



**Q. I've never done a rally. Is this a good one to start with?**

A. Yes. It is a competitive event yet it is also designed from start to finish to offer a sensible learning curve, with advice and help from experienced people available at every turn. If you or any member of the crew finds any part of it difficult or tedious (and you won't) you'll be able to choose a less demanding option for that day and still see and do everything.

**Entering from overseas?** Everything will be in English but it will also be easy to follow and our experts will try to explain anything you have difficulty with before the start. We have entrants from Germany, Hungary, Norway, America, the Netherlands, New Zealand too. Crucially, the roadbook will be in kilometres as well as in miles.

**Worried about your cherished classic?** You do not need any special competition preparation other than good seat belts and you do not need special rallying equipment either, although we do strongly recommend carrying a simple stop watch and fitting a supplementary distance recorder such as a Brantz tripmeter so as to be able to enjoy the regularity sections – it's very hard to do them without one. Whilst your car needs to cover around 500 miles reliably, the rally is quite gentle in pace and non-damaging. Sumpguards and other protective equipment are not needed, although an exhaust skid is an idea if your car is very low slung.

**Worried about getting lost?** Don't be; the route will be given to you in easy to follow diagrams and will be given in kms as well as miles, so as long as your speedometer and distance recorder work you should be fine. Unless you get lost, you don't even need a map (but in case you do, we tell you which to bring).

**Worried about your driving skills?** There's nothing too demanding here – just a gentle challenge. All the road rally sections are set at average speeds under 30 mph. On tests, you go as fast as you're comfortable going.

**Worried that there won't be time to see anything?** Don't be. Each day everyone will have time to enjoy one or two special places. And if, other than this, you want to stop and admire the view, you can – you don't have to keep up on the rally sections, or do all the tests; if you decide to tour instead on one day, or even all the time, you have the route and will know when the main controls you must visit are open – the rest is up to you (you might get a few penalties on your time card, but who cares? The important thing is that you have a good time!)

The Three Castles Trial has been created to ensure all participants have a great motoring experience in wonderful scenery and on some classic roads, with a really good 'social' programme to complete a memorable few days. We set out to make it a happy and pleasurable experience for you,

and for everyone. Please call us or email if you need any further help. We look forward to seeing you.

**Q. I'm used to longer, more expensive classic car rallies. Will I enjoy this one?**

A. Yes. It has the social programme and support services you are used to, as well as features you haven't seen before. North Wales, at its best in early summer, is just as beautiful as other countries you may have visited. It may not be as expensive, but we think you'll find it every bit as good!

**Q. What's the accommodation like?**

A. The best we can supply in Llandudno, a town whose best hotels are used to party conferences and the like. Rally HQ is the Imperial Hotel. It's a Best Western rated 4\* by the AA. Centrally located, it offers comfortable modern en-suite rooms and good food. Our other hotels, the Quay, the Empire and the St George's, are also AA 4\*.

**Q. What do I need to know about insurance?**

A. The first rule is, ask your broker if you can be covered whilst on the event under your normal policy. Normal road regulations apply on all the road sections of this event and your brokers can of course see that in the Supplementary Regulations. Therefore we'd be surprised if they are not prepared to cover you on the Regularity Sections, which although timed are all set at an average speed of no more than 30 mph and are all on the public road. Although your time of arrival is recorded and compared to a due time to calculate penalties our Road Regularity Sections are not speed tests and if your broker is familiar with the concept he may take the view that you should be covered under your normal policy for them – some brokers certainly do but in the end it depends on the individual policy wording – you sometimes need to ask your broker to shop around a little to make sure you have a policy that suits you in this market, and it isn't just a matter of cost. ASK YOUR BROKER!

If he says that your cover cannot be extended and you don't wish to change insurers you can still opt for our third party rally insurance scheme, which will give you third party cover for the event at very modest cost. When it comes to the driving tests, which are on private land, again they are run to an average speed of no more than 30mph (there are RAC Motor Sports Association rules for this kind of thing that we abide by). They are also not pure speed tests, but are tests of Handling and Manoeuvrability coupled with tests of your ability to drive the right route – a car that is slow but neatly driven and accurately navigated will often beat a faster car poorly driven, for instance.

You won't usually get fully comprehensive cover for the driving tests, but you still may not think it a big problem – speeds are usually not at all high and we cannot actually remember anyone damaging a car physically on a test (a mechanical failure, very occasionally, is the usual problem encountered) so we hope you're unlikely to need comprehensive cover. You can, if this worries you, simply choose not to do any or all tests and still carry on with the road route, though few people choose to.

The actual time taken at each test venue will be perhaps 10 minutes, including a short wait to do the test itself, on which you usually set off at minute intervals for safety reasons. A typical driving test might take anywhere from under a minute to six – they're not long, but are intended to offer a short but relatively intense test of skill and judgement. At one or two more spectacular locations there may be a halt of 15–20 minutes after you tackle the test and you'll then have a chance to see others in action.

**Q. How should I prepare the car?**

A. Here are some expert tips. The Three Castles Trial is a relatively gentle road rally, so there's no need to go overboard fitting banks of spotlights or sumpguards to your treasured classic. Nonetheless, there are some things you can and should do to make sure that you have a trouble-free run. Our preparation expert is Tony Fowkes, former Mercedes works rally driver on tough long distance events like the London–Sydney Marathon and the East African Safari, and the man in charge of the Three Castles breakdown service. Tony is the best in the business. This is what he has to say...

“A reliable car is the first thing you need. Many classics lie idle during the winter, when potential problems like dirt in fuel can build up. First, service the car. Change the oil and filter, and fit a new air cleaner filter. Check all the fluid levels. Grease all the grease nipples. Put a fresh tank of fuel in the car, use it over a weekend if possible and make sure that it runs cleanly. Note any problems, then (either do this yourself or ask the person who regularly looks after the car to) go through it checking in particular the tyres, wheel bearings, brakes, suspension, cooling system, electrics, fuel filter and fuel supply.”

“If you need new tyres, a pair of new shock absorbers (you'll marvel at the improvement in handling) or brake pads or linings, get them fitted at this stage. Ordinary road tyres at manufacturer's recommended pressures are fine. Just make sure they have plenty of tread. Don't assume you now have a reliable car. Instead, give it another longish run. Time and again we find ourselves at the roadside fixing a car that has just come out of a winter rebuild with an unidentified problem still present. Chase down any little niggles.”

“Next, turn your attention to two areas that often cause unnecessary trouble. Do you know how old your clutch is? Thought not. An enthusiastic approach to driving tests can quickly expose a slipping clutch or worn drive-shaft coupling. Time spent now fitting a new clutch could be well worthwhile. Get those drive shaft couplings checked too, especially if you're a press-on type. Some cars are more prone to this kind of problem than others – hard driven Minis are famous for twisting theirs and big Healeys can be hard on drive-shafts themselves. The Mercedes SLs I used to drive, on the other hand, had very strong transmissions.”

“How about the exhaust? It may be new, but is it attached properly? Normal country roads can cause bottoming in a low-slung car. See if it can be raised to increase your ground clearance. Wire on the exhaust rubbers so they can't pop off if the exhaust takes a bump. Tighten

everything up and turn the exhaust clamps to one side to reduce the chance that they'll catch. If your exhaust is really low, consider attaching a skid-plate to the front of the silencer.

**Q. Do I need a competition licence?**

A. No. The event is open to members of the organising club only. Your entry fee includes membership of the Three Castles Motor Club. You do not need a competition licence.

**Q. How do I find out about navigating?**

A. We run a practice day In Llandudno the day before the Welsh Classic Trial begins, which will run on 2<sup>nd</sup> June this year, and will involve a practice tulip section with roadbook. This is free to all competitors and is highly recommended for beginners or as a refresher for those returning to the sport after a few years. It will tell you all you need to know, when you need to know it.

There are a number of good resources on the web. Try Googling classic road rally navigation and follow the links you find there. A good resource is at <http://www.historicroadrally.co.uk/hrcr/navigation/navigation.htm>

Most of the navigation covered there will **not** be relevant on the Three Castles – for example you don't need to be able to read anything except **tulip diagrams**, but the general advice and instruction may be helpful.

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