

CLASSIC DRIVER

[2011, 18th St Moritz British Classic Car Meeting: Review](#)



The sound of cowbells in a collecting area might be an unfamiliar one to seasoned British competitors, but that's what the 180+ entrants to this year's event enjoyed at the start of the 18th British Classic Car Meeting in St Moritz.

Having missed last year's event due to a diary clash with the Le Mans Classic, I had been greatly looking forward to some summer Alpine air and 5* hospitality at the [Suvretta House](#) hotel. Neither disappointed, and nor did the route of the event itself: for 2011 titled 'La Drossa Rally'.

Yes, the jet-set resort of St Moritz is wonderful in winter, yet the Engardin region has much to offer throughout the year and the annual British Classic Car Meeting (BCCM) is the ideal opportunity for visitors to discover it.

As the hours go by on Friday afternoon, the entrants make their way one by one across the Alps to the 1800-metre-high resort. That evening, the route for the Saturday regularity rally is revealed.



So instead of their usual late-night carousing (red wine, cigars, vodka, that sort of thing) it's early to bed for the hardy rallyists, with a roadbook now carefully annotated and plotted, all ready for the early Saturday start.

Now, it might appear a simple task but, as you will recall from [my efforts in 2009](#) (which were bettered by some margin as [Nicholas Hewitt took over the Classic Driver driving gloves in 2010](#)), the task of rattling off 98.9km before lunch, and 97.5km afterwards, is not a simple one.



Add in a secret-to-the-competitors handicap, timed sections along the way and a final driving test, and you end up with two distinctly different categories: 'Men' and 'Boys'. The separation between them being as high as the Stelvio itself - our destination for the rally's lunchtime stop.

And my goodness, some competitors could not even find their way to the start line by the correct route!

Our car for 2011 was to be a Bentley Continental Flying Spur Speed, with Nicholas Mee behind the wheel and your Editor on the twin Haldas. In all honesty the chances of a pot this time were slim, so we decided to take it easy and enjoy the scenery...







... which was simply breathtaking. The morning's route took in Pontresina, Livigno, the Ofenpass and then up the Umbrailpass to Stelvio. All the while, we enjoyed the company of fellow competitors at stops along the way, or just parking up and watching the convoy pass by.

At Stelvio, lunch was taken at the Albergo Folgore with snow still visible on the northern side of the mountains. Pasta and pastries despatched, it was time to step back into our cars for the homeward stretch and the descent down the magnificent Stelvio with its winding ribbon of road. Naturally enough, our car performed faultlessly, but I was impressed with how well the older cars coped with the - at times - quite testing conditions. Breakdowns were few and far between, and soon assisted by the ever-efficient organisers' support staff.



Come tea-time and we'd almost got back to the finishing line. I say *almost*, as the final test was a timed trial in a car park where some of the older cars were really going for it. Counting down 15 seconds with your driver desperate to cross the finishing line is not easy, but finish we did with a flourish from the Swiss flag outside the world-famous Badrutt's Palace Hotel.

What a great day. And hats off to the organisers for assembling such a world-class entry this year. There was a historically significant original Jaguar C-type (the British company being a title sponsor of the event), an ex-Mille Miglia Healey 100S, the ex-Briggs Cunningham Aston Martin DB2 and a 'Blue Train Bentley' recreation which must have been a handful in the passes.



Saturday night was a gala dinner where, on every table, hopes were raised and soon crushed. The overall winner – driving solo, well done, sir... worthy winner of your Chopard watch! - was Christopher Steiner, from Zofingen, Switzerland in his Aston Martin V8 Saloon Series 3.

On Sunday, the driving gloves had been packed away and it was out with the polish and dusters for the concours, with a final lunch and concours prize-giving to finish proceedings.



As they say, it's not the winning, it's the taking part. To win this event, you would really have to take it

seriously. To take part next year, on the other hand, simply go to www.bccm-stmoritz.ch and find out more about this must-do event.

The 2012 St Moritz British Classic Car Meeting takes place from 13-15 July 2012. See www.bccm-stmoritz.ch.





With grateful thanks to Daniel Waltenberg and the organisers of the BCCM, Vic Jacob and the staff of the sublime [Suvretta House hotel](#) and, last but not least, the man who could well give Paddy Hopkirk sleepless nights, Nicholas Mee.

















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