The Carrick-on-Suir Motor Club’s Ravens Rock Rally is the fifth round of the 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship; it’s also the second tarmac round of the seven event dual surface rally championship. Encompassing both forestry and tarmac under the banner of one championship is pretty unique within the rallying championship calendar. Some competitors rise to the challenge of competing on both surfaces while others specialise on either forestry or tarmac. Generally all the rounds are also rounds of either the national forestry (Valvoline) or the tarmac (Dunlop) championships. Although the title of this championship is The South East Stages, we have been known to spread over a greater terrain with the occasional trips to Wicklow and Lismore for forestry events. Our competitors are representative of the regional strongholds of rallying within Ireland. The quality of our events have also attracted some loyal and welcome competitors from Wales who bring their own brand of exuberance and excitement and welcome competition giving an International flavour to our events and Championship.

To the business in hand, the championship standings to date and this weekend’s event. The simple story is that leading the 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship is Shay Power and John Rafter in their class 5, Escort MK2 on 53 points. Shay won the forerunner of the TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship way back in 1992 when it was the Foley Championship. He has a 1300 MK2 and a long term partnership with Connie Delaney. There have been many bumps in the road since those far off days in the latter half of the 20th century. Shay competes on both the forestry and tarmac events with aplomb and flair. So much natural talent that he has a pool of navigators ranging from daughter Cathy, super navi Derek Gibbs and fellow club member John Rafter. He’s a long time on the road, has plenty of experience and above all enjoys his rallying, always smiling through the rough and the smooth.

Second O/A are James Coleman and Michael Haley, also in class 5, not surprisingly also in an Escort MK2 and on 48 points. Friends, neighbours and rivals who enjoy the cut and thrust of rallying with Shay. James wears rallying on his sleeve as his support for rallying through his SUIRWAY BUSINESS ventures and the events of the Carrick-on-Suir bear testimony to his commitment to rallying and motorsport in general. Formerly a National Karting champion his competitive spirit is still to the fore. James and Michael also compete on both the forestry and tarmac events.

Third O/A are Owen Murphy and James O’Brien, class 6, Mitsubishi Lancer on 46 points. Recognised by many as a competitor who with sufficient backing would be a house-hold name among the rally fraternity. They have the strong streak of the unique Cork motorsport competitiveness that has produced Coleman, the Fitzgerald’s and Cronin’s to name a few of the
most successful Cork names within Irish rallying. Currently committed to the Valvoline National Forestry Rally Championship, they may venture onto some tarmac events outside of the cork / Kerry region. They thoroughly enjoyed the night stages of the Willie Loughman Forestry rally attributing their success from competing on night navigation (rallies) trials.

Class 1. Class leaders are Emmet Cronin / R. Long, Escort MK2 on 29 points. Most likely to stay on the loose surface but may try the next two tarmac events as they are ‘local’ to Richie. The revs of the 1300 engine are akin to the wails of a F1 engine. Colin O’Toole / Francis Kelly are second on 22 points in the Ford Ka. Francis is a former TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship winning navigator. Joe Shinnors / Derry Healy, Nova on 17 points are currently third. The Shinnors name is synonymous with Irish rallying.

Class 2. For some reason the 8 valve rally engine is fading fast from Irish Rallying. Strange but true, the 1600 CC Kent engine, once the backbone of the Ford Escort has faded from the rallying scene. Just two competitors in the class, former multiple TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship winner Mick Nevin / M. Garahy and relative newcomer to the sport Paschal O’Shea /R. Hennessy both of course in Ford Escort MK2’s share the class on 44 points. Surely there are 1600, 8 valve Sunbeams, Novas, Starlets, Skoda’s to name a few that are under the wraps of dust and cobwebs waiting for an occasional blast.

Class 3. The lead is shared by Douglas Stewart / B. Ryan, Peugeot 306 and Derek Butler / D. O’Shea, Honda Civic, both on 43 points. Again both crews are competitive on forestry and tarmac. Not so far behind on 40 points are Mick Cuddihy / J. Dunphy, Toyota Starlet. Unusually the FWD seem to have the upper hand of the RWD. The situation may be readdressed on the next two events are they are fairly local to Mick. Having a lash at the domestic rallying scene are our WRC contenders pairing of Craig Breen / G Roberts, Ford Fiesta on 30 points. Two rounds, two class wins, the ambitious target of fellow class competitors is to have Craig finish behind them ! Oh, the majority of the main field have the same ambition.... Personally I think it’s fantastic that Craig competes so often at home to show what a talent he so modestly has.

Class 4. The preserve, so far, of the RWD, mainly MK2’s. It’s so simple really; the class is sewn up by the Benskin family from Ballycotton, Co. Cork. Sean W. with Joe Fitzgibbon is on 44 points. The young lad, Ray (jnr) with Ollie Kierce is on 40 points and the (most respectfully) senior member Ray with long co-driver Peadar Walsh are on 35 points. Without exception Ray Benskin is competing for what seems to be forever in Carrick-on-Suir motorsport events. Oh, I’ll make an exception by mentioning fourth and fifth placed crews, Alan Commins and Paul Quinlan who are not related to anybody else in the class.
Class 5. Frank Kelly / L. Brennan, Escort MK2, on 45 points are just off the overall contenders in the same class. Frank is rated as one of the most exciting MK2 drivers that grace Irish Rallying. Ed Colton / Claire O’Mahony is making the latest of many come backs to rallying in a Peugeot (what else) 306. On 30 points from the previous four rounds. Paul Lacey / A. Walsh Escort MK2 are on 10 points from the Carlow MK2 challenge.

Class 6. The class lead is shared by Vincent and J.P. McAree, Mitsubishi Lance, on 45 points from the forestry rounds. If the tarmac can be assured as loose they may take in a few tarmac rounds. Another crew with night navigation experience who revelled in the night stages of the Carrick-on-Suit forestry rally. Ger Connors / O. O’Neill in a Subaru Impreza, also on 45 are competing on both forestry and tarmac. Diligent and steady competitors who are always there or thereabouts in the shake up. Second in class is also a shared position. Mark Murphy / Carol O’Keeffe, also in a Subaru are on 32 points. John Reid / E. Shiels, in the almost unique to Irish rallying Toyota Corolla, 32 points. Both perhaps committed to forestry but may yet appear on some of the tarmac rounds. Third are Connie Delaney and R. Grace, 23 points also in a Subaru. May not make much progress as Connie will adopt an officials status for the Ravens Rock.


As we look forward to the remaining rounds of the 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship we wish the promoting clubs healthy entries. Far too many events are running at a loss and need support from outside of the competitor’s entry fees. Advertising and sales of programmes are just two other means of supporting the sport. To all who buy the programmes, thank you for your support.