

Corinium Stages Rally 2017

Organisers: Cirencester Car Club. Date: April 29. Where: Down Ampney airfield, Gloucestershire.

Championships: ACSMC; ASWMC Sealed Surface; FMP and CMSG. Starters: 68. Stages: eight.

Last year's runners-up Martyn and Dawn England went one better in 2017, setting a storming pace throughout the day to win by 1m1s from Chris Ransley / Chris Sharp-Simkiss (BMW M3). Using their Ford Fiesta R5+'s prodigious power and grip to maximum effect on a dry but slippery surface, the husband and wife pairing took the lead on stage three and were never headed thereafter.

Third seeds, Chris Simmons / Andy Moss held top spot early on, their fast but sometimes fragile Darrian GTR9T sporting a newly fitted, more powerful 2-litre Honda engine. Spurred into action, England immediately fought back, his high-tech Fiesta performing faultlessly as he opened an eight second lead over the Darrian on SS3 before pulling steadily away. But it was not plain sailing for everyone: fifth seeds Oliver Davies / Ben Innes (Ford Escort Mk2) started strongly but suffered power steering failure on SS3 and retired, while tenth seeded Chris Butcher / Andy Hollingham (Nissan Sunny F2) pulled out with a broken driveshaft.

Ransley held third early on but put in a mighty performance to chase, challenge and finally overhaul Simmons on SS7: the big BMW howled along the main straight at over 120 mph on every test and a broken alternator belt on SS6 failed to slow him; having crossed the finish line with a flat battery the crew had to push the car back to the Service area to fix the problem. Simmons's new engine continued to run superbly all day, his only problem being a half-spin on SS7 as he took the other podium place. Tom Walster / Jamie Vaughan (Suzuki Swift) survived a fifth-stage oil pressure issue to finish fourth. The Nottinghamshire driver pushed his Super 1600 machine (fitted with a 2-litre engine) to the maximum, sitting on the rev limiter all the way down the main straight. Rob Dennis / Andrew Boswell swapped their usual historic spec. Ford Escort Mk2 for a maiden run in a Subaru Impreza. Getting used to the car and making set-up changes as they went along, they were rewarded with fifth place. Dan Gibson / Alf Chanter (Darrian T90 Batmobile) rounded out the top six, the driver's day-long pace belying his inexperience – only the second rally - with the potent machine. The pairing lost time on SS5 after getting caught behind a slower car but fought back to overhaul seventh-placed Lee Edwards / Mike Roberts (Escort Mk3 RWD).

Results: 1 Martyn England/Dawn England (Ford Fiesta R5+) 51m02s; 2 Chris Ransley/Chris Sharp-Simkiss (BMW M3) +1m1s; 3 Chris Simmons/Andy Moss (Darrian GTR9T); 4 Tom Walster/Jamie Vaughan (Suzuki Swift); 5 Rob Dennis/Andrew Boswell (Subaru Impreza); 6 Dan Gibson/Alf Chanter (Darrian T90 Batmobile); 7 Lee Edwards/Mike Roberts (Ford Escort Mk3 RWD); 8 Richard Barrow/Andrew Richards (Impreza); 9 Matt Smith/Keith Corbin (Ford Escort Mk2); 10 Glyn Cartwright/Rhys Edwards (Escort Mk2).

Class winners Matthew Arnold/Richard Arnold (VW Polo); Jordan Reynolds/Richard Pashley (Ford Fiesta R2); Simmons/Moss; Ransley/Sharp-Simkiss; Dennis/Boswell; Paul Robins/Tudor Jenkins (Escort Mk2).

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