

Gary Jennings claims the Valvoline title as Henry takes his maiden Valvoline victory in the Glens of Antrim Rally

Gary Jennings is the new **Valvoline Forest Rally Champion** after he finished ninth overall (and fifth of the Valvoline registered crews) on

Saturday's Glens of Antrim Rally

. The Glens rally was the seventh and final round of the **2012 Valvoline Motorsport Ireland Rally Championship**.

A native of Kesh Co. Fermanagh, Jennings is the first driver from the Northern Ireland to win the series in five years, and he is the eighth Ulsterman to win the National Forest Championship in its twenty one year history. Jennings was favourite to land this year's title after his brilliant form in the early events in the trusty Impreza 555. However, Saturday was a nail biting day for Jennings and co-driver Barry McNulty, as the engine in the Subaru did not run properly all day.

The rally was organised by the Mid Antrim MC and it was based in Garvagh near Coleraine and it consisted of six stages and a 64km/40 stage-mile route, with Springwell and Cam forests traversed three times. It attracted a total of seventy entries of which eighteen failed to finish. The event was won by NI rally champion Derek McGarrity in a Subaru S14 WRC. Second place was claimed by Martin Cairns in a Subaru WRC ahead of the Mini WRC of Derek McGeehan.

Desi Henry was fourth overall and winner of the Valvoline registered runners. Henry campaigned in the BRC this year in a CitroenDS3R3, but for the Glens the Portglenone man drove a Mitsubishi Evo6. It was Henry's first ever rally in a four wheel drive and he was partnered by Liam Moynihan. Liam Regan was second in the Valvoline class, the Belfast man driving his unique Peugeot 206 four wheel drive. In third place was Enda McNulty the Tyrone just ahead of Stephen Wright who was fourth in the rally and fourth in the championship. Jennings was fifth and the new champion was followed home by Frank Kelly who was once again best 2WD pilot in his Escort Mk2. Colin Britton was seventh, a position that consolidated his second place in the series. The Strabane driver was slowed by drive shaft failure, but he could have lifted the crown if he won the rally and Jennings was lower than seventh championship driver. However Britton's co-driver Arthur Kierans is the 2012 winning co-driver,

as Jennings had different co-drivers during the year.

Shane McGirr was eighth in his exciting Starlet RWD, the result gives the Tyrone driver championship win in class five. Ger Lucey had another good run to ninth place and the result gives the Corkman a championship win in class eight. Finishing off the top ten was Adrian Hethrington, the Escort driver clinching 3rd in class five in the championship. The Escort of Shay Power was next, and the Kilkenny man won the 2WD class in the championship. Another Escort was next, this one a left hand drive in the hands of Tommy O'Connell who is the first ever winning driver in the Historic class in the Forest Championship. The Dungiven man was co-driven by Brian Duggan of www.rally.ie fame. Duggan from Co. Kerry is now the first ever winning co-driver in the historic class. The junior category was claimed by Michael Ryan in the Honda Civic. A good result for the Cashel driver, who bounced back to a fourth place in class despite a trio of DNF's earlier in the season.

The principal retirements in the Glens rally were: Andrew Fanning (burst radiator), Jer Connors (drive shaft), Seamus O' Connell (engine stage 4) and Vincent McAree.(off stage1).

At the Rally Prizegiving, Forest Subcommittee Chairman John Quill said "I want to congratulate Gary Jennings on his championship victory and I would like to thank the Mid Antrim Club for organising a fabulous rally. They put huge effort into running the rally especially when they had to change their original route. The new compact layout was fabulous and very popular with the crews"

Valvoline Standings Overall: G. Jennings 103, C. Britton 97, V. McAree 93, S. Wright 90, G. Lucey 75.

2WD Standings: S. Power 99, D. Raftery 84, I. Downey 72, S. McGirr 65, F. Kelly63.

Valvoline Forest Rally Championship Prizegiving will take place next Saturday 3rd of November in the Clonmel Park Hotel.

2012 Valvoline Rally Forest Championship Class Winners:

Class 1: Joe Shinnors Jnr (Opel Corsa)

Class 2: Pierce J. Doheny (Opel Corsa)

Class 3: Adrian McElhinney (Peugeot 206)

Class 4: Raymond Benskin Jnr (Ford Escort)

Class 5: Shay Power (Ford Escort)

Class 6: Stephen Wright (Evo6)

Class 7: Martin Cairns (Impreza WRC)

Class 8: Colin Britton (Evo9)

Class 9: (Juniors) Dean Raftery (Honda Civic)

Class 10: Joe McGonigle (C2R2)

Class 11: (Historic) Tommy O'Connell (Escort)