 20 years. In that time, he masterminded win after win with Escorts which evolved from the Twin Cam, through the RS1600 all the way to the RS1800. His time at Ford also included the Group B era and the stunning RS200.

"It's always good to meet up with enthusiasts and old rally colleagues like Jimmy," said Stuart, "And it's good to see so many Minis and Escorts being maintained as well. It will also be nice to see the occasional RS200, although I must admit it saddens me a little bit to recall a conversation with my wife about this car. I told her we should buy one when the project ended. But then I added: "No, they'll never appreciate in value..." Probably best not to take any financial advice from me!

"This will be my first time at Rallyday and I'm very much looking forward to coming along and having a look."

Jimmy, Russell and Stuart will all be delighted to remember Roger Clark – another of Britain's most successful and highly regarded rally drivers. This year marks the 20th anniversary of Roger's death and Rallyday will commemorate that occasion by inviting his family and the owners of as many ex-Roger Clark cars as possible.

In deference to the BRC's diamond year, Rallyday has commissioned an exclusive run of British Rally Championship stickers, which will sit alongside this year's another stunning sticker reminding fans that this year's Rallyday also celebrates 50 years of the Ford Escort Mk1.

Rallyday organiser Tom Davis said: "Jimmy and Russell were probably the two biggest names in British rallying in the late Seventies and through the Eighties. They were the benchmark for any young driver coming into the sport and they kept fans constantly on their toes as they battled, year after year, through Yorkshire, Wales, Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man.

“To have them both coming to Wiltshire to tell us all about those years is something very special in a season when we’re celebrating the 60th anniversary of the British Rally Championship. When you add Stuart Turner, *the* team manager of that time and Roger Clark’s cars and family into the mix, we’re shaping up for an unmissable event.

“We are now coming towards the end of our offer period for reduced ticket prices, so I would urge rally fans to get their tickets bought before the end of March to get the best value for money possible.”

Rallyday tickets are still priced at £15 per adult (under-17s admitted for free with an accompanying adult), but this exceptionally good value offer closes at the end of March. From April 1 onwards, ticket prices will rise to £18 per adult.

Ends.