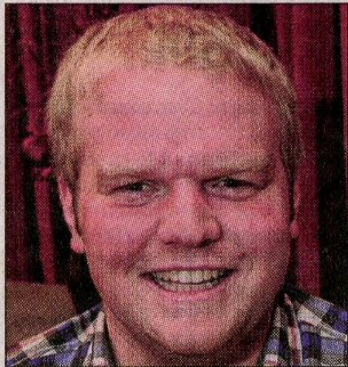


# Farmer ploughs a new line in first competitive rally



Debut – Charles Stewart.

HUNTLY driver Charles Stewart admits his rally debut will be something of a “leap in the dark”.

Stewart (29) will line up in Saturday’s McDonald and Munro Speyside Stages, part of the ARR Craib MSA Scottish Rally Championship.

The Huntly farmer admits that just completing the 40 miles of tarmac and forest stages would be an achievement.

Stewart, a member of the organising 63 Car Club (Elgin), has competed in auto testing and

navigational rallies before, but this is his competitive rally debut.

“I have been wanting to do it for a few years but have never had the money to do it.”

Five of the forest stages at Clashindarroch and Gartly Moor are close to his family farm but Stewart will be driving most of them for the first time.

And he will be meeting his co-driver Paul Cummins for the first time at the rally after regular partner David Law was called offshore.

“I have never met Paul before but he comes well recommended and I am lucky he didn’t have a seat already.”

Stewart will be driving a Peugeot 106 he bought in January.

He added: “I am looking forward to it and can’t wait to get started.”

Seven-time winner David Bogie has not entered and Jock Armstrong, who has never won the Speyside before, will be favourite.

Huntly driver John Wink, who had a top-15 finish last year, will

again line up with John Forrest in their Mitsubishi Lancer EVO 9. Alex Pirie, from Drummuir, is also entered in his Citroen C2.

The event – based at the Alexander Graham Bell Centre at Moray College – will start with safety scrutineering from 5pm at Billy Miller Contractor & Plant Hire, Elgin, tonight. This is a good chance for the public to get up close to the cars before they take to the 10 super special stages, five of which are open to spectators, on the Saturday.

Stages one and two are the popular Cooper Park stages in Elgin and action starts there from 9am. The next stages open for spectators are five and eight, which will see crews attack the fast and flowing Gartly Moor stage twice.

The final stage for the day will be the Rosarie stage near Mulben before competitors make their way back to the Alexander Graham Bell Centre where the event winners will spray the champagne.

Fans can get more information at [www.speyside-stages.co.uk](http://www.speyside-stages.co.uk)



John Wink and John Forrest finished 15th last year. Photo: Daniel Forsyth