
St Moritz: 17th British Classic Car Meeting 2010: Review

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“How difficult can it be?” were the Editor’s words last year, reflecting on the rally tests at the British Classic Car Meeting in St Moritz.

The 17th running of the event, which combines an alpine rally and regularity run with a concours d’elegance, receptions, lunches and dinners, all set among Switzerland’s beautiful **Engadin** mountains, seemed not to be missed. The Ed’s words rang in my ears as I set off from England under the directions of my 14-year-old navigator, **Thomas**, on what was to be a 3000km, six-day round trip in our **Aston Martin V8 Vantage Volante 6.3**. The scenery, the weather, the Swiss hospitality and the organisation of the event turned out to be epic.



Thomas's Facebook holiday one-up-man-ship determined that we drove through as many countries as possible. A meandering route through **England, France, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Austria** and **Lichtenstein** was chosen. Together with the rally in **Switzerland** and **Italy**, this gave a satisfying tally of nine countries in six days, despite mutterings about how mean I was to refuse to add **Holland** and **Spain**. I made a mental note to scrutinise his school geography results. The amazing performance of my 24-year-old Aston's 6.3-litre engine continues to surprise, even after 14 years' ownership. Its rapidly looming appearance in the rear-view mirror evidently surprised most of the German autobahn users.



Soaring temperatures of 35deg C saw us arrive in **St Moritz** with the engine's water temperature needle contorting itself into worrying positions. After testing everything, **Garage Volante**, St Moritz's classic car specialist, put us back in the game with a new radiator cap and a huge sigh of relief – plus many thanks on my part.

St Moritz boasts some of the finest hotels in Switzerland and our stay at the **Suvretta House** lived up to expectations. Surpassing them, however, was the friendliness and welcome from our Swiss hosts. With 200 cars entered, only a handful were from outside **Switzerland** and the range of entrants was amazingly diverse – from a **1914 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost** (driven all the way from **Nottingham**) to a **2010 Bentley Supersports** and seemingly every variety of classic **Rolls, Bentley, Jaguar, Healey** and **Austin-Healey** in between.

The **Splügen Rallye** on the Saturday morning took us on a 215km course of breathtaking scenery through the **Engadin**, taking in the **Albula, Splügen** and **Maloja** passes. **Thomas** had never seen a **Tulip diagram** before and, when handed the route book, was alarmed that there was no map. He soon took to it, however, giving me instructions with scary assurance... and we didn't get lost once.



The required 36.5km average speed seemed ridiculously low until the challenges of the route became apparent. Narrow tunnels and galleries, together with endless hairpins and the afternoon bus traffic in **Italy**, soon made this a genuine target to attain. How cars such as the **Rolls-Royce Phantom VI** navigated the course was a mystery. The simple tests sounded a doddle... until we tried them. The regularity test in the form of a hillclimb might have been easy if we had spotted its start... or its finish, for that matter, but we were having too much fun trying to keep up with **Marcus Diethelm's** spirited driving in his **DB9**.

Like the **Editor last year**, at the end of a magnificent dinner we came away empty-handed from the prize-giving on Saturday evening (but in our case, deservedly). **Philip Ringier** in a **1954 XK120** enjoyed the highest overall score in the **Splügen Rallye 2010** and collected a **Chopard Mille Miglia** watch. For us, there was always the concours on Sunday morning, but first I had the daunting task of removing 1500km of filth and road-kill from the **Aston**... while **Thomas** had a long, teenage lie-in.



Come 11am on Sunday, under dazzling sunshine, a magnificent array of machinery was laid out in the centre of **St Moritz** around the **Badrutt's Palace Hotel**. Personal favourites were the beautifully presented fleet of **1955 Austin-Healey 100S Sebrings**, **Michael Darcy's 4½-litre Blower Bentley**, **Adrian von Lerber's 1953 Graber-bodied Bentley VI Coupé** (which had won the **Bentley** class in the rally) and more recent fare in the form of **Le Mans** 'ancien pilote' **Marco Vanoli's** immaculate **DB7 Zagato**.

A great event and with wonderful memories of our road trip and many new friends made, I for one will be looking forward to the 18th running of the **BCCM St Moritz**... and, unlike the Editor, we didn't – in the end – come away empty-handed. The **Aston** collected the silverware for winning first in class in the concours d'elegance, while Thomas remains truly amazed that the Engadin fairies cleaned the car while he slept.

*With grateful thanks to the staff at the superlative **Suvretta House** hotel, and **Daniel Waltenberg** and the organising committee of the **2010 BCCM St Moritz***



For information on next year's **BCCM St Moritz** event, see www.bccm-stmoritz.ch

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