



## **Team GMF Wyedean Forest Rally**

**Saturday  
13<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

### **AND THEY'RE OFF!...**

The first major forest rally in the UK calendar, the Team GMF Wyedean Forest Rally, will see crews from all over the country heading for Chepstow Racecourse on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February for all the pre-event formalities. The one and only opportunity in the year for competitors to sample the special stages in the Forest of Dean has attracted an entry of 170 cars which, in the current uncertain economic climate, will be the envy of many an event organiser as the season unfolds.

Last year's winner NIK ELSMORE, co-driven on this occasion by NIGEL GARDNER, takes the No.1 spot in his Mitsubishi Lancer EVO9 and there is some family honour at stake here. Nik's father Graham won the first three Wyedean Rallies ever to take place (1975-1977) while Nik was victorious in 2001 and 2009. So, the Coleford resident will be looking to even the score this time but, as is ever the case, that will be easier said than done!...

Behind Elsmore, former MSA Gravel Rally Champion STEVE PEREZ (Ford Focus WRC) has yet to win the Wyedean and the Chesterfield driver would dearly love to add the event to his CV. Meanwhile, co-driver PAUL SPOONER (Raglan) guided Brian Bell to victory in 1999 and is no stranger to the area. 2007 winners HUGH HUNTER/ANDY MARCHBANK are back and the North Walian, in another Ford Focus WRC, are eminently capable of putting their names on the trophy once again.

Hereford's DAMIAN COLE (Hyundai Accent WRC) has been runner-up in the past, while 2009 Silverstone Tyres BTRDA Gold Star Champion DAVID WRIGHT (Mitsubishi Lancer EVO9) journeys down from Lancaster to begin the defence of his title.

Rounding off the Top Six is a driver no-one can ever ignore! In its thirty-five year history, ANDY BURTON (Kington) has won the Wyedean more times than anyone else. The score currently stands at five, the first one coming in 1995 and the most recent in 2008. Win or lose, Burton's attacking style is a great crowd-pleaser and, given a clean run, he will undoubtedly be up amongst the leaders.

The first two-wheel drive car in the entry is the Ford Escort MkII of Ulstermen ADRIAN HETHERINGTON/GARY NOLAN who will have double former Silverstone Tyres BTRDA Silver Star Champion JON BALLINGER (Opel Manta) and co-driver JONNY EVANS breathing down their necks. In turn, 'JB' will be immediately followed by another rapid Escort in the hands of TIM FREEMAN/IAN OAKEY.

The first cars to leave the Chepstow Racecourse start at 8.00am on Saturday 13th February will be those contesting the 1400cc category and, in particular, the Millers Oils BTRDA 1400 Championship. The Vauxhall Nova of JULIAN WILKES/WILL RUTHERFORD will lead the rally away, ahead of former champion DARREN PINCHIN, and co-driver KAREN WATTS, in his Proton Satria. MARTYN & RICHARD LEWIS (Vauxhall Nova) are next, with 2009 MG ZR Rally Challenge Champions CALLUM BLACK/PAUL WAKELY up against the identical car of MATT EDWARDS/SAM COLLIS.

The 2009 BTRDA *Rally First* Challenge winners, DAVE BENNETT/ALASTAIR MCNEIL (Vauxhall Corsa) have moved up to contest the mainstream 1400 Championship this year, while MATT GRIFFIN/JOE CRUTTENDEN (VW Lupo) and JOE EVETT/MATT FOWLE (Vauxhall Nova), amongst many others, set out in their respective bids to succeed them.

For the first time on the Wyedean, what is a very healthy 'Historic' entry will also run ahead of the main field. Former MSA British Historic Rally Champions DAVID STOKES/GUY WEAVER lead a Top 10 dominated by Ford Escorts. Adding to the variety of 'classic' machinery are the Opel Ascona 400 of THEO BENGRY/LES FORSBROOK, 1989 Wyedean winner IAN BEVERIDGE in a Volvo P544 and the Saab 96 V4 of Chepstow's JOHN TATLOW.

Pretenders to the 2010 MSA English Rally Championship crown set out on the long road to success on the Wyedean. JON BALLINGER was the 2009 Champion in his Opel Manta, but the class-based series promotes the possibility of outright victory coming from someone in any of the different engine capacities. Indeed, a 1400cc car was on course for victory last year until retirement on the final round!...

After 45 miles of special stages, the first car is due back at the finish shortly after 2.30pm, with Prize-giving also taking place at Chepstow Racecourse on the Saturday evening.

4/2/2010

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