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CHAMPIONSHIP NEWSLETTER No. 3 – 2026

KIELDER FOREST RALLY

FUCHS LUBRICANTS BTRDA GOLD STAR® CHAMPIONSHIP

PAYNE'S MILK RUN!....

Following a gap year in 2025, the Kielder Forest Rally was back in the Protyre Autocare BTRDA Rally Series calendar once again. The records show that Matthew Hirst won the event in 2023/24 while current Fuchs Lubricants BTRDA Gold Star Championship leaders, Elliot Payne/Patrick Walsh (Fiesta Rally2) were victorious in 2022.

Elliot Payne/Patrick Walsh 1st Gold Star

Two loops of three stages were on the agenda and it was, indeed, Hirst and Jack Bowen (Fabia R5) who took first blood, a second a mile quicker, over six miles, than both Payne/Walsh and Daniel Sigurðarson/Asta Sigurðadóttir (Fabia RS). However, Hirst/ Bowen's glory was to be short-lived as, in the driver's own words, he misjudged the length of a long left-hander on SS2 and got sucked into a Kielder ditch. Game over! Never mind, even following the loss of the Malcolm Wilson, everyone has the 'luxury' of two dropped scores and, albeit rather earlier than planned, Matthew has now used up one of his lives!

Daniel Sigurðarson/Asta Sigurðadóttir 2nd Gold Star

The Icelanders set fastest BTRDA time on SS2 from Alistair Ginley (Skoda RS) and a tying Payne/Walsh and Liam Clark/Michael Gilbey (Fiesta Rally2). As far as FTDs were concerned, the next four stages went 3 -1 in Payne's favour in what was truly a ding-dong battle with Danny and Pinky. With just the final stage to go, their Skoda was leading by six seconds but a gigantic push by the triple BTRDA Gold Star Champions saw them take a massive 9s out of their rivals in seven miles to arrive back at Hexham Auction Mart as winners by 3s. Phew!...

Ian Bainbridge/Andrew Roughead 3rd Gold Star

A returning Ian Bainbridge (Fabia Rally2), with Andrew Roughead directing operations, was a fine 3rd. Third-fastest times on each of the stages in the second loop belied any lack of recent match practice and augurs well for the rest of the season. Then, in a very BTRDA-orientated results list, Russ Thompson/Steve Link (Fiesta) were 5th overall and Class 2 winners, with Alistair Ginley (Skoda RS), Dan O'Brien (Fiesta Rally2), Daniel Hiorns/Rob Fagg (Fiesta S2000t), Pat Naylor/Tom Bishop (Lancer EVO9), Trevor Gamble/Chris Davies (Fiesta Rally2) and Pete Gorst/Mark Twiname (Lancer EVO9) finishing line astern to claim valuable points at this early stage of their respective campaigns.

Unfortunately caught on camera by the *Special Stage* TV crew, while lying 8th overall, Clark/Gilbey's Fiesta Rally2 spun on to a narrow bridge on SS4 and got stuck! Several following cars were held up while the stricken vehicle was manhandled to face the right direction once more and, although it left the scene under its own power, it retired shortly afterwards.

Patrick Naylor 1st Senior Driver

Alex Vassallo/Chris Lees were in trouble right from the start – something was amiss with their Fiesta Rally2's gearbox and, whether electrical or mechanical, it would see them retire after the opening stage. Before the day was out, they would be joined by Colin Minton/Izzie Holman whose Fiesta broke its propshaft on SS4 and Geoff Smith/Joe Dunn (Lancer EVO6) went out on the next one.

Plains Rally next in a couple of months which will give everyone time – should they need it! – to regroup. Currently, the top eleven drivers in the Gold Star points table (sorry, Matthew!) have finished both events to-date and point to what may well be a very competitive season!

PROTYRE AUTOCARE BTRDA SILVER STAR® CHAMPIONSHIP

'FLYING KIWI' TASTES THE FRUITS OF SUCCESS!....

Boyd Kershaw/Keegan Rees 1st Silver Star

Having failed to finish Rally North Wales, Boyd Kershaw/Keegan Rees (Escort MkII) needed to make a statement as to their intentions in regard to the Protyre Autocare BTRDA Silver Star® Championship – and what better way to do it than with a maximum points score! They beat Baz Jordan/Arwel Jenkins (Galant VR4) into 2nd place by a minute, leaving the North Wales winners to take solace from their second maximum score in the BTRDA Historic Cup and maintain the Silver Star lead.

Also featuring in the 'Top Three Finishers' photograph for the second event in a row was Irishman Bryan Jardine (Escort MkII) who completed the day a mere 8s behind Jordan/ Jenkins. Two successful results so far see Rian Walker/Paul Gribben (Adam R2) in a podium spot in Silver Star but also leading the BTRDA Rallye R2 Cup. Their main rivals in Kielder, Tom Constantine/Tony Walker (Adam R2), came home just one second behind them…

Baz Jordan/Arwel Jenkins 2nd Silver Star 1st Historic

Geoff Phelps/Andy Boswell (Escort MkI) were victorious in Class 6, ahead of Nick Dobson/Phil Sandham's MkII version while, after another successful day, Steve 'Korky' Ward/John Millington (Escort MkII) find themselves in 5th place in the Silver Star rankings and 3rd/2nd respectively in the BTRDA Historic Cup.

Bryan Jardine 3rd Silver Star driver

Oliver Phillips' successful start to the season ran out of steam when his Adam R2 stopped on the penultimate stage, as did David Dobson's Opel Manta. For its part, Ben

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Jemison/ Adam Burkill's Chevette HSR waited until the last one before throwing its toys out of the pram!

James Gratton-Smith/Tom Jordan didn't actually get to sample any of the stages as their Datsun 350Z was withdrawn with fuel surge issues prior to the start of SS1.

FUCHS LUBRICANTS BTRDA BRONZE STAR CHAMPIONSHIP

WATTS TRUMPS?!...

Luke Watts/Matt Rogers 1st Bronze Star

Having been beaten into 2nd place in the Fuchs Lubricants BTRDA Bronze Star Championship on the opening round by defending champions, Dylan Fowler-Bishop/Dan Evans, Luke Watts/Matt Rogers (MG ZR) took full advantage of their absence from Kielder to assert their authority and claim top spot for themselves. With Luke's mum and stepfather, Kaz & Nigel Jenkins, on hand for support, this result moves them into the lead of the series (something of a family tradition!) at this stage of the proceedings.

Giles Armitage/Josh Rhodes 2nd Bronze Star 1st Rally First

Luke and Matt had been six seconds slower than Dave & Freddy Brick (Nova) on the opening stage but had clawed three back on both SS2 and SS3 such that, at service halfway through the event, the two crews were dead level. Equal times on SS4 maintained the stalemate before the MG ZR took five seconds out of its rivals on the penultimate test. The strain obviously proved too much for the Nova which didn't start SS6, leaving the Forest of Dean crew to spray the (non-alcoholic!) fizz at the finish.

Having registered a 'failure to agree' on Rally North Wales, Giles Armitage/Josh Rhodes (Peugeot 205) opened their BTRDA Rally First Cup campaign with a solid finish and a class win on the Kielder Forest Rally. Onwards and upwards, lads!...

KINGFISHER INSURANCE MOTORSPORT UK ENGLISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

A CLASS OF THEIR OWN….

But not yet!...

After the disappointment of the Malcolm Wilson Rally cancellation, the Kingfisher Insurance Motorsport UK English Rally Championship sprang into life in Kielder and, as ever after the first round, we have several joint leaders – i.e. those who took maximum points in their respective classes. 2025 English Champion Lewis Hooper is not defending his title and so, at this early stage, we have 2024 winner Elliot Payne (Fiesta Rally2), Baz Jordan (Mitsubishi Galant VR4) and Russ Thompson (Fiesta) sharing the limelight. One point behind, Rian Walker (Opel Adam R2) has 4th place to himself before Daniel Sigurðarson (Fabia RS), Pat Naylor (Lancer EVO9) and Bryan Jardine (Escort MkII) are equal 5th.

Russ Thompson/Steve Link 1st Class 2

As we look forward to the next round, the Plains Rally in June, twenty-six drivers have so far scored points and the difference between 1 & 26 is just 10! So, it's quite obvious that there'll be some serious jockeying for position as the season progresses! Bring it on…

Photos by Kevin Money & Malcolm Almond

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CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS: Competitors to check!

A full list of all the **Protyre Autocare BTRDA Rally Series** points after the S G Petch Kielder Forest Rally can be found in the Competitor section of **www.btrdarally.com**

KIELDER POWER AWARDS

Thanks to generous support from KIELDER Works Team, they will be awarding one of their valuable "Impact Wrench Kit" as a prize on each round of the 2026 Protyre Autocare BTRDA Rally Series.

Further details of the kit Kielder provide please visit https://www.kielder.co

On the S G Petch Kielder Forest Rally the award goes to the Highest Placed Driver in Class 6: **Geoff Phelps**

On the Plains Rally the award will go the highest placed driver in **Class 10**.

ETS RACING FUELS & VITAL EQUIPMENT PRIZE

Premier competition fuel suppliers Vital Equipment Ltd and ETS Racing Fuels continue their initiative to support Britain's most popular national rally series. On every round of the 2026 Protyre Autocare BTRDA Rally Series two competitors each receive **25 litres of Carless Racing Fuel** to be redeemed on the next round of the championship.

On the S G Petch Kielder Forest Rally the prizes were awarded to: -

- The winning driver in class 3: **Boyd Kershaw**
- The winning driver in class 9: **Luke Watts**

The two awards on the Plains Rally will be for **Class H1 & 2**

At the end of the 2026 season the highest placed Junior Driver who returns to the 2027 Protyre BTRDA Rally Series will receive a fuel deal for each round they enter.

MINTEX / QUESTMEAD BONUS SCHEME

The winners of the Mintex Awards on the S G Petch Kielder Forest Rally, each of whom receive a FREE set of competition brake pads from Questmead Ltd, are: -

Randomly selected starter in the Bronze Star: **Giles Armitage**

Randomly selected starter in the Gold Star/Silver Star: **Tom Constantine**

Steve or Alan Brown from Questmead can be found in the Service Area at most events but to **claim your reward, please contact them in advance on 01706 363939.**

ON EVENT BTRDA REPESENTATION

On the Plains Rally it will be Bryan Hull and Neil Cross, the BTRDA Eligibility Scrutineer will be Geoff Doe.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Plains Rally – Saturday 13 June

Another event returning to the Protyre Autocare BTRDA and Kingfisher Insurance Motorsport UK English Rally Championship, organised by Knutsford & District Motor Club. The event will be based in Bala and Service will be in Dolgellau Farmers' Mart. Classic stages in Dyfi and Gartheiniog, renamed Llyn Sumner in honour of long-standing club member Jeff Sumner and stages not used in a long time, Drws-y-Nant are on offer. Entries are open and close on 9 June 2026. Visit www.plainsrally.co.uk for more information

Nicky Grist Stages Rally – Saturday 11 July

Running their tried and tested one-day Event that will feature the classic WRC gravel stages in the Halfway and Crychan forest and military land over Eypnt. The Event will comprise 42 stage miles and 90 road miles with a mid-day service halt in Builth Town Centre. Rally Headquarters returns to Builth Wells Town Centre, setting up in Strand Hall. Entries open on Monday 18 May 2026. Visit www.nickygriststages.co.uk for more information.

DECALS

Competitors are reminded that they **must** display the BTRDA Rally Series decals on each qualifying event to be eligible to score points in the Protyre Autocare BTRDA Rally Series and the Kingfisher Insurance Motorsport UK 2026 English Rally Championship. These include a **sponsor panel on each side of the car** and a **championship screen strip** which must be displayed on the windscreen, not on the roof. Checks will be carried out to ensure compliance with this.

We allow some latitude on the first round but from round 2 this will be strictly enforced.

Co-drivers with non-registered drivers must carry 2 x BTRDA club decals on the car.

Decals are available from the BTRDA Championship Co-ordinator Neil Cross Tel: 07767773862 or the Championship representatives at each of the qualifying events in the Protyre Autocare BTRDA Rally Series.

ON EVENT FUEL

Vital Equipment are the recommended fuel supplier for the BTRDA Rally Series and will be providing a re-fuel service at all the events. They supply both a Motorsport UK compliant Super Unleaded fuel and a FIA spec ETS turbo fuel. We strongly emphasise the convenience, safety and organisational benefits that using the Vital Equipment facility brings to competitors. To order your fuel please use the on-line order facility listed in the Competitors section of the BTRDA Rally Series website. www.vitalequipment.co.uk/pages/btrda-rally-series-fuell-order-form

SPECIAL STAGE FILMING

Once again Special Stage will be **live streaming** from the Stages on every BTRDA Rally Series event this year, bringing all the action to our screens across several media platforms. For more details follow them on X or check out their Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/specialstage

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Championship Team

The 2026 **Championship Co-ordinators:**

Neil Cross	Email: trec1.nec@btinternet.com	Tel: 07767 773862
Bryan Hull	Email: hqmsport@gmail.com	

Neil will be at every event supported by other members of the BTRDA Rally Series

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Multi-Vehicle Insurance Through Our BTRDA Partnership

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Preparing for a season often means managing more than just the race car. Tow vehicles, service vans, trailers, and support cars all need cover - and keeping them on separate policies can quickly become time-consuming, especially when renewal dates and admin demands don't align.

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- ✓ Work with a team that understands motorsport and tailors your policy around your passion

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