

## LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE

Despite being the biggest appellation in Europe, the La Mancha region has a relatively small output of wine thanks to its extreme temperatures and arid climate. It was this hot and dry region in southern Spain that would today be our playground and, even in mid October the temperature on the road rose to 29°C by mid afternoon.

According to the route book we had a very busy day ahead of us, three Regularities and a Test to be precise, so an early start was needed. It was still barely light therefore as the first cars checked out of the hotel and clattered over the old cobbled streets of the sprawling medieval citadel.

Tony and Lee Ann Strelzow could have done with an extra hour in bed however after the day they'd had yesterday. Famed for countless punctures on a Russian highway in 2013, this Canadian crew and their Bentley found that running fast on Spanish roads, puts something of a strain on the Derby's differential. When it starts



Photos: gerardbrown.co.uk

*Anthony and Lee-Ann Strelzow, 1936 Bentley Derby Drophead*

complaining, it needs attention; and, as Tony found out that takes some time.

Even if they did feel a bit tired they, like their fellow competitors, enjoyed a relatively easy start to the day, with the first Regularity a mere 53km from the start. La Aliseda was a lovely woodland section filled with gnarled old cork oaks and some equally gnarled old cyclists who, until this morning, had claimed this road as their own.

20km of motorway followed as we approached the Passage Control in Los Olivos before the third round of the RTG "run what you bring championship" was played out at the nearby Kart Active Racing circuit.

This circuit based (and slightly random) format has a long and distinguished history in endurance rallying and, to the dismay of some of the other crews, today's Test could have been specially designed for a Blue Porsche driven by a man who knows carting inside out.

Prior to the off the Clerk of the Course, John Spiller, led the crews on a track walk so as to better familiarise themselves with the turns and, mid way through it, Anton Gonnissen wryly noted the fact that this track was almost definitely not designed for a large Bentley - such as his.

So, it was no surprise then that one of the most clinical drives came from David and Susan Danglard in their 911



*David and Susan Danglard, 1973 Porsche 911*





Manuel and Irene Dubs, 1965 Ford Mustang V8 Convertible

whilst, the award for the most entertaining drive was shared by Rogier Quekel and Manuel Dubs who both explored the limits of traction, suspension travel and braking efficacy over the two sinuous laps.

After such a busy morning, the lunch Time Control at the Asador Los Pucheros fairly buzzed with adrenaline and, as the crews arrived Fred Gallagher greeted each of them dressed as matador, before they were shown to their seats and served with substantial plates of charcuterie and freshly cooked delicacies from the BBQ.

Taking on enough fuel here was essential, as the afternoon session was a long one, with two Regularities



Anton Gonnissen and Inge Willemen, 1948 Bentley Speed 8

still to be tackled. First up was the 18km Arroba de los Montes which took the rally through a set of rugged, low lying hills, lined with wild rosemary and Douglas fir. A long, but fast, main road liaison then brought the cars to the third Regularity at Canamero which at a mere 6km was short but most definitely intense.

All that was then required of the crews upon cresting the summit was to make their way, in an orderly fashion, to Plaza Mayor in Trujillo and their well deserved night halt.



Neil and Peta Oatley, 1967 Lancia Fulvia 1.3S Rallye

Finally we note that it's good to have Roy and Rachel Stephenson back with us, albeit in a rental car. It's a snappy looking Alfa Romeo Stelvio and, whilst it's got a pretty cool name - and will undoubtedly get the job done, like anything brought in to replace an original, we all know that it's not as good as the real thing.

We hope to see the Mustang back with us soon.

Tomorrow is our last full day in Spain, as we head to Portugal and its famous Douro Valley. Press on!

*Gerardus Mercator*

Gerardus Mercator, *Dispatch* reporter