

ATS Western Stages 1983

CHELLENHAM MC received a full entry of 70 for their annual extravaganza within the confines of Down Ampney Airfield near Cirencester. As seems to be the norm for this event the weather, although cold, was sunny and dry. Seeded at one was the Escort RS1800 of Charles Eveson/Geoff East, last year's winners, in the colours of their new sponsors Autela. At number two, fresh from his success on the Cork 20 (where he was first British driver) Peter Morris on this event was partnered by local co-driver Paul Wellfair in the fast 2-litre Sunbeam.

At the start of the first stage it was obvious that a large number of the entry had not rallied at this venue, which has a reputation for being wet and slippery on the first two runs; by the number of cars fitted with racers a lot of crews were in for a very exciting time indeed. Fastest on the first stage was the Autela RS of Eveson/East, from second seeds Morris/Wellfair, with the ill-fated Husbands Cameras Escort RS of Haskins/White third. On the second stage things started to change, with Mike Hanna/Lesley Ireland (Imp) surprising all with second fastest time from Pete Morris, although Eveson put in a very fast run to again record fastest. Harrison/Wood (RS2000) found themselves well and truly stuck in the well-visited slurry pit, where they were joined by another competitor, causing considerable damage to both cars. Clerk of the Course Steve Atkinson stopped the action (much to the dismay of the spectators) to extricate both cars from what could have been a very smelly end.

Although Morris was some 20 seconds down on Eveson at this point it did nothing but inspire him to greater things and on stage three he changed tyres (could be a bit of local knowledge from Paul Wellfair) and recorded fastest time from the Escort of Kedward/Harber, with Eveson/East having to settle for third fastest. Making their presence felt were Cox/Jones (RS2000), the number 16 seeding of Mark Dominey/Graham Holding (out for the first time in a newly-acquired RS2000) and the number 36 pair of Goodman/Geary (Beamonts Wine Bar RS2000).

Stage four proved Eveson's swan-song as he again set fastest in a bid to keep ahead of the ever-present Morris, with Cox/Jones coming in with third. The Southern CC pair of Harrison/Wood decided to call it a day after losing a front wing, while the TR7V8 crew of Montague/McKee wrote off the car on a very substantial piece of farm machinery.

At the start of the next stage Eveson was desperately changing plugs in a bid to get rid of an engine disorder: this proved to be the head gasket and led to his retirement from the event. Morris/Wellfair went on to set fastest time, a feat they were able to emulate over the four remaining stages. Although classified as a non-finisher due to missing a stage, second fastest went to Haskins/White, who were getting in some practice for the following day's Cricket St Thomas event. Third fastest was the Escort of Kedward/Harber, although this was to be their last competitive stage as once again the unlucky Kedward was forced to retire.

On stage six Morris kept on the pressure from Cox/Jones, who with only three stages to go looked certain to finish second; third fastest went to that incredible Imp of Hanna, who was giving little chance for any other Class A drivers to match his times. Goodman/Geary had moved into fourth place from Dominey/Holding, although Williams/Furnival (using Mike Furnival's car, very hastily built after Williams had severely damaged his own car the previous weekend) were by now making some progress.

On stage seven Morris/Wellfair seemed content to do just enough to keep their place secure and the battle was now between Cox/Jones and Goodman/Geary, although third fastest on the stage was Williams/Furnival. In fourth place was the RS2000 of Dominey/Holding. On the penultimate stage Dominey put in second fastest to move into third place overall, ahead of Goodman/Geary who seemed to be slowing in the later part of the event.

With one stage to go, Morris/Wellfair led from Cox/Jones, Dominey/Holding, Goodman/Geary and Hanna/Ireland. On this last stage disaster struck the second-placed crew; on the first bend, after a long flat-out straight, the engine of their Escort cried enough in a big way, leaving the 60 & Worcs members with memories of what might have been. At the end of a very enjoyable event a very pleased Peter Morris and Paul Wellfair received the laurels, it being Paul's first ever win. In second place were Mark Dominey/Graham Holding, this being by far their best result to date; third place went to Griffiths/Curtis, who put in a consistent drive throughout the day to come through from a starting position of 27.

Malcolm Jones

Results (class winners in bold): 1, P Morris/P Wellfair (Sunbeam) 39m 39s; 2, M Dominey/G Holding (RS2000) 41m 21s; 3, R Griffiths/N Curtis (RS2000) 41m 30s; 4, M Hanna/Miss L Ireland (Imp) 41m 38s; 5, D Goodman/D Geary (RS2000) 41m 38s; 6, R Williams/M Furnival (Escort) 41m 48s; 7, P Turner/R Collins (Escort) 41m 58s; 8, R Lennis/R Mackeborn (Escort) 42m 08s; 9, D Brunsdon/R Joseph (BMW) 42m 09s; 10, D Howes/G Byard (Golf) 42m 34s; 11, G Wharton/N Fuller (Escort) 42m 36s; 12, P Bennett/K Bennett (Escort) 42m 56s; 13, R Ceen/S Golding (Clan) 43m 01s; 14, P Smith/D McNiven (Mini) 43m 05s; 15, B Stoneman/B Challacombe (Astra) 43m 06s; 16, M Price/P Suckling (Sunbeam) 43m 09s; 17, M Hyde/H Nelson (Sunbeam) 43m 36s; 18, W Clarke/T Taylor (Escort) 43m 39s; 19, S Bolland/K Johnson (Escort) 43m 50s; 20, M Cocker/J Raymond (Avenger) 43m 52s; 21, G Caldicott/R Wheeler (Mini) 44m 24s; 22, P Sutton/S Budworth (Mini) 44m 50s; 23, D Parry/G Evans (Escort) 44m 51s; 24, K Gooding/A Jeffries (Alfa Escort) 45m 04s; 25, R Turner/P Anstey (Mini) 45m 14s; 26, L Allfrey/C Kent (Avenger) 45m 30s; 27, C Paley/S Ellis (Imp) 45m 37s; 28, N Johanson/T Thorp (Escort) 45m 44s; 29, D York/S Goode (Escort) 45m 45s; 30, M Anderson/R Carlin (Imp) 45m 58s; 31, J Wells/R Thwaites (Mini) 46m 14s; 32, H Statham/N Thomas (Avenger) 46m 14s; 33, I Butcher/M Davies (Escort) 46m 19s; 34, J Bailey/J Tooze (Escort) 46m 52s; 35, M Maynard/P King (Imp) 47m 00s; 36, S Candy/I Ranford (Escort) 47m 17s; 37, D Hall/D Forrest (Mexico) 47m 43s; 38, C Gay/H Kent 47m 52s; 39, T Watson/D Watson (VW Beetle) 48m 42s; 40, K Hulbert/D Bush (Fiat Sunbeam) 51m 22s; 41, S Snook/A Smith (Mexico) 52m 44s; 42, T James/M Dyson (Escort) 53m 26s. 70 starters/42 finishers.