

Robert's Rally Round-up

VICTOR IS RALLY MARSHAL OF THE YEAR

At the recent BMMC/BRMC (NI) Dinner Dance, Victor Lyness was named Rally Marshal of the Year 2009 and presented with the unique Richard Donaldson Award by Anne Donaldson. As you all are probably aware, Richard was a long time BRMC member who sadly passed away last January. In memory of this popular character, whom we all miss, his widow Anne presented the club with a framed Rally Ireland Timekeepers Tabard, which Bobby Willis got ALL the top competitors on the first round of the 2009 WRC to sign.

This was the first time the award has been presented, and it goes to a very worthy recipient in Victor. He is the man who kept me on the straight and narrow while trying to organising the timing on Rally Ireland and the Circuit. Quite literally Victor is my "right hand man" as he usually drives me round the stages to check that everyone is in place before the events start. Well done mate, it couldn't happen to a better man, Richard would have approved!

RallyBuzz

As **Seb Loeb** was back to winning form in Mexico last month on the WRC, our own local hero, **Kris Meeke** had the "best of times and the worst of times", a tale of two rallies indeed. He won for the second time in Brazil and then was forced out after a trying time on Rally Argentina. Kris now has an uphill task if he is to retain the IRC title this year, the Skoda Fabia S2000 (It filled the podium in Argentina) seems to be the car of choice over Meeke's now underdeveloped Peugeot 207, but there is still a long way to go before the season ends in November! **Check out RallyBuzz.com for all the latest news from the World of Rallying.**

WHERE WAS I LAST MONTH?

At just one event; **THE McGRADY INSURANCE BISHOPSCOURT STAGES RALLY (Round 2 Hankook N.I. Rally Championship)**

No surprises here, Derek McGarrity and James McKee brought out the ex. Boland S12B/C Subaru WRC and cleaned up yet again. Incredibly, it was the Glengormley man's SEVENTH VICTORY on the event since it started at the former Co.Down airfield back in 1993.

No one came close to McGarrity so it was left to George Robinson and Stuart Biggerstaff to fight for the runners up position, just as they had done on round one of the NI series at Kirkistown, only this time it was Biggerstaff who made a slight mistake, and dropped to third with just one of the six stages left. Still a good result for the young Dromara driver who now heads for the Circuit of Ireland this weekend and his first taste of closed roads and pacenotes. Denis has loaned him the S9 for the job, I can't see him getting the car back any time soon!

For our part at Bishopscourt it was the usual timekeeping duties; which saw John, Andrew and Neil cover one end (four starts and two finishes) while Victor, Goff and I did the other one. The weather was dry but cold and we had 94 starters and 75 finishers. Thanks to everyone for helping out.

LOOKING BACK

30 YEARS AGO..... APRIL 1980

Believe it or not, it's been 30 years since JIMMY McRAE took his first win on the Circuit of Ireland. It was a titanic battle between the Rothmans Ford Escort Mk.2 of ARI VATANEN and the new Vauxhall Chevette HSR of McRae. The fight lasted all FIVE DAYS and was only resolved when Ari rolled on the final leg. He still came back to Belfast in second place, but both cars bore battle scars and I remember parking my Escort Popular beside them as we marshalled in the final Pac Ferme at the Europa Hotel. Apart from McRae and Vatanen, the top ten also included Brookes, Coleman, Blomqvist, Salonen, Toivonen, Wilson and Clark. I had been timekeeping on stage one in Ormeau Park, my first Circuit job, what a baptism of fire, never thought I would still be at it thirty years down the line! Incidentally, Andrew Bushe, of RPM and Pacenotes fame, now owns the fully restored Chevette HSR that Jimmy drove in 1980 and intends to use it on historic events.

20 YEARS AGO.....APRIL 1990

The NI section of the BMRMC celebrated their tenth birthday in the Wellington Park Hotel in Belfast. Among the principle guests were National Chairman John Felix, ANICC President Ronnie Trouton and Ian Lynas, motorsport journalist. There were 70 guests and chairing proceedings was NI Chairman, Colin Rossborough. Many former and founder members were present, as well as several recent recruits including Patrick Cavan and Philip Bryans. We had 50 members on our books.

Rally Diary

THIS EASTER WEEKEND; SAT 3RD/SUN 4TH APRIL CIRCUIT OF IRELAND

As Chief Timekeeper I want to thank all club members in advance for helping out. No EUGENE DONNELLY this year, the money has run out, so should be a walk over for GARETH MacHALE in the Focus WRC. DEREK McGARRITY has entered as has TIM McNULTY but I can't see them as a big threat, unless MacHALE has problems, which is always possible. Very few World Rally Cars this year and only 43 have entered the INTERNATIONAL section of the rally.

KENNY McKINSTRY is top of the 50-odd competitors in the NATIONAL RALLY (N.I. Championship) and again he should walk it! DONAGH KELLY has entered Kevin Lynch's old Focus WRC and is second seed. Watch out for young Stuart Biggerstaff on his first big event. Interestingly, the NATIONALS get **extra stages** to make up for loosing out on mileage last year. They have two runs over Slieve Gullion IN THE DARK on Saturday night at 10pm!

The Rally starts in Dundalk at 12.30 Saturday and finishes in the centre of Newry at 16.40 on Sunday.

SAT.17TH APRIL MMP TRAINING DAY AT LOUGHRY COLLEGE, COOKSTOWN

Those of us who joined the MMP (Motorsport Marshalling Partnership) last year enjoyed this "hands on" training day. Jon Cordrey and Bob Wright were in attendance as MSA instructors.

SAT.1ST MAY BALLYCASTLE RALLY

Round two of the Pacenotes 2WD Rally Challenge. Mid Antrim MC run this tarmac event out of the Marine Hotel in Ballycastle and use the forest drives of Ballycastle and Ballypatrick. We have been asked to provide the timekeepers for Ballypatrick. Don't know times yet, so ring me if you are available.

MON.3RD MAY ST.ANGELLO MAY DAY RALLY

Organised by Enniskillen MC, I don't have any details about it but marshals will be made welcome. An early start though.

SAT.8TH MAY TOUR OF THE SPERRINS

Magherafelt MC will have three new road closed tarmac stages for this the fourth round of the Hankook N.I. Rally Championship. Patricia Laverty as Chief Timekeeper has asked for help, so I will be in touch as and when details are available.

NEXT WRC ROUNDS

1-3 APRIL JORDAN RALLY

16-18 APRIL RALLY TURKEY

7-9 MAY RALLY NEW ZEALAND

28-30 MAY RALLY PORTUGAL