Preview – 2018 Rally Run to Monte Carlo for Classics…

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Pictured Alan Stark and Driver Sandy McEwan in a 1971 Porsche, Douglas Anderson, the UK Co-ordinator with his 1961 Triumph Herald, Tony Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive St Mirren Football Club and Rally Driver Iain MacDonald from Kilmacolm in a 1967 Saab 96, with Renfrewshire Provost Lorraine Cameron.
Image © Gibson Digital 2017.

A great line-up of classic cars will be setting off from Paisley for Monte Carlo on 31st January…

Final preparations are being made for the Paisley start of the 2018 historic rally run to

Monte Carlo… and it's been confirmed there will be the largest number of entries so far with a total of 25 cars setting off for the 1,500 mile trip to the South of France.

It'll be the fifth time the town – the sole shortlisted Scottish entry for the title UK City of Culture 2021 – will be the only British start point of six European cities.

Close to a hundred cars in total are expected to leave the start ramp outside Paisley Abbey at 6pm on Wednesday January 31st in three separate categories.

The Historique class is being run for the 21st year and is restricted to car models which competed in the Monte Carlo Rallies between 1955 and 1980. It will run over eight days on open public roads with the cars and crews having undertaken 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 1969 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, including Dumfries in the south of Scotland, Barnby Moor in Nottinghamshire and Banbury in Oxfordshire.

Once again the event will feature the popular Monte Heritage Runs which will follow on from the full-scale events and motoring enthusiasts in a range of interesting cars from over the years will take in a series of short classic routes in Scotland, including Aberdeen, Dumfries and Stirling.

In January this year a crowd of around 10,000 gathered in the centre of Paisley with the magnificent backdrop of the Abbey to wave off the crews in a party atmosphere with lights, music, street food and fireworks….. and working with staff from Renfrewshire Council and volunteers from many motorsport clubs in Scotland, the organisers are confident of making the start even bigger and better next year.

At this week's official launch of the 2018 event at St Mirren Football Club's ground, the Paisley 2021 Stadium, Renfrewshire's Provost Lorraine Cameron said: "We are delighted to

welcome the only UK start leg of this prestigious international event back to Paisley for another year – and it's great to have the support of St Mirren.

The cars are always a really popular spectacle which draw a big crowd into the town centre and I am looking forward to waving them off on the night as they head to Monte-Carlo.

By the time the event rolls around we will know if Paisley has been successful in its bid to be UK City of Culture 2021 – events like this one are a huge part of our plans to bring visitors into Paisley and boost the local economy."

St Mirren chief executive Tony Fitzpatrick added: "Paisley means everything to St Mirren, so we support anything which helps put the town on the map – and Paisley's bid to be UK City of Culture 2021 and this event both certainly do that.

We enjoyed welcoming the cars to the Paisley 2021 Stadium and I'm sure they will generate another great turnout in the town centre."

Douglas Anderson, the UK co-ordinator and the man responsible for bringing the Monte back to Scotland in 2011, will be leading the cars off to Monte Carlo in his 1961 Triumph Herald Coupé.

He said: "The Paisley Abbey Start of the Monte Carlo Rally is acknowledged to be the best of all the Rally Starts, with thousands of Paisley buddies cheering the cars and crews on their way to the snowy Alps and on to the sunshine in Monte Carlo."

Among the entrants who'll be heading for Monte Carlo in the Historique Class is Iain MacDonald of Kilmacolm, along with Swedish co-driver Patrick Toorell, in his 1967 Saab 96.

He's looking forward to the adventure: "I competed in rallies in the Sixties and Seventies around the UK and more recently in Scandinavia but the Monte has got to be the ultimate and it'll be a challenge in our 50 year old Saab. It'll be interesting to set off from Paisley Abbey. I was married there in 1972."

Also taking part in the Historiques is Sandy McEwen and Alan Stark in a rare 1971 Porsche 914/6 which Sandy has bought specially for the event. Although Sandy has more than 45 years of experience in motorsport including driving single-seaters, GTs, saloons and historics, he describes himself as “a rallying newbie”.

One of the crews in the Classique Class is Albert De May and co-driver Roland De Bargigli from Belgium. They’ll be driving their 1936 Chevrolet Coupe and had originally planned to set off from Lisbon but when that start point was cancelled they opted instead for Paisley.

“I love the UK and especially Scotland so it’s all worked out well. The Paisley start point also gives us the opportunity to travel through more attractive routes”, said Albert.

All the competing cars will assemble from around 4pm in the precincts of Paisley Abbey on the evening of Wednesday January 31st, before setting off at 6pm for the long drive south.

More information can be found at www.monte.scot

Pictured Renfrewshire Provost Lorraine Cameron in a 1967 Saab 96.
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