

SOL RALLY BARBADOS

WORDS :: ROBIN BRADFORD // IMAGES :: BARBADOS RALLY CLUB



BIRD LEADS RECORD WRC ENTRY TO SOL RALLY BARBADOS

Former UK National Rally Champion Paul Bird will face the largest field of world rally cars ever assembled in the Caribbean when he returns to the region to defend his title in Sol Rally Barbados 2013 (June 1/2). Thirteen cars, up from the previous record of 11, are entered in the WRC classes on the provisional entry list of 98 crews, which includes a record-breaking contingent from Ireland.

Bird's Ford Focus WRC08 arrived in the island in the cargo hold of a Virgin Atlantic Boeing 747 a few days before Scotiabank King of the Hill at the end of May 26, Bird hoping to win both events, as he did last year, when he described the experience as, "the hardest and probably the best I've ever driven since I started rallying."

Sol is also sponsoring 12-time winner of the island's premier event Roger "The Sheriff" Skeete's Subaru Impreza WRC S12 for a second season and has welcomed Neil Armstrong to the team, driving the rebranded Suzuki SX4 WRC. Both can be expected to be at the sharp end of the battle for supremacy, along with RB03 and 2007 winner

Paul 'Surfer' Bourne (Focus WRC07), who won the first three events of the local season.

In addition to Bird, the overseas entry includes Jamaica's Jeff Panton (Focus WRC06), the first winner from the wider Caribbean, in 1998, and third last year, former UK national champions Steve Perez (Focus WRC07) and Roger Duckworth (Impreza WRC S6), plus regular visitor Rob Swann in his UK-spec B13 Impreza, who finished fourth, sixth and seventh respectively in Sol RB12.

There are 62 international drivers or co-drivers entered, one short of last year's record number, 22 of whom are new to the event. The Rally to Barbados promotional campaign run in association with the Tourism Development Corporation (TDC) has again proved it's worth, with the largest influx of newcomers being from Ireland, although three of the six first-time drivers are in fact expat Irish based in New York.

The New Yorkers – Enda McCormack, Michael O'Leary and Danny O'Brien - were inspired to travel by the tales told by Martin Donnelly, who had made his first trip to the event last year. Back home in Ireland, Joe McQuillan and Glenn Campbell, another keen advocate of the event, arranged for ten of the 14 cars with Irish connections to make their way to Portsmouth for shipping out on one transporter . . . a fantastic boost to the event.

Here, we have a look at the Irish entries . . . go to www.rallybarbados.bb over rally weekend

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for updates, you can also listen to live commentary of www.rallyfm.net, also on the iRally app for your smart phones and tablets . . . as the principal commentator in Barbados, Robin Bradford, would doubtless put it, "Keep taking the tablets."

**EDDIE POWER – IRL/
MICHAEL MORRISSEY – IRL**
(WRC-2 Eddie Power JCB Hire Toyota Corolla WRC)

A class champion in the Dunlop Irish National Rally Championship in 2005, Power's Toyota Corolla WRC is a sister car to that campaigned in recent years by Barbados Toyota dealer Roger Hill, both among the last cars built. While Power has only been rallying since 2000, co-driver Michael Morrissey's career stretches back to the 1960s, since then he has won a number of titles, including two Irish National Championships and the Group N crown in the Middle East. Power's son Keith is also making the trip, running his Clio in Modified 6. ➔

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Darren McCague will return with the Corolla in which his flamboyant driving style earned respect from island fans...

**JOE MCQUILLAN – NIR/
ANNETTE DALY – IRL**
(Group A M & M McNally/Masstock/
Masserene Park Farms Mitsubishi
Lancer Evo VII)

County Antrim farmer McQuillan, who has been rallying since the late 1990s and has won the Mid Antrim Motor Club Championship twice, returns with the Lancer in which he finished 40th overall and third in Modified 8-A last year. For Sol RB13, the car boasts a new livery and a new co-driver, McQuillan's partner Annette Daly. Since Sol RB12, the Lancer, which started life as a Group N car, has been on a diet, alongside a development programme, as McQuillan, aka 'The Big Man', explains, "Since Barbados, we have taken the car to three rally events, finished second overall twice and looked like we would win the third, until we had gearbox failure and a DNF!"

**MARTIN DONNELLY – IRL/
BRIAN DOCHERTY – IRL**
(Group N Eire Concrete Inc Mitsubishi
Lancer Evo IX)

New York-based Donnelly, who is making his second visit, started his competition career in the mid-1990s driving a Ford Mustang. He's been a regular competitor on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and twice won the Atlantic Rally Cup in the United States. Champion in 2008 & '09, he has been a regular podium finisher on events in Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee and won the Black River Stages in up-state New York three years in a row. In Sol RB12,

with co-driver Colin Fitzgerald in the Lancer, Donnelly finished an impressive 22nd overall all and second in Group N. For Sol RB13, Fitzgerald is unavailable, so his co-driver will be fellow-Irishman Brian Docherty.

**MICHAEL O'LEARY – IRL/
JOHN O'LEARY – IRL**
(GpN O'Leary Construction/Feldman
Lumber Inc Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X)

The O'Learys are unique among the New York Irish contingent in shipping their regular US-based car to Barbados 2006, rather than something from Ireland. Mike started rallying in 2006 in a Lancer, winning the Eastern States Rally Championship in 2007 and, more recently, winning Rally America 2012 in his John Buffum-built Lancer. John's rallying career dates back to 1980, back home in Ireland.

**GLENN CAMPBELL – NIR/
SARAH WHELAN – IRL**
(SuperModified 11 Motorcare/Trevor
Moore Motors/lanFleckSigns.com/
DMH Automotive/RallyForums.com
Nissan
Micra Kit Car)

This is Campbell's fifth visit and one he hopes will eventually result in a class win. He has twice finished second in Modified 5, in 2009 & 11, and this year pits his Nissan Micra Kit Car against a mixture of local and international entries. He has a new co-driver for 2013, Sarah Whelan, the latest member of a rally-centric Irish family to win a title, in her case champion co-driver of the 2012 Galway Motor Club.

**RAYMOND CONLON – IRL/
DARREN MCCAGUE – IRL**
(SM10 Palm Garden Hotel Barbados/
Banks Beer/Skelton Travel/Clones
Shavings Scanbitz/Gribben Plumbing/
Conlon Travel Toyota Corolla)

Conlon had entered some months ago, but issues with sponsorship caused him to withdraw, a late change of heart, however, means he and co-driver Darren McCague will return with the Corolla in which



Martin Donnelly

his flamboyant driving style earned respect from island fans on his way to 30th overall and fourth in the hyper-competitive super modified 10 classification last year. In the early part of this year, Conlon has done three rallies in Ireland, finishing sixth overall on both the Donegal Mini Stages and the Mayo Stages. Of his preparations for Barbados this year he says, "Since last year, I've made a few changes to the car so, hopefully, I will go better in RB13."

**ALLAN MACKAY – SCO/
MO DOWNEY – NIR**
(SM10 Avanti Environmental/
Highland Waste Services/Mark Greer
Motorsport/Mountune Ford Anglia
WRC)

**EUAN MACKAY – SCO/
CALUM MACLEOD – SCO**
(SM10 Mark Greer Motorsport/
Advantec Aberdeen/Highland Waste
Services/Ford Anglia JWRC)

Despite a combined age of more than 100, the two Anglia 105Es are among the most lively on the rally scene and promise more than enough sideways action to keep fans entertained. Mackay Senior won the hearts of the crowd on his first visit in 2010, despite retiring with bent steering. The former Scottish Tarmac Champion finished 29th overall in 2011, fourth in SM10, then 49th in Sol RB12, slipping a few places down the order in SM10. Once again, his co-driver will be 'Mad Mo' Downey.

Owner of the Anglia WRC – the initials stand for Well-Run Car – since he was 14-years-old, Allan

gave another as a shell to his son one birthday. Euan explains, "I started navigating in the Anglia WRC for my Dad when I was 16, but soon got bored and wanted at the controls. I started doing sprints in the WRC, then got a Vauxhall Nova before me and my friends built my own Anglia and a Peugeot 106 Cup car from scratch."

The Peugeot, called 'Snowball', was driven to many class wins in Scotland, including on a single-venue event last year, the Crail Summer Stages with Rory Fraser, who had never navigated before – we were 11th overall and won our class. Sadly, 'Snowball' became a fireball a few months later, when Mackay rolled end-over-end on the last stage of the Mull Rally in October, the car burned out completely. Like the Anglia WRC, Euan's car is run by Mark Greer Motorsport in Ireland. Mackay Junior's co-driver will be fellow Scot Calum Macleod.

**ENDA MCCORMACK – IRL/
KIERAN MCELHINNEY – IRL**
(SM10 McCormack Contracting Inc
Ford Escort MkII)

McCormack's Ford Escort Mk2 was built new for Sol RB13 by Philip Case Rallysport. Driving a Lancer, he won class 15 for modified four-wheel-drive cars on his first attempt at the Dunlop Irish National Tarmac Rally in 2012, with only one non-finish. Most of his rallying has been on the other side of the Atlantic, however, as he is based in New York. A regular podium finisher in the United States Rally Championship since 2007, also

Michael O'Leary



Glenn Campbell



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Doyle has earned a reputation as something of a giant-killer...

in a Lancer, he finished third in the 2010 USRC all-wheel-drive class, his best result was second in that year's New York Winter Rally, with Tommy Doyle as co-driver. In Barbados, his co-driver will be Donegal's Kieran McElhinney.

TOMMY DOYLE – IRL/ LIAM MOYNIHAN – IRL (M7 McCormack Contracting Inc Renault Clio R3)

Doyle comes from the same town as McCormack, Longford, and they are close family friends. As well as occasionally co-driving for McCormack, Doyle has also driven the Evo – he won Rally New York USA in 2011 and finished fourth in this year's Circuit of Munster Stages in Ireland, on both occasions, his co-driver was Liam Moynihan from Millstreet, who travels with him to Barbados. In recent years, Doyle has earned a reputation as something of a giant-killer, in front-wheel-drive Renault Clio and Citroen DS3 R3 cars, claiming regular top ten finishes on tarmac, often with a string of four-wheel-drive cars in his wake. He was a finalist in the 2011 Pirelli UK Star Driver shoot-out.

DANNY O'BRIEN – IRL/ BARRY MCNULTY – IRL (M6 Midtown Concrete Toyota Starlet)

O'Brien's involvement is poignant, as he is competing to honour the memory of a fellow member of the New York Irish rallying community, Celsus 'Charlie' Donnelly, who posted an on-line entry for Sol RB13 last November, only days before he died. Co-driver McNulty is a multiple Irish and British title-winner – he was British Rally Champion

in 2010, with Keith Cronin – who explains more, "A few days before his sudden passing, Charlie had signalled his intent to do Rally Barbados and told the lads how excited he was! Danny thought it would be a fitting tribute to buy the car and do the event in his memory... and the car carries the legend 'Going sideways for Charlie.'" Born in County Cork, O'Brien emigrated to the United States in 1983 and began rallying 12 years ago, since then he has won the USA National Rally Championship three times, competing against Donnelly regularly.

KEITH POWER – IRL/ JONATHAN MCGRATH – IRL (M6 Power Groundworks Renault Clio)

Power Junior's first rallying experience was as a co-driver in 1998, before he switched to driving in a Toyota Corolla. He was the inaugural winner of the junior class in the Galway Rally in 2005, won the 1600 class in the Southern 4 Championship the following year, then the S1600 class in the national championship in 2007, by which time he was driving a Ford Puma. More recently, he was the overall two-wheel-drive champion in the 2010 Southern 4 Championship and won the Carlow Motor Club Rallsprint in 2011. For Sol RB13, Keith will be driving his factory-built Renault Clio S1600, with co-driver Jonathan McGrath, twice winner of the S1600 class in the Irish championship.

JOHN HARDMAN – NIR/ VISHAL DHANRAJ – TRI (M5 John Hardman Engineering/ Chicken Pen Racing/PEC Tyres Nissan Micra)

Born in Northern Ireland, but is based in Wales - Hardman will clock up his sixth appearance, this time in the Nissan Micra campaigned in Barbados last year by Stuart Deeley with Trinidad's Vishal Dhanraj as co-driver. Hardman won group B on his debut in RB04 in his unusual self-built four-wheel-drive Ford Fiesta, but has had mixed results since. He has developed many long-term relationships with island



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competitors, however, not least those who compete under the wing of Chicken Pen Racing, Norman Catwell's rallying collective, which has encouraged and helped a number of newcomers into the sport in recent years.

PETER GALLAGHER – IRL/ RENE FORD (Clubman Dublin Crystal/Greenspeed R & D/Sam Andrew Jewellers Peugeot 206)

Now on his eighth trip to Barbados, Gallagher's early visits were as co-driver to long-term Irish rallying buddy, Martin Taylor - they finished 37th overall and won production two in 2004, after which Gallagher drove a variety of Peugeots, claiming another class win, in P3, in a 306 in

2008. Last year, he took the Talbot Samba in which he won class and overall Group A titles in the Irish National Championship in the 1980s out of storage, where it had lain since 1997, but this year reverts to the 'Pug' in which he finished 39th overall and fifth in M6 in 2010, he will have local co-driver Rene Forde on the notes.

MAURICE MOFFETT – IRL/ JASON MCKENNA – IRL (Group B Maurice Moffett Ltd/Premier Welding Products/Haughey Metals/ The Squealing Pig/MS Motorsport Toyota Starlet)

Moffett's 325bhp Millington Diamond-engined car has carried him to two National class titles, in 2006 and 2008, plus a number of individual class wins, including the 2009 Donegal International, with his previous Toyota Corolla, he was a class winner in the International Tarmac Championship in 1988. Perhaps his most memorable victory came on the Midlands Moto Stages in 2009, when he arrived at the finish on a tow rope, with fellow competitors - among them double Sol RB winner Kris Meeke - sat in and on the back to balance it up. Moffett's co-driver that day, Jason 'Wee Pete' McKenna, has sat with him since 2002 and will be making the trip to Barbados... but, not just to go rallying. He married Cheryl early in May and Sol RB13 is their honeymoon!



Maurice Moffett



Danny O'Brien