

## THREE CASTLES TROPHY 2017

There was a competition to win a free entry into this Targa event, and having guessed the correct "number of entries received by a certain date", all I had to do was pick my navigator. A no-brainer really, as my wife had marshalled on previous events and enjoys daytime Historic Rallies.



Scrutineering was on the Thursday afternoon on the promenade in Llandudno, which we passed with no drama, then parked up on the mandatory ground sheets to show the cars to the public. The Concourse winner was in no doubt, a beautiful original Le-Mans Supercharged Bentley.

Later that evening, on our way home the Escort developed a serious misfire in the higher rev band, so instead of enjoying our evening super with the other 40 crews at the new Dylan Restaurant, I was in the garage back on Anglesey trying to trace the fault on the car... without success!

Friday dawned bright and sunny and we re-joined the cars on the Prom for the ceremonial start. Our start time of 08:05 came up quickly and before we knew it the Escort was sliding its way around the three Great Orme tests. The top 10 cars beat the bogey, so after 3 tests we were in the lead (along with about 9 others). Paul and Rosalind Tomlinson in the car behind us had a big scare on the Orme when a brake calliper on their Porsche 911 failed which sent them into a spin. They would eventually have the car fixed by the Chase car that followed the event, changed their underwear and re-joined at a rest halt. They would go on to finish 30<sup>th</sup> overall and a pot for 3<sup>rd</sup> in class, and Spirit of the Rally.

The next set of tests were in my neck of the woods, and run by C&A MC. First was Vaynol Hall (uphill). Whilst queuing up at the start line (marshalled by Francine Dean) I pulled the carb to bits, checked the jets and pipes, hoping the misfire was something simple to fix. 3,2,1 Go... Accelerate hard off the line, but just as the car hit around 5,000rpm... Pop \* Bang@ S%\*!, So, short-shift to 2<sup>nd</sup> and kept the revs in the low band where the car ran perfect.



Not much consolation when we only have 1300cc. Anyway, by now we were at the Passage Control in the middle of the test by the main hall, where we came to a stop; Eve looked over to the marshal with her clipboard ready on the window waiting for it to be signed and the marshal just stood by a tree looking at us for what felt like an eternity! Eve holds the

clipboard out and shouts out over the engine noise "You need to sign!" Only then did he approach taking the Time Card and turned it over then got confused when confronted by the Test Diagram which Yvonne had on the reverse of the Clipboard and had just as much trouble handing it back!! Extremely frustrating for us, as we must have lost at least 10seconds and I was itching to set the car sideways for photographer Duncan Littler who I had spotted loitering just round the next corner. We didn't disappoint! With a time of 1:56 marked by Timekeeper Tecwyn Jones we were 12 seconds off Dermot Carnegie who was fastest in the Escort Mk1 RS2000. We were 7<sup>th</sup>.

Next a trip through Bangor to Penrhyn Castle, starting at the Harbour end. Ifor, Dafydd Edwards, and Sion were marshalling the start area. This test started with a double figure of eight, then hairpin left, careful not to hit the ornamental chain-link boundary, echo through the Gate House archway and then nearly took out the next slalom under braking on very greasy moss under the trees in front of marshals John and Iona. Others did spin out! At the finish line we were greeted by Paul Cross and Ieuan Roberts with a fourth fastest time. Now we were up to 4<sup>th</sup> O/A. We also had a dog in tow. A Border Terrier looped, chased and ran alongside us all the way through the castle grounds. It was literally seeing us off the property.

Test 6 was a short trip across the road onto the old disused A5 that now passes under the A55 at Llandegai. Aled Pennant and Huw Gwyn were on the start line. This test did not suit the misfiring Escort, with 3 stop boxes to contend with, one of which was on the steep uphill and I struggled to get going from a standing start. Now 5<sup>th</sup> O/A.

Big shout out of thanks to all the marshals. Sorry I didn't see you all as I was concentrating too much on driving.

The route then took in scenic roads over Sychnant Pass and many minor roads to regroup at a rest halt at Groes Inn. I spent the half hour under the bonnet disassembling the fuel regulator, then dropping the screws into the grass! Found them with a magnet and just got it all back together when Yvonne gets back into the car having had 'Panad a Bara Brith' - oblivious to my woes. We hard accelerated from the pub with hopes of full revs. Bang...Pop. No..... Still not fixed!



Long haul then to the 'Glan y Gors' Go Kart track at Cerrigydrudion for test 7 where the misfire caught me out mid-slide, ending in a half-spin and having to reverse to avoid going on the grass. Despite the problems it was still a good time, just 7 seconds off the bogey time which no-one beat. Now 4<sup>th</sup> O/A.

Test 8 was a short straight farm estate tarmac road. Not much in here to take time out of anyone and the power of the XJS V12 we were dicing with meant we were back to 5<sup>th</sup>.

Test 9 was the back entrance road to the same estate, and there was a hairpin right junction halfway through which the start line of Test 8 could see. I got a bit carried away here. Nailed it! Then we came across a triangle junction around a cone which was quite tight. I "diffed it" to stay on a tight line, but said to Yvonne immediately " We've bust a driveshaft", and we had. We got to the end of the test OK, but pulled over as soon as we went on the public road as the driver's side rear wheel was wobbling badly.

And that was the end of our Three Castles adventure, except for the passenger ride home in Jamie Jones's Recovery truck. Yvonne was gutted, as the next item on the Three Castles route was dinner halt, and a posh one at that. We had to make do with soggy sandwiches and bananas that we had brought with us in the Escort.

Thank you to everyone who helped put this event on, from the organisers down to the test observers, and thanks to Duncan for the photos.

Report by Lee & Yvonne Matthews - Car 5 - Escort Mk2 1300cc.