

FROM CAMERA TO CAR

A familiar sight at the Catlins Coast Rally over the last few years has been Dave Loudon of Dave Loudon Photography capturing photos of the rally action. However when the 2017 Catlins Rally takes place on Saturday 12 August Loudon is more likely to be the subject of others photographs as he makes a return to motorsport competition after a lengthy break.

Loudon, of Invercargill, will debut his new rally car, a Triumph 2500 at the event. The car was purchased on Trade Me over a year ago and Loudon looked at using it as a road car but then decided to hook back into Classic Rallying so spent the best part of twelve months building the car as close as possible to a works replica. Originally the car was to debut at Rally Otago earlier in the year but Loudon decided to delay the debut until Catlins.

Loudon has received funding from the Paddon Foundation, designed to assist aspiring competitors at all levels, to pay his entry fees for the event and says, "I am very fortunate to have received that support."

Loudon has never driven at Catlins before but says he knows some parts of the the stages reasonably well having covered both the Catlins Rally and the Silver Fern Rally in the Catlins area as a photographer.

While this is his first competition outing for many years he has a strong background in motorsport. "I started out in Dunedin. I kicked off in 1977 as a co-driver originally. I got sick of that so I shifted to the other side of the car and did a lot of rallying until 1984, the last time I did a rally. I competed in a Mini, Datsun's, Mazda's and an Escort. I did some of the Wyndham, Gore and Otautau Rally's in that period. In 1998 I did a couple of gravel hillclimbs around the Marlborough region in an ex-works Morris Marina Coupe. I also did some circuit races and other events in the mid 2000's as well."

Highlights for Dave include a second place in a national event in Marlborough and winning the Otago Sports Car Club's Lupp Trophy. "There have been one or two accidents too," he points out. "In one my co-driver saw power poles going straight ahead in front of us so we powered on. Unfortunately they actually crossed a paddock. I remember saying this is going to hurt as we went end over end. We were both K'Od on that occasion."

However the goal for Catlins in a new car is to take it quietly in the hope of delivering a finish for the Triumph in its maiden outing as neither he or his co-driver Darren Brown have competed for some time.

Loudon's sponsors for his return to competition are the Paddon Foundation, Sievwright Panel & Paint, Southern Suzuki, PRO - MED NZ, Safety 1st NZ, Strang Automotive, Evolution Motorsport and Discount Tyres Invercargill.

