

S.A.C.C. Stage Rally Report, Sept-Nov 2012.

Since the last association meeting there have been 2 rounds of the Scottish Rally Championship, 4 rounds of the Scottish Tarmac Rally Championship including The Tunnocks Mull Rally, as well as the September Kames rally.

Both SRC events, the Merrick and the Colin McRae Forest Stages suffered from low entries.

The Merrick starting 67 cars with 46 finishers, David Bogie winning the event and his 4th Scottish title.

The McRae started 71 cars with 44 finishers, Quintin Milne winning his first ever event and is probably still nursing the hangover...

Conditions over both events were mixed, with the McRae organisers being badly let down when contractors arrived to relay the road surface in SS4, Kindrogan with 4" stone....the day before the rally!

Lengthy discussion took place at the SRC AGM in Perth on the topic of low entry levels, particularly for events later in the season. With current forestry charges of £630/mile(first use), 70 cars is very much borderline for rallies to survive.

The general committee agreed to introduce a points incentive scheme within the class structure, not overall, which will hopefully encourage crews out later in the year.

For 2013 the same 8 events will form the SRC and it is pleasing to see the return of the RSAC Scottish Rally to the British Rally Championship, meaning there are now 2 rounds in Scotland with only 1 in Wales! Organisers of both championships have been involved in very constructive discussions with the RSAC resulting in a format acceptable to all.

A provisional calendar for 2013 is now on the SRC website and this year's awards ceremony takes place in Aberdeen on 1st December.

A recent upload of a 50 minute compilation of championship highlights to the iRally app and website, produced over 500,000 downloads! putting it in the top 5 for the year amongst WRC and IRC videos.

Following the Lindisfarne and Pendragon rallies in the north of England, the STRC moved to Mull in October where an excellent field of 111 cars started the first Mull rally under the guidance of Iain 'Scunner' Campbell. The event used a 'super rally' type system for the first time, allowing crews who retired to continue in the main event rather than in a trophy rally.

Incidents on SS8, Gribun and on the final stage when Euan Mackays 106 was destroyed by fire (without injury to crew) led to many crews receiving nominal times. Despite the typical Mull weather, (clearing beautifully for the ferry home on Sunday), the event was a success with Mull drivers Callum Duffy and John MacCrone taking 1st & 2nd. 72 cars finished, with 39 retirements.

Last weekend, another fine GMSC event at Crail (that's what Lock told me to say..) rounded off the Tarmac series with 77 crews enjoying Kingdom of Fife sunshine throughout. Alister Ingles took victory ahead of a close battle for 2nd with Ross Fernie clinching the STRC title in his Subaru. 50 cars finished.

The STRC is likely to consist of the same events for next season, beginning with the BECC event at Knockhill on 29th December. Organisers continue to look for alternative venues and although there are 2 possible openings, these remain some distance away.

The STRC Awards ceremony takes place in Perth on 24th November, details from Trix Grant.

Final round of the Junior 1000 Challenge took place at Kames in September, promoted by EACC, 14 Junior crews supplementing 9 cars in the main event. Weather conditions meant that 2 Junior drivers, Alexander Vassallo and Ryan Weston actually led the entire field after stage 1!

Blair McCulloch in his Nova eventually winning overall with Ryan Weston finishing very close to Vassallo after taking some stage wins during the day. The Junior 1000 awards will form part of the Ecosse Challenge ceremony at the SRC dinner in Aberdeen, with many crews and families attending the 'main event' allowing them to integrate more with those they wish to be beating in the near future! Graduate driver Blair Brown contested his first full rally at Crail and Ryan Weston should start the Snowman in February....look out! Many congratulations to Digby and his team on the success of this series, 14 competitors in the first year is fantastic.

The non championship Armstrong Galloway Hills rally was brought forward from its traditional December date to the first weekend that the 'Raiders Road' forest area is available, 28th October and hence probably suffered from being too close to the McRae.

The organisers took the brave decision to run, despite having only 38 entries and altered their route accordingly, without reducing the competitive mileage. Based in Castle Douglas and enthusiastically backed by Jock Armstrong and family, the event used only one stretch of forest road making for a very compact rally with the first car finished at 12.55, right on schedule. Jock himself took victory with 27 cars finishing and 11 retirements. The event was observed by members of the SRC Management Committee for possible inclusion in a future SRC.

The economic situation is beginning to bite and its effects are now more obvious, especially in forest rallying. Entry levels in the north may well hold up but it is worth noting that these rallies have very little competition, there are no 'single venue' type events north of Perth, whereas further south it is possible to go rallying almost every other weekend whether in Scotland or just over the border, especially in the autumn. Last weekend was a prime example, Kingdom Stages at Crail on Saturday, Cheviot at Otterburn on Sunday and an excellent gravel rally not too far away at Pickering also on Sunday. All 3 had reasonable entry levels but in general there are too many events chasing reduced expendable cash. Clubs should perhaps keep in mind that 'less may well equal more'.

Dave Robson.

5.11.12