



Syd Stelvio Rally Report Flying Scotsman 2022 Day Two

Peaks and Troughs in the Highlands

‘Welcome to the Highlands’ read the sign, a sure enough indication that the altitude was about to rise. But what goes up must come down, and the second day of the Flying Scotsman, whilst full of plenty of highs, would see some crews come crashing back down to earth as the mechanical gremlins began to strike.

The day began with the ground wet underfoot, and the prospect of a downpour loomed on the horizon. Before the weather could get involved though, a brisk time control section at Crail Aerodrome followed by a test gave crews the opportunity to stretch their legs before some miles would need to be covered to get the rally up into the Cairngorms. Crail, or HMS Jackdaw as it was known, is one of the best-preserved wartime airfields in the UK, a befitting status for this particular rally. It was also home to the Joint Services School of Linguistics up until its closure in the 60’s, and some of the crews would have done well to employ their services, as they struggled to get to grips with the roadbook instructions whilst navigating in and out of the listed airfield buildings.

As drivers pushed their cars for a decent time, components began to fail, including a second broken trailing arm for Bill Cleyndert, although a quick trip to a friendly farmer welding bay with car 76 navigator Matt Abrey got him back on track! Some incredible charity and rallying spirit, although Matt had been afforded the time to spring into action, the Aston Martin he was competing in with Simon Arscott had overheated, after Simon had forgotten to switch the fan on!

Simon and Bill were still in the rally though, which, by the time the day was done would not be the case for some and the sweep crews were kept busy for the duration of the leg. Other issues included a wiring fire for Dan Geoghan and Pip White in their Riley MPH, a broken clutch release bearing for Andrew Cairns and Ian Wallace in their Frazer Nash and a broken gearbox for Wilfred and Sandra Schaefer in their Talbot, amongst many others. As the hail hit during the morning as well, many may have been wondering why they had left the safety of the Fairmont at St. Andrews, but the reward, if the blast around Crail hadn’t been enough, would come as the day got going properly after the first coffee halt.

The second regularity provided the first hint of altitude of the day, and the first view of the highlands stunning scenery as snow capped peaks towered above the heather flanked roads of the competition section. It was a firm display of nature’s beauty, as well as her power, as whilst travelling between the trees of the Forest of Alyth, the devastating effect of the winter storms was in full view as the road was lined with upturned trees. It was quite an awesome





sight and would set a theme for most of the days forest sections, including a regularity through the Loch Errochty Forest that took crews on an exciting and undulating navigation of the forest fire roads.

By lunch time, which would take place at the impressive Blair Atholl, the top three remained unchanged from the previous day, although there was the tiniest crack of daylight appearing between the top two as William Medcalf improved his margin over Martin Hunt in second place. But, nothing stays the same for long in rallying and there was about to be a shift in the fortunes of one of those fighting for the lead. Post lunch and there was no time for a length digestion, as a brisk test followed in the grounds of Blair Atholl, followed quickly again by another test up the sharp incline of the adjacent Lude House. The engine notes of William Medcalf's Bentley sounded particularly sweet as it bounced off of the trees surrounding the Lude climb, as did Martin Hunt's Frazer Nash BMW 328, but behind them there would be no car 97 of Paul Crosby and Ali Proctor. The second-place finishers in 2019 had suffered a difference of opinion with the differential of the supercharged MG TB and their rally was over for this year, promoting Paul Dyas and Ian Tullie into third spot, a just reward for their consistent performances on the competitive sections.

This would be how the day would finish, certainly for the top three in any case, but not until some more exceptional regularities, particularly the last of the day which wound its way along a sun-soaked road, under the gaze of yet more snow-capped peaks, before finishing with a flourish on the closed roads of a private woodland. It was a glorious end to a fabulous day for most, and to those that have sadly succumbed to the endurance element of this rally, we can only say we wish you were here. Tomorrow is the final day, and it remains to be seen who will make the flag at Gleneagles, and in what order they will finish.

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