Classic Adventure… Away they go to Monte Carlo

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GLASGOW TO MONTE CARLO… THEY ARE OFF ON THEIR WAY!

In typically wet Glasgow winter weather tonight a historic Mini from the Sixties led off a competitive field of classic cars at the UK start of the Monte Carlo Historique Rally.

Fifty-three years after its success in the 1967 Monte Carlo Rally, the actual Mini driven by rally legend Paddy Hopkirk was first off the ramp at the start of the Historique event in Glasgow's George Square.

The car with its classic LBL 666D registration plate has been restored back to its original

BMC Competition Department specification by Hamilton-based enthusiast Mike Hyrons who took it to Monte Carlo on the Historique event in 2017 – half a century after it finished 6th overall in Hopkirk's hands.

Tonight it was driven by Mike's co-driver then, Pat Haley with Mike's son Christopher, a former junior footballer with Aberdeen, sitting alongside.

A total of 80 cars had gathered in George Square over the afternoon. 13 of them will be doing the whole epic 1300-mile drive trip to the south of France, while the rest are taking part in a series of Heritage runs around Scotland.

The city is the only British start point of seven European cities including Athens, Milan and Barcelona. In recent years, Paisley and Clydebank have also featured as the only UK start locations but it's the third time Glasgow has taken on the role.

This year's start is the tenth since it returned to Scotland and is being supported by Glasgow Life, the charity that delivers cultural, sporting and learning activities on behalf of Glasgow City Council. Other support has come from Bridge of Weir Leather, Laurie Ross Insurance, Tayprint and Tunnocks.

Cars and crews will compete in three separate categories:

The Historique class is being run for the 23rd year and is restricted to car models which competed in the Monte Carlo Rallies between 1955 and 1980. It runs over eight days on open public roads with the cars and crews undertaking a series of fourteen demanding test stages in the mountains of southern France.

The Classique event is for older cars from as early as 1911 to 1965 and follows the same route to Monte Carlo but does not include any test stages, the goal simply being to finish in Monte Carlo after checking in at a series of control points on the way.

Among the entries is Dundee GP Colin Levin who will be driving his late father's 1961

Austin A40, 25 years after he competed in the Monte in the same car. His co-driver should have been brother Richard but he broke his foot a few days ago and Colin managed to recruit a valuable friend, Fergus Millar as a last-minute replacement for the passenger seat.

Said Colin: “It’s a great tribute to Dad to attempt the Monte in his car with the added bonus of leaving from Glasgow where he lived for 83 years.”

Ian Glass from Denbeigh and co-driver Ray Jones from Skye are old hands at the event. Ian is once again in his 1953 Ford Popular – nicknamed the Flying Tortoise – and has taken part in every one of the Classique Scottish starts and has raised thousands of pounds for charity. The car has been rebuilt for this year’s event.

The popular Heritage Runs link with the full-scale events and take in a series of short classic routes in Scotland including starts from John O’ Groats and Aberdeen. Fourteen crews started on Monday from the northernmost landmark.

Before the cars set off the crowds were allowed a close-up view of the cars and the chance to chat to the crews along with lively entertainment from among others, singing trio the Vintage Girls, in appropriate Sixties outfits.

Bailie John Kane of Glasgow City Council said: “The start of the Monte Carlo Rally will be an occasion to remember when owners and enthusiasts bring their treasured vehicles to Glasgow to set off on this epic adventure. There are sure to be some of the greatest automobiles ever made at the start line which spectators will be able to see up close. I’m looking forward to welcoming the teams and their vehicles to the city and waving them off this week. ”

Event Director Douglas Anderson said: “Glasgow is one of Europe’s great cities and everyone involved in the organisation of this event is delighted to be back here for the 2020 start. Once again it will raise the profile of the city to an international audience and I’m sure the competitors’ send-off from George Square will be an occasion never to be forgotten. The Monte belongs to Glasgow”.

More information can be found at www.monte.scot