



The Irish Connection...



MARTIN TAYLOR - ZERO DUTIES ON THE CIRCUIT OF IRELAND

As we reported last month, Sol Rally Barbados 2012 (June 9/10) looks set to be the most closely-fought in the 23-year history of the Barbados Rally Club's (BRC) premier event...and Pacenotes Rally Magazine is proud to have been involved with the Caribbean's biggest annual motor sport international over the past couple of years...

As we publish our 100th edition, we can report that no fewer than 11 crews (a record) with Irish connections are entered for this year's event on the 166-square mile tropical island; better than that, of the 12 International crews who will be tackling those tricky island

stages for the first time, six are from Ireland, bringing to 41 the number of drivers or co-drivers who have made the journey from one island to the other...and we'd like to think we can take just a little bit of credit for that!

While newcomers are always welcomed, one of the mainstays of Sol Rally Barbados, just like the island's vital tourism industry, is its repeat business. Over the past decade or so, more than a dozen competitors have returned to compete six or more times, including Dublin Crystal boss Martin Taylor and jewellery designer Peter Gallagher, road rallying friends from the 1970s, who are paying their seventh visit to the island this year.

International All-Stage Rally that same year. So, we're looking at nearly two decades of the Irish-Bajan motor sport connection!

Taylor and Gallagher first heard of Rally Barbados through Motoring News in 2003, by chance the same year Pacenotes Rally Magazine was launched! Having cut their teeth on road rallies in the '70s, Taylor in an Escort and Gallagher in a BMW 2002, they moved on to tarmac stage rallies and some forestry stuff – while Taylor retained the Escort, Gallagher had moved on to a Talbot Samba...which is where this story turns full circle. (That's the very same car Gallagher is taking to Barbados this year.)

After Irish National championship events, they



GALLAGHER WILL BRING THIS CAR TO BARBADOS THIS YEAR

The rally was long, hot...and different. But the people and the welcome had us hooked!

But, before we hear from them, a quick factoid: in 1993, the then Vice-Chairman of the BRC, Andrew Phillips, was staying in Ireland with old friend Gabriel Konig – he had raced against her in Barbados in the 1970s – and met legendary television producer 'Plum' Tyndall. Out of that association, Kenny McKinstry and Robbie Philpott arrived in Barbados and won what was then known as the

eventually moved on to the Circuit of Ireland...another full circle, as they spent Easter weekend this year acting as a Zero Car on the 'Circuit' for the seventh time, in Taylor's Proton Satria, which they first used together to compete on the London to Athens World Cup Rally in 2002. Oh, and Dublin Crystal supplied the trophies, too.

As Taylor explains: "That was an amazing 12-day rally right down



MRS. TAYLOR RECEIVES TUITION!



BAJAN TIME...



PETER GALLAGHER IN ACTION WITH HIS SAMBA

through the Balkans, and began our taste for rally travel. The 2003 Barbados gig sounded good, so we sought the advice of former winner, Kenny McKinstry, who said go! We took the women with us, and had a ball.

"The rally was long, hot...and different. But the people and the welcome had us hooked! There were five Irish crews competing that year. When we went back the following year, we had a better idea of how to handle local driving conditions. The islanders love to try and scare the foreigners with tales of zero grip and whatever!"

In 2005, Taylor and Gallagher started running as Car 00 on the Circuit and twice even ran as Car 0, which really put the pressure on! As Taylor remembers: "Try running a 1600 Proton in front of WRC Subaru!" When they ran on the 2012 event, they were carrying Sol Rally Barbados 2012 ID on the car, promoting the marshals prize draw and acting as ambassadors for the event.

On their third trip to the Caribbean, Taylor and Gallagher had split up. Well, they took a car each, Taylor co-driven in the Proton by fiancée (now wife) Janet, while Gallagher had local navigator Dario Hoyte in his Peugeot 306. Taylor remembers that trip as

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- Martin Taylor

a success: "Janet and I finished second in P2, and got a beautiful 50th Anniversary cup for our efforts. Needless to say, she enjoyed the craic and the beauty of the island and friendliness of the people so much, that she was now hooked." Result, Martin!

The following year was the

first of two in which Ulster's Kris Meeke won Sol Rally Barbados, matching McKinstry's two wins from the 1990s – they remain the only winners from outside the Caribbean – during which he somehow found time to give Mrs Taylor some driving tuition.

Husband's recollections of 2008 are these: "Her catch phrase for a while after was, "well, Kris says...!" Peter and Janet were also now becoming well-known guest singers at the Karaoke nights in the Gap bar. We took some time off from rallying activities to explore the delights of the island. We have made many friends, both locals and other competitors and always look forward to meeting up again at the event."

The recession – and a new knee – has slowed Taylor down a little over the past couple of years, but all is good again. For



TOP 10 Tropical Tips

Rallying in the tropics is - how shall we put this? - err, different! Thoughts to be considered by first-timers include the following:

- 1 It's hot in Barbados:** arrive before Shell V-Power King of the Hill to allow time to acclimatize to the weather
- 2 Spares:** work out what you might need before shipping, especially if your car is not sold in the island; speak to locals with similar machinery to help sourcing parts
- 3 It's hot in Barbados:** cars tend to run hotter but also slightly richer, thanks to hot, humid (less dense) air coming through the intake. Make sure your cooling fans are running properly!
- 4 Scrutineering:** download a copy of the scrutineering list, also check the ASRs for documentation and safety requirements, including stuff like disabling door locks, padding on roll cages
- 5 It's hot in Barbados:** tinting windows is a good idea, but ventilation is more important, you must get air in and out of car; some competitors invest in cool suits
- 6 Recce:** check out both the stages and the transits, so you know where you could do emergency service...or simply how to get around traffic jams
- 7 It's hot in Barbados:** crews need to drink lots of water before the rally starts
- 8 Grip:** while this is a tarmac rally, do not expect tarmac levels of grip. The road surface catches everyone out; bring a selection of tyres - it can rain cats and dogs, or be completely dry...oh, and all within the space of a couple of hundred metres!
- 9 It's hot in Barbados:** some older cars may need bigger radiators, engine cooling is always a problem.
- 10 Service:** bring some mates to help (and have a holiday). Technical assistance in the island is abundant but there's no replacement for extra hands.

Oh, and did we mention that it's hot in Barbados - you'll need a cooler to keep the Banks beer at a drinkable temperature and to provide ice for your rum and ginger!

Thanks to scrutineers Simon Gillmore and Adrian Linton for their expert advice!



Class Action

Sol Rally Barbados has 16 classes, eight of which include entries with Irish connections, sadly not including Modified 8-WRC, almost certain to produce the outright winner: the only drivers from outside the Caribbean to have won the Barbados Rally Club's premier event are Ulster's Kenny McKinstry (1993 & '96) and Kris Meeke (2008-'09).

The island's technical regulations are close to those of the FIA – M8-A and Production 4 are aligned to Groups A and N respectively, for instance – but the SuperModified classes (based on a cc-to-weight ratio) give free reign to the remarkable mechanical ingenuity that is rife in the island. What was formerly a single class known as Open Modified, which mustered around 15 competitors in its last season in 2006, is now split into three capacity classes that mirror the Group A structure, with numbers more than doubled.

Subject to any last-minute changes (this was written a month before European entries were due to ship to Barbados), these are the members of the Irish Invasion force:

Modified 8 -A - Joe McQuillan – IRL/tba (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VII)

Production 4 - Martin Donnelly – IRL/Colin Fitzgerald – IRL (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX)

SuperModified 11 - Ronan Curley – IRL/John McKinley – IRL (Ford Escort RS); John Hardman – NIR/Sean Buckley – ENG (Ford Escort MkII)

SuperModified 10 - Raymond Conlon – IRL/Darren McCague – IRL (Toyota Corolla); Conor McMeel – NIR/Sean Devlin – NIR (Ford Escort MkII)

SuperModified 9 - Matthew Shinnors – IRL/Catherine Levis – IRL (Ford Escort MkII)

Modified 7 - Allan Mackay – SCO/Mo Downey – NIR (Ford Anglia WRC)

Modified 5 - Glenn Campbell – NIR/tba (Nissan Micra Kit Car); Peter Gallagher – IRL/tba (Talbot Samba)

Production 2 - Martin Taylor – IRL/Eddie Taylor – IRL (Proton Satria)



ALLAN MACKAY



SIMON WALLIS

JUST SOME OF OUR LOCALS HEADING FOR BARBADOS

2012, he is taking the Proton to Barbados, once re-fettled after its Circuit duties, this time with son Eddie. As Taylor puts it: "Eddie's on the notes, Janet's on the beach! It's become a family occasion now, as it has for so many other competitors."

The Group A Talbot Samba that Gallagher will drive in Barbados this year was built by Ravic in the mid-1980s...and he has owned it since then! He won class and overall Group A titles in the Irish National Championship, also once collected a cheque for £250 as A5 winner on the Cork 20 International.

"It was a princely sum at the time, so I promptly cashed it at the bar and bought drinks all round. We all had a great time - there are still people in Cork who remember me, but can't quite place why!"

He also finished second in class on the Circuit, when the car performed faultlessly – "better than the driver," as Gallagher puts it, after an 'off' on the last stage and a complicated change of a punctured tyre cost valuable time. The opposition had also had their woes, however, so second in class was theirs. He retired the car after the Donegal International in 1997

and it has been in storage since.

Gallagher says: "It has been up on axle stands and hasn't turned a wheel until a recent test day in preparation for Sol Rally Barbados, so it is like a time warp machine - unsullied by modern conveniences like ECU and so forth."

Confirming Taylor's assessment of the Barbados 'craic', Gallagher says: "I would just like to add that I have always had a fantastic time in Barbados. I have made wonderful friends, and am always keen to return to your 'Jewel of the Caribbean'."



TOM ROBERTS



MARTIN DONNELLY



STEVE PEREZ IS A BARBADOS REGULAR