

CLASSIC DRIVER

Villars-sur-Ollon

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Cars waiting their turn, the Dents du Midi mountains in the background

Hillclimbs are a form of motorsport poetry: man and machine against nature for a short, intense burst of speed, in some ways the purest form of our sport. Only hardened cynics would be left cold by such a truly fine event as the Villars-sur-Ollon historic hillclimb, held in stunning scenery between snow-capped Alpine peaks and pastures peppered with flower-laden chalets. The delighted spectators were transported to a purer, simpler time, reflecting the roots of racing.

Re-enacted only very occasionally due to the reluctance of the Swiss authorities (in this case, the first time in four years), September 15-16 saw the Villars-sur-Ollon hillclimb take place between the ski resorts of, unsurprisingly, Ollon and Villars.

In the olden, golden days, this was a round of the **European Hillclimb Championship** which saw the likes of **Datwyler** in his **Maserati** and **Peter Schetty** in the gorgeous, one-off **212E Montagna** rule the mountain – before **Francois Cevert** set the all-time record in 1971, driving a **Tecno F2**, in what was to be the event's final competitive year. The original hillclimb's international standing is demonstrated by the fact that **Jim Clark** and **Jack Brabham** rank as former competitors, as did the likes of **Jean Behra**, **Maurice Trintignant**, **Jo Siffert**, **Vaccarella**, **Bandini** and **Scarfioffi** (the latter very successful in climbs though, alas, he perished at Rosfeld).

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A selection of Alfas about to take to the hill: small engine, big noise!

Today's historic event is not timed, yet an incredible variety of cars, bikes and sidecars blasted their way up the original 8km course. Throughout the weekend, the weather was glorious and a large but not overwhelming crowd of spectators gathered from across Europe. They were not disappointed.



Claude Sage, former manager of the **Swiss Filipinetti** team, aboard his **Alfa Giulietta** added local flavour. The **1971 Miura SV** of **Marc Caveng** was driven seriously fast and much admired, despite the model's lack of significant racing history, while the **Mercedes 300SL Gullwing** of **Simon Kidston** made dignified progress up la Montagne. The silver **Aston DB6** of **Thomas Maechler** brought memories of **Bond** chasing **Blofeld** along similar Swiss roads in *'Goldfinger'*, while the **Lancia Stratos** of **Tryfon Georgallides**, one of the most passionate and knowledgeable *Stratisti*, was a popular sight and demonstrated just how nimble the Dino-powered rally legend can be.



Sports prototypes such as the stunning **Chevron B16** of **Gerard Demarta**, a pair of **Jean-Rondeau-built Inalteras** and **Porsche Carrera 6**, a rare purpose-built hillclimb **907**, plus **908** and **910**, were greatly admired, while the **911** brigade, along with some 356s, was predictably out in full force, some rasping sideways out of hairpins to cheers and applause. Specialised hillclimb machinery such as **Abarths**, from 500s to sports prototypes, were plentiful, while there were also some cars which seemed incongruous on a hillclimb. Among these were the the **1957 Corvette** of **Alex Luchinger**, which brought to mind a tugboat heading upstream on an unfamiliar river, while a sickly **Ferrari Daytona** smoked so much that it appeared to be steam-powered.

The **1928 Maserati tipo 26M** of Swiss **Alain Berrabah** was a popular sight, seemingly original yet running well, while **Franz Messerli** drove his rare **4CM** with gusto. The **Maserati** contingent also included the one-off **Cegga Maserati** sports prototype and single-seaters of the **Gachnang** family.

Completing the widely varied entry were 50s and 60s racing motorcycles and sidecars. Swiss **Yvan Beaud** was greeted with much applause due to his speed – and the fact that it was achieved with hand controls, on a vehicle he built himself, following a motorcycle accident which left him partially disabled. He was fastest of all through the chicanes and hairpins with his 125cc kart, which gave yours truly ideas for the next event... The entries that seemed most evocative of bygone days, however, were the **Alfa Romeo 8Cs** of Swiss drivers **Blochle** and **Donsallaz**, and Brit **Peter Mann**. These elicited an admiring hush from the crowd.

It's not known when we'll next see the hillclimb take place but, whenever it is, you would do well to add this very fine event to your diary.



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