

A rally guide to **Rallyday**

Rallyday: the perfect Saturday for rally fans

When Saturday (September 23) comes... Rallyday will be here and Wiltshire's Castle Combe circuit will echo the beat of the world's fastest ever rally car.

It's official, M-Sport's Ford Fiesta WRC has led and won more rounds of this year's World Rally Championship than any other car. It leads both the drivers' and manufacturers' standings and it's the star of the Rallyday show in Chippenham on Saturday.

Not for the first time, Rallyday organisers are breaking new ground and making history: Saturday's all-action festival of rallying is the first time the British public will be able to see a 2017 World Rally Car driving at rally speed. And it'll be a sight to behold. Not least because two of the fastest rally drivers in the world will be behind the wheel (obviously not at the same time) as Welsh hero Elfyn Evans and two-time world rally winner Ott Tänak return to Rallyday this year.

Cumbrian-based M-Sport World Rally Team – the squad standing at the top of the WRC tables (with Sébastien Ogier in the drivers' championship – is heading south in unprecedented numbers, led by team principal and managing director Malcolm Wilson OBE.

And if it's cars you're after, M-Sport's history will be on show in all its glory – there's even talk of a *virtual* appearance from four-time world champion Ogier himself.

Beyond M-Sport's huge effort, there's a stunning array of cars from every corner of the globe, every aspect of the sport and every generation of the World Rally Championship.

Rallyday organisers Tom Davis said: "We've got around 1000 rally or rally-inspired cars on show. That, allied to a driver line-up including Ott [Tänak], Elfyn [Evans], Rally Sweden winner Jari-Matti Latvala, 1984 World Rally Champion Stig Blomqvist, Colin McRae's co-driver Nicky Grist and star Finn Harri Toivonen, makes us the biggest show of our kind in Europe.

"Where else can you go and watch the best rally cars and drivers in the world demonstrate their skills on the stage right in front of you, then jump in a car and co-drive on the same stretch of road yourself. Rallyday is the perfect Saturday for rally fans."

As well as considering the present and looking to the future, Rallyday always has a look back. And looking back this month bring the inevitable sadness and poignancy of a commemoration of Colin McRae's passing 10 years ago.

On a happier note, the 30-year anniversary of the Opel Manta 400's final international rally win – when Russell Brookes headed fellow 400 drivers Pentti Airikkala and Andrew Wood – in a podium lock out on the 1987 Fram Filters International Welsh Rally.

Rallyday detail:

Location: Castle Combe Circuit

Currency: Pound

Time difference: Wiltshire is UTC +1 (BST)

Language: English

Wiltshire population: 680,127

County town: Trowbridge

Sunrise: 0644

Sunset: 1925

Rallyday itinerary:

Saturday September 23

Gates open 0900

0900 Clubman & Open Track Sessions

0930 Harri Toivonen interview

1000 Jari-Matti Latvala interview

1030 Ott Tänak interview

1100 Series McRae Parade

1100 Malcolm Wilson OBE interview

1130 Clubman & Open Track sessions re-open

1130 Stig Blomqvist interview

1200 AWDC Infield demo

1230 Feature Car demo stage

1430 4x4 Infield parade

1500 Clubman & Open Track sessions re-open

1500 Elfyn Evans interview

1530 Nicky Grist interview

1600 Spirit of Rallyday presentation

Gates close 1700

Remembering Colin

Ten years ago this month Britain's first World Rally Champion Colin McRae passed away. Rallyday will mark this saddest of anniversaries with a parade, including some of his competition cars and road-going including the Series McRae Subaru Impreza.

Davis said: "Rallyday is about celebrating and commemorating the good and the great of this sport and there were none better than Colin McRae. We will never forget Colin and what he did for our sport and the pleasure he brought to us all when he was behind the wheel."

Rallyday, it's a great place to bring the family – here's why:

Under-16s get in for free, when accompanied by an adult. And, once you're in, there's a whole load of fun to be had – not least with the inflatable slides and ball games.

There's an ice cream van on every corner – not on the apex, parked in a very sensible place and selling 99s and Magnums.

The banking which lines the circuit offers not only the perfect place to watch rally cars, but also the ideal base for a September Saturday picnic.

Don't fancy your own sandwiches? Then try one of the numerous food outlets dotted all around the circuit.

Posters, balloons, badges, bags and stickers, Rallyday has more freebies than children could ever want, need or desire.

The stars (below is just a small selection...):

Stig Blomqvist (SWE)

WRC starts: 122

WRC wins: 11

WRC titles: 1 (1984)

Took over the mantle of Mr Saab from fellow super Swede Erik Carlsson and drove Trollhättan's finest 94s and 99 EMS for more than a decade. Was a winner from the very start of the World Rally Championship in 1973, but his finest year ever was with Audi, when he used a Quattro to devastating effect and crushed all-comers in the race for that year's crown. Remained at the forefront of the sport ever since, enjoying a late career resurgence with Skoda in the early 2000s.

Nicky Grist (GBR)

WRC starts: 128

WRC wins: 21

WRC titles: 0

Just when Nicky Grist was about to embark on life on the golf course as a club professional, he went to watch a road rally – it changed his life and sent him down a different path. That path took him around the world as one of rallying's best and most experienced co-drivers ever. Best known for his time with Colin McRae, Nicky was also the man who guided Juha Kankkunen to four world rally wins and also worked with British stars Malcolm Wilson and Dave Metcalfe.

Harri Toivonen (FIN)

WRC starts: 11

WRC wins: 0

WRC titles: 0

At his best behind the wheel of an MG Metro 6R4, where he was one of the few drivers in the world who could justifiably claim to have tamed the Austin Rover beast in its full factory 450bhp guise. A top-10 finish on his home round of the World Rally Championship – the 1986 1,000 Lakes Rally (eighth place overall) was the best score on the world stage for Henri Toivonen's younger brother.

Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)

WRC starts: 179

WRC wins: 17

WRC titles: 0

Still only 32, Jari-Matti has been a regular on the World Rally Championship scene for more than a decade. And next year it's a decade since he eclipsed the record of his hero Henri Toivonen and became the youngest ever winner of a WRC round (Latvala won Rally Sweden aged 22 in 2008). J-ML spent his early career with Ford before switching to Volkswagen for the 2013 season. After four years chasing his team-mate Sébastien Ogier – and following VW's departure from the sport – Latvala moved to Toyota Gazoo Racing. His first season in the all-new Yaris WRC has shown massive potential and started serious title talk for 2008.

Latvala on Rallyday: *"I'm really happy to be coming back to Rallyday. It seems like quite a while since I was there last – I was driving for Ford in 2010 and I had a great day, with a lot of fun. I love to come to these events to see the historic cars. In the UK, you have so many of these kind of rally cars. In Finland we have some as well, but ours are mainly in the museum."*

"The best thing about Rallyday is that you come and you get to see these incredible [Group B] supercars and incredible Group A machines from such amazing times in our sport and you don't just get to look at them standing still."

"At Rallyday, you can see the cars coming really fast, you get to see them in action, you get to see them shooting the flames and you get to hear them. This is what I am coming for: I want to see these cars, to hear them and to feel them – this is when you get the passion."

"The fans in Rallyday are knowledgeable rally fans; in the UK, they know what the rallying is all about and this day gives them the chance to enjoy the best cars, but also the chance to get closer to the drivers than they would normally. I'm looking forward to it. It should be a great day."

Elfyn Evans (GBR)

WRC starts: 60

WRC wins: 0

WRC titles: 0

For the son of 1996 British Rally Champion Gwyndaf Evans, that middle statistic could so easily have read '2' after finishing second in Argentina and Finland this season for. Evans' South American result was a real heart-breaker as he came within seven tenths of a second of taking his first ever World Rally Championship win. It showed just how much he has progressed as a driver that he was able to put the disappointment behind him and get on with the next event. Driving for the M-Sport World Rally Team throughout his professional career, Evans has emerged as one of the sport's most exciting talents. And, don't forget, he's still our reigning British Rally Champion (keeping it in the family, a decade down the line).

Evans on Rallyday:

"Rallyday's definitely one of the highlights of the year away from the World Rally Championship," said Evans. "It's a perfect chance to come to an event, meet a lot of old faces and old friends from earlier in the career and have time to chat to them. I missed it last year, so I'm really happy to be back this time."

"When you're away on a WRC round, there's really not much time for anything other than focusing on the rally itself. So, to come to Rallyday, be able to drive a great car like M-Sport's Ford Fiesta R5 and chat with the fans is brilliant."

"This year's line-up is looking really good, it's almost like being on a WRC round! My M-Sport team-mate Ott [Tänak] will be there to talk about his win on the last round in Germany and Jari-Matti Latvala's coming – he's probably the current driver who knows the most about the history of the sport, it's always really entertaining to listen to his interviews!"

Ott Tänak (EST)

WRC starts: 76

WRC wins: 2

WRC titles: 0

A protégé of Estonian rally hero Markko Märtin, Ott Tänak stormed onto the scene as Pirelli Star Driver in 2010. Astonished at the speed Tänak was able to produce, the World Rally Championship sat up and took notice. M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson ensured himself a lifetime of popularity in Estonia by signing Ott – just as he had Märtin 10 years earlier. After just missing out at Rally Poland two years in succession, Tänak finally delivered his first WRC win in Sardinia earlier this season. He followed up a brilliant Italian job with an even more merit-worthy maiden victory on asphalt last time out in Germany.

Tänak on Rallyday:

"I was at Rallyday in 2012 and it was a lot of fun with some really nice cars. I'm looking forward to going back again and meeting all the people – it's good to be able to see the fans away from the pressure of the normal [WRC] rallies."

"The changeable weather was a big part of the last round in Germany and I think, sometimes, it can be a little bit like this in England... but it's no problem for me to do donuts in the rain! Actually, the last time I was at Rallyday, I think I remember getting a bit sunburned it was so hot."

Malcolm Wilson OBE (GBR)

WRC starts: 43

WRC wins: 0

WRC titles: 0

The loss of Group B hit Malcolm Wilson's rally career as hard as anybody. The Cumbrian had been building his speed and experience and was ready to launch a serious attack on the establishment when his factory Austin Rover deal and his drive was pulled from beneath him at the end of 1986. He returned to Ford and maintained his WRC presence, but the draw of running his own team was growing. Winning the 1993 British Rally Championship title in a Malcolm Wilson Motorsport-run Ford Escort RS Cosworth was a special moment and a good time to move into team management. Since then he's won world titles and now manages the team at the very top of the WRC tree.

Wilson on Rallyday:

"I remember the reaction when Group B cars first came to Britain back in the Eighties," said Wilson. "It was huge news, everybody wanted to see the likes of the [Metro] 6R4 or the Audi Quattro and it's the same with these 2017 World Rally Cars. And it's been the same from Sweden to South America: every country we've been to this year, the effect has been huge.

"And when you see the car out there, doing its thing, you can understand it. They're so quick, so dramatic and so beautiful. I'm genuinely delighted to have this chance to bring our Fiesta WRC to Rallyday to give British fans a chance to see the car before Wales RallyGB next month.

"As for who's going to drive it, well that's a tough one with Ott and Elfyn [Evans] coming down. Maybe I'll pull rank and get behind the wheel myself..."

The cars (below is just a very small selection...):

Ford Fiesta WRC (2017 World Rally Championship Ott Tänak's livery)

Opel Corsa S1600 (driven by Kris Meeke in the JWRC)

Ford Sierra RS Cosworth (Group N car once tested by Ayrton Senna)

Triumph TR7 V8 (ex-works car driven by Tony Pond and Simo Lampinen)

Subaru Impreza WRC99 (Juha Kankkunen's 1999 Rally Finland-winning car)

Subaru Impreza WRC97 (Colin McRae's 1997 Rally GB-winning car)

Peugeot 205 GTI (driven by Colin McRae on the 1988 RAC Rally)

Audi Quattro (ex-Malcolm Wilson Group 4 car from 1982 RAC Rally)

Off-road on track:

There's getting muddy and there's getting muddy off-road style. Rallyday has long enjoyed a relationship with some of Britain's most active off-road clubs and competitors and this year's event will be no different. Head to the Quarry Corner car parks to see an exceptional display of some of the finest 4x4 and off-road machinery on offer.

Don't leave Rallyday without...

... going for a ride in a rally car.

There are precious few events where you can actually jump in and co-drive in a full-on rally car. You've seen the sport from the outside, now take this incredible opportunity: hand over just £25, strap yourself in (actually somebody else does that for you), enjoy the ride of a lifetime and then tell your friends about what our sport's really like from the inside.

Recap Rallyday 2016:

Four-time World Rally Champion Juha Kankkunen was the star guest at last year's Rallyday. As one of the original Flying Finns and one of the very few drivers who had come from Group B through Group A and into the World Rally Car era, Kankkunen had plenty of tales to tell.

Kankkunen was re-united with former co-driver Nicky Grist. Grist famously joined the Finn just in time for the 1993 Rally Argentina... and won it. Nick also scored his first RAC Rally win with Juha in a Toyota Celica Turbo 4WD later in 1993. Stories from those rallies and many more were enjoyed at Rallyday 12 months ago.

Five-time British Rally Champion Jimmy McRae thrilled fans with his undiminished speed and ability behind the wheel when he took to the Castle Combe track, with RAC Rally-winning co-driver Tony Mason providing his usual, engaging running commentary.

Car-wise, every era of rallying was covered from the Sixties to present day with a bevy of MG Metro 6R4s proving a particular favourite with the thousands of fans who turned out to enjoy the late September sunshine.

Rallyday supports Wessex MS Therapy Centre

The Wessex MS Therapy Centre is a lifeline for people suffering from multiple sclerosis in Wiltshire, Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset and North Dorset. The centre, which is entirely self-funded, offers weekly sessions in physiotherapy, counseling, reflexology, solution-focused hypnotherapy and oxygen therapy in an effort to offer MS patients respite from the pain of day-to-day life. Visit the Wessex MS Therapy Centre in the paddock during Rallyday for more information on the event's charity partner.

Weather with you:

Sunny with occasional cloud and 17 degrees.