

Rally ready to hit the road at Myerscough

By **Phil James**

tango@blackpoolgazette.co.uk
@The_Gazette

The Legend Fires North West Stages will make rallying history this year as the event moves inland to a new base in Wyre.

The 2019 Legend Fires North West Stages, in partnership with Simpsons Skoda, was launched at Myerscough College, near Garstang, which is to be the event's new headquarters.

The rally, to be held on Saturday, March 23, will be the first in the north of England to make use of changes to the Road Traffic Act, which allow motorsport events to be staged on what are usually public high-ways.

The rally will comprise 12 special stages and 50 stage miles, with 35 of those stage miles on country lanes in Wyre, which will be closed for the duration of the rally.

Myerscough College's Motorsport Centre will host the pre-event scrutineering and central service area, an ideal central location with stages taking place to the east and west of the venue.

In previous years the rally has taken place largely on the Blackpool and Fleetwood seafront, with a base at Norcalympia. The hope is that the rally, now taking place entirely on one day, will attract

around 5,000 spectators.

Event director Dave Read said: "We have worked closely with Wyre Council, having previously run special stages on the council-owned Fleetwood Waterfront.

"We are confident the rally will bring significant levels of income to the area at what is a relatively quiet time in tourism terms."

Myerscough is delighted to serve as host for the groundbreaking rally.

Head of Motorsport Belinda Oldham said: "The college is looking forward to welcoming over 100 competitors to our beautiful campus.

"The organising committee worked tremendously hard to get to this point, and with the combination

of closed roads and private venues it should be a fantastic event for both competitors and spectators."

Myerscough HE Motorsport tutor Simon Moss added: "Occasions

like this give the students crucial real life experience working alongside potential employers.

"The students will get to experience at first hand a major event and that looks great on their CV when they apply for jobs within the industry."

Guests at the launch were given the opportunity to sit alongside one of nine north-west drivers in attendance as they tackled a short special stage set up within the college grounds.



Drivers converge on Myerscough College for the launch of the 2019 Legend Fires North West Stages
Pictures: www.pro-rally.co.uk

John Stone, managing director of the Blackburn-based event sponsors Legend Fires, brought his Ford Fiesta WRC.

Preesall's Neil Wearden, once a regular competitor in the World Rally Championship, brought his new Hyundai i20 1.6L 2WD.

Also in attendance were their fellow Blackpool South

Shore Motor Club members Simon Bowen and Mark Holmes.

Bowen, from Hambleton, won the rally in 2016 in his ex-Petter Solberg Subaru Impreza WRC.

He said: "I'm really looking forward to it – it will be like rallying in my back garden!"

Fleetwood Auto Engineer Holmes, who is most often

seen competing in forest rallies at the wheel of his Ford Escort Mk1, will contest the event in his iconic MG Metro 6R4.

Garstang teenager Rob Cotton, the 2018 UK Young Rally Driver of the Year, hopes to compete in the Toyota iQ, in which he finished third in last year's Formula 1000 Junior Rally Championship.



Seasoned centre Chris Briers

Praise for Briers on milestone at Fylde

Fylde RFC's most experienced player, centre Chris Briers, made his landmark 200th appearance for the club in Saturday's win at Macclesfield.

The centre, who captained the club from 2015-2017, had spells with Sale Sharks, Orrell, Sedgley Tigers, Rotherham Titans and Doncaster Knights before joining Fylde ahead of their first National One campaign in 2011.

The 35-year-old, who has scored 59 tries for the Woodlands club, has made 385 Premiership, Championship and National League appearances for his six clubs, also playing representative rugby for Lancashire and England Counties.

Having taught at AKS since 2011, Briers this week begins a new career chapter as lecturer in rugby and sport at Myerscough College.

Briers said: "It's a huge honour to make so many appearances for the club. I'm not one for looking at stats and tables when I'm still fully involved – I prefer to enjoy what's happening at the moment. Maybe when I retire I'll look back and appreciate the achievement a little more."

Fylde head coach Warren Spragg said: "Briersy has been a key part of the Fylde team for seven and a half seasons and has been extremely influential as a player and character.

"Reaching 200 games is something he should be proud of, and all of us involved with the club should also recognise that we have been very fortunate to have had such a high-quality player running out for us for so many seasons.

"He could certainly keep on performing at this level for a few more years due to his excellent fitness, game understanding and competitive nature.

"We just need to convince his lovely wife Jodie that there's nothing better than taking Teddy and Franklin to Fylde to watch their dad play on Saturday afternoons!"

