

Welcome to Round 3 of the 2023 HRCR MOTOSCOPE Northern Historic Gravel Rally Championship, the Border Counties Rally. Once again based in the Scottish Borders town of Jedburgh, the event provides some classic tests in the renowned and little used Tweed Valley and Wauchope Forest Complexes.

The traditional start of the Riponian Stages Rally. Round 1 of the 2023 HRCR MOTOSCOPE Northern Historic Gravel Rally Championship, although for this year to keep the road mileage down, the event would start from the Service Area at Wombilton Airfield and then finish at the Auction Mart. 16 contenders had lined up, with the Historic 5 2WD field being run in reverse order. So it was Stewart Scott in his Ford Escort RS2000 who would be first away having last contested the NHRC in 2012. The final car to leave the start was the 2019 Champion driver David Brown with Hannah McKillop in the navigator's seat. There were several new names to the series this year. Sam & Oilly Lucking (Ford Escort Mk 2) and Alan Kitson/John Roberts in a recently finished immaculate Ford Escort RS1600. Sam & Oilly did not finish the rally, Alan & John took 1st in Class C2 for the up to 1600cc cars.

With 6 stages on the itinerary, Gale Rigg, Cropton and Wass Moor all repeated twice giving just under 44 miles of competition and 3 miles which were on closed public roads it was Brown/McKillop that set the pace on the opening 3 stages being 17 seconds then 14 seconds and 1 second quicker than Ken Sturdy/Tom Hutchings/Ford Escort Mk 2 also in Class D5. In the D3 class for Pinto engined cars Sam/Oilly Lucking were new names to the series in their Ford Escort Mk 2. 24 seconds slower than Brown, but led the class by 9 seconds over David Dobson and Mike Reed/John Millington 1 second behind. Chris Ingram (not the 2019 European Champion)/Paul Turner a further 13 seconds behind. Dave/Jamie Forrest, Ian Hildreth/Sarah Wetton and Carl Stuttard/Harry Walshaw rounded out the class. The sole entry in C5 for BDA engined cars was Dave Watkins/Davo Shepherd.

Class C3 for the Pinto engined Mk 1 Escorts saw Nick Kitching/Andrew Troilope starting the season with a Mk 1 Escort as their Mk 2 was still being repaired from an accident on last years Trackrod Rally. They led the class by 1m 37 seconds over Stewart Scott's RS2000. Finally Class C2 saw Paul Rawson/Paul Wild (Escort Mexico) heading the class by 50 seconds over the immaculate RS1600 of Alan Kitson/John Roberts. Unfortunately the Mk 1 of Rob Graham/Helen Harkness retired at the end of stage 1, with clutch failure.

After three stages and the end of the first loop, Brown/McKillop headed the field by 32 seconds over Sturdy/Hutchings. Sam Lucking/Oilly Lucking lay third 13 seconds behind. After a 30 minute service at Wombilton, it was out for a repeat of the three stages again. Brown/McKillop added to their lead by being 4 seconds quicker through Gale Rigg 2, then 11 seconds through Cropton 2 but lost out on a clean sweep of fastest times by 1 second through the final stage. They took victory though by 46 seconds and were very pleased at the finish to have done so. Ken Sturdy/Tom Hutchings took second overall and 1st in Class D5. Of the rest of the classes, the closest finish was in D3 for Pinto engined cars, with 1 second separating David Dobson & Mike Reed/John Millington, Nick Kitching/Andrew Troilope took victory in Class C3 by 3mins over Stewart Scott. Alan Kitson/John Roberts brought their Escort RS1600 to the end in the same condition as it started the rally, just with some dirt on and they rounded out the field, but won Class C2.

Round 2 took the crews north to the Lake District for the Malcom Wilson Rally. Unfortunately the snow hit the event and the opening three stages in the Whinlatter complex had to be cancelled. The organisers decided on a change of route and on the Friday evening posted a bulletin of the change of stages. Greystoke would be run three times with the two Grizdale tests still giving just over 40 miles of stages. They also decided to run the cars in seeded order instead of reverse seeding for the 2WD's as had been originally planned. Ben Friend/Cliff Simmonds (Escort Mk 2) headed the field, but as they were not carrying championship decals were not able to score points. So it was David Dobson with stand in navigator Jamie Forrest who were first away from the M-Sport start followed by Derek Belbin/Mark Mason (Escort Mk 2), then Ian Hildreth/Sarah Wetton (Escort Mk 2), Paul Rawson/Mike Curry were the first of the Category 2 cars away in their Escort Mexico followed by Carl Stuttard/Harry Walshaw (Escort Mk 2), Rob Graham/Helen Harkness (Escort Mk 1) was the last car away and hoping to get to the end of the event but unfortunately bad luck struck again and they retired at the end of the opening stage with a mechanical problem. Dobson/Forrest set the pace through the opening Greystoke stage ending it 17 seconds ahead of Rawson/Curry (Escort Mexico) with Hildreth/Wetton a coat of paint behind and heading Class D3. Stuttard/Walshaw were fourth. Stuttard had gone well on the single venue Greystoke event in 2022 when he took top championship points. Belbin/Mason rounded out the field. A quick service at Penrith Auction Mart offered the crews a chance to grab a quick drink and some sustenance and for the mechanics to sort any damage incurred. Then it was off to the two longest stages of the rally.

Into the first of the Grizdale stages and Stuttard/Walshaw set the pace being 4 seconds quicker than Dobson/Forrest. Rawson/Curry set third fastest time just over 8 seconds down. Hildreth/Wetton were fourth and Belbin/Mason were fifth having had a bad run through the stage not being able to build a rhythm with the pace notes. Straight into the second Grizdale test and Dobson/Forrest flew through the stage 9 seconds quicker than Stuttard/Walshaw.

Hildreth/Wetton set third fastest time 11 seconds down. Rawson/Curry (Escort Mexico) were hoping the two twisty stages would suit the less power of the Mexico but it was not to be and they were 8 seconds and then 13 seconds slower through the two stages. They remained third overall as they headed back for another quick service though. Into the second of the three Greystoke stages and it would be Dobson/Forrest who would be fastest as Stuttard/Walshaw had a half spin and a stall which cost them 30 seconds, they still remained second overall though, but now just under a minute down on the overall lead. After another quick service it was a final run through Greystoke. Dobson/Forrest were quickest again by 21 seconds. Stuttard/Walshaw had a clean run this time, but couldn't match the pace of Dobson. Belbin/Mason & Hildreth/Wetton were third and fourth fastest but Rawson/Curry had a bad stage with the car suffering problems causing them to take a stage maximum. They did reach the finish but rounding out the field, but still taking Class C2.

So at the end of the event, David Dobson/Jamie Forrest took the victory by 1m 18seconds over Carl Stuttard/Harry Walshaw who won Class D3. Ian Hildreth/Sarah Wetton were third Derek Belbin/Mark Mason fourth and Paul Rawson/Mike Curry annoyed that their problems on the final stage cost them a podium place. At least Rawson/Curry had the satisfaction of being first of the Category 2 cars home.



Malcolm Wilson  
1st Overall  
David Dobson & Jamie Forrest-Ford Escort Mk 2  
Photo  
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Riponian Stages  
1st Overall  
David Brown & Hannah McKillop-Ford Escort Mk 2  
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1985 George Marshall/Lyn Jenkins  
1984 Andrew Wood/Dougie Paterson  
1983 Ken Wood/Peter Brown  
1982 Ken Wood/Peter Brown  
1981 Donald Heggie/George Dean  
1980 Drew Gallacher/Jim Fullwood  
1979 Drew Gallacher/Sandra Gallacher  
1978 Willie Rutherford/Rumbo Kennedy  
1977 Alistair Bearley/R Turnbull  
1976 Jim Howden/Ian Marwick  
1975 Alistair Bearley/Mike Smith  
1974 Keith McCleary/Ivor Clark  
1972 Alan McInroy/Ron Wilson

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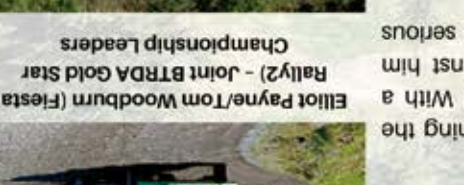
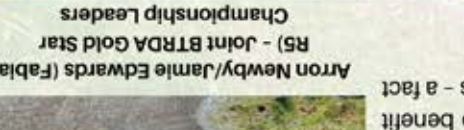
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2017 Fredrik Ahlin/Torstein Eriksen	Skoda Fabia R5
2016 Jock Armstrong/Paula Swinsoe	Subaru Impreza STI
2015 David Bogle/Kevin Rae	Ford Focus RS+
2014 David Bogle/Kevin Rae	Ford Focus WRC '02
2013 Quinter Milne/Martin Forrest	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX
2012 David Bogle/Kevin Rae	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX
2011 David Bogle/Kevin Rae	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX
2010 Dave Weston Jnr/Lewan Thomas	Subaru Impreza STI N16
2009 Marcus Dodd/ Andrew Bargery	Hyundai Accent WRC3
2008 Barry Johnson/Stewart Merry	Ford Focus RS WRC '05
2007 Steve Perez/Claire Mole	Ford Focus WRC
2006 Marcus Dodd/ Andrew Bargery	Hyundai Accent WRC3
2005 Barry Johnson/Stewart Merry	Subaru Impreza S9 WRC '03
2004 Guy Wilks/Phil Pugh	Hyundai Accent WRC
2003 Raymond Munro/Neil Ewing	Subaru Impreza S5 WRC '99
2002 Brian Lyall/Martin Forrest	Ford Escort WRC
2000 Andrew Wood/Ann Parker	Audi Quattro S2
1999 Dominic Buckley Jnr/Neil Ewing	Porsche 911
1998 Brian Bell/Paul Spooner	Ford Escort Cosworth
1997 Andrew Wood/Peter Martin	Mazda 323
1992 Stephen Finlay/ Dessle Wilson	Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4
1991 S Robertson/Lawrence Clark	MG Metro 6R4
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