

CLASSIC DRIVER

The 16th St Moritz British Classic Car Meeting



The Engadin in high summer, classic British cars, 5-star Swiss luxury hotels and good company - you can't really beat it, can you? Well, no; but a trophy would have been nice...

I still don't understand how we didn't win. My map-reading was exemplary, our time-keeping was spot-on, Peter's driving in our car (a **1987 Aston Martin V8**) immaculate and yet, come Saturday evening, at the gala prize-giving at the **Suvretta House Hotel**, our table was bare.





It could have been the omitted mystery test, I suppose. Yes, that's it, but surely everyone missed the one after the Austrian customs post? Evidently not, and as for our performance on the **Regularity** section at **Tschlin**, well, how difficult is it to average 27km/h over an uphill kilometre, for goodness' sake? Very; especially if you get stuck behind a Swiss farmer's tractor in the hay-making season.

Oh well, there's always next year, and 2010 will be the event's 17th since it was first run in 1994. It's a largely Swiss affair, with the notable exception this year of one or two entries from the United Kingdom, the most intrepid of which being **Marcus Fincham's 1979 Rolls-Royce Phantom VI** limousine. All the way from the UK in that must have been quite an experience and, to top it all, he won not only his class but the prize for the greatest distance travelled to the event. The man's got style (and stamina).



The event takes the form of a two-night stay in one of the world's most charismatic locations, **St Moritz**, and a gentle regularity rally on the **Saturday** split into various classes based on marque (**Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Jaguar/Daimler, Aston Martin/Lagonda, Austin-Healey/Healey** and 'Open, for anything else'). All cars are handicapped for age, so the many entrants of newer cars such as a **DB9** or **Continental GT** were suitably penalised but could still have fun.

Friday night was a cocktail party, drivers' briefing and informal dinner at the **Engadin Airport, Samedan**. Entrants then repaired to their luxury hotels (a very reasonable hotel package can be added to the also-

reasonable entry fee) in preparation for the following day's competition.

Luckily, Friday's cloudy weather had blown away for a superb Alpine summer's morning come 08:00 the next day. As described above, Peter and I did our best and returned trophy-less but with broad smiles on our faces. The route covers some 210km of the most perfect Alpine roads in **Switzerland**, with brief incursions into **Italy** and **Austria** before returning to the famous **Badrutt's Palace Hotel** around tea-time.







No, let me correct that, you return *exactly* 7 hours 16 minutes after you are flagged off the starting ramp. We got that right. Oh yes.

Sunday sees the cars on display in St Moritz for a concours d'élégance, again split by marque. With *Live and Let Die* playing - strangely appropriately - on the PA, I wasn't expecting the next musical intervention to be by the **Pipes and Drums of Zurich**. It was the **British** Classic Car Meeting, I suppose.

The event finishes with prizes for the concours entrants held after an informal lunch in a marquee in the centre of town. More excellent Swiss hospitality and yet another chance to re-live the weekend's action.



I can honestly say that I had a terrific time and could recommend the weekend to anyone with an eligible (i.e. British) car. And, if you are thinking of a summer European tour, why not take in St Moritz, anyway? You won't always have a rally to enter, but who takes that sort of thing seriously?

*With grateful thanks to **Daniel Waltenberg**, **Vic Jacob**, President of the **BCCM**, the wonderful **Suvretta House** for its world-class, 5-star accommodation, and last, but not least, my long-suffering co-driver **Peter Ruegg** and his super **Aston V8**.*

*The next **St Moritz British Classic Car Meeting** will take place from **9 - 11 July 2010**. For further details, see www.bccm-stmoritz.ch*









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