

Glamour meets true grit

Three Castles Rally

Wales. 2-5 June

Photography: Max Earey



Main image
Philip and Yvonne Haslam's ex-Malcolm Campbell Aston Martin Le Mans, which carried the coveted number 1.

The Three Castles is rapidly becoming one of the UK's favourite historic rallies, and following the action in the 2010 event it's easy to see why it continues to grow.

'We think that the little things aren't so little,' says event director Ian Crammond. 'We think one base, a break every couple of hours, good food, a great social programme, proper breakdown and medical support, a comfortable hotel room – are all givens for a successful event.'

After eight years the event routinely sells out within weeks of entries opening and attracts a more prestigious entry list each year. The rally now attracts more pre-war and high status cars – including this year 'Little Red', the world's first supercharged Bentley, and the superb 1936 French GP Lagonda of Belgian crew Macko Laqueur and Rob Brouwer. Post-war exotica also included a 1953 Jaguar C-type for German duo Michael Pelle and Heike Sarnow.

The friendly mechanical support offered by CES UK and Penderyn was joined by the support of Mostyn Estates, representing the ancient Welsh family that founded and laid out Llandudno. As a result, Three Castles gained access to roads not previously visited.

The event began at a sunny scrutineering on Llandudno's unspoiled sweep of promenade, and subsequently visited a string of country estates, pausing at the serene setting of Mostyn Hall, home of the oldest Welsh families. High roads took crews over the Clwydian Hills to historic Ruthin Castle, now a hotel, before new tests at Lleweni Airfield and favourites at Kinmel Hall and



Bodelwyddan Castle rounded off the first day.

'Best ever' accolades were bestowed by competitors on Kenny Owen's route and on the twin country house lunch halts at Dolserau Hall and Penmaenuchaf Hall. Dr John Criswell and Commander Robin Whiteside (Austin-Healey 3000) had held the early lead, but were passed on day two by Mark and Sue Godfrey in their 1951 MG TD (above right), and John Abel and Tony Davies in their 1965 Sunbeam Tiger.

Day three dawned bright again as crews set off via a new test and coffee at Penrhyn Castle to tackle the 1.7-mile hillclimb at Marchlyn Dam and road sections leading back to a relaxed lunch at The Groes Inn. On Saturday afternoon two impressive closed road hillclimbs over the Great Orme took competitors back to the finish.

The Godfreys and their MG survived all challenges to win for a second time. Interviewed by special guest Tony Mason (above left), they declared this to have been the best Three Castles of all. Graham Walker and Sean Toohey (1973



Lotus Elan Sprint) came through to finish a close second, ahead of Abel/Davies. Former winners Jayne Wignall/Kevin Savage (1932 Sunbeam 20hp Sports) were fourth. Another former winner, Howard Warren, having suffered a transmission failure, had sportingly returned to act as course car.

At the awards dinner, Siân Lloyd presented the crystal glassware. The 2011 entry list will open on 1 October. There is likely to be a queue.