

The Alpine Echo

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In December 2017 and with the winter snows starting to blanket the Alps, Keith Baud and Anthony Preston undertook the first 'recce' trip for the 2018 Alpine Trial. These days one can normally get over all but the highest passes in November, however the conditions resembled the snowy years in the '90's when we used to organise the routes for those memorable Monte Carlo Challenges that helped kick start the Classic Rallying movement. The snowline started at around 1200m, which meant a dog sled would have been of more use to us than the Rally Office VW Golf! But no worries, we have driven all these roads many times in the past and know them well enough to guarantee a good 'Alpine' for you.



Family Matters

With the entry list already two-thirds full, it is heartening to see so many family members competing together. Bill Holroyd was so pleased with his successful debut in his Bentley Tourer on the Blue Train Challenge that he immediately put in an entry for two cars on the Alpine. However, he has wisely chosen a rare but more nimble 1953 Frazer Nash Sebring in which to enter the Alpine Trophy with son Harri, leaving wife Julia to chauffeur daughter Olivia around the many Alpine hairpins in an MG TC.

Other father and son teams include Alpine regulars Michael and Nicholas Kershaw in their nimble HRG, and Brian and Harvey Scowcroft in a Chevrolet Fangio Coupe. Also, for the first time, we welcome Jamie Pueche and his son Alfonso all the way from Spain in a beautiful Alfa Romeo SS Pininfarina. No doubt sisters Kate and Sophie Wickham (MG TC) will again be aiming to do a giant killing act on dad Keith's big Bentley.

There are also numerous husband and wife teams on the entry list. Ade and Fi Barwick are first time Alpinists in their 1927 Bentley, as are Jim and Tanya Clarke (1936 Ford Coupe) and Graham and Marina Goodwin (Talbot 105). Andrew and

Ann Boland lead the Irish contingent in their familiar Talbot AV105, whilst Aoife Rosenmeyer also flies the Irish flag in husband James' Lea Francis. Tony and Pauline Mather have forsaken their normal Citroen for a newly renovated Delahaye, and Richard and Victoria Nicholl have entered the Alpine Trophy section in the 1962 Jaguar E Type they used on the Blue Train Challenge.

However, lest anyone think the Alpine Trial is an easy three day doddle for families, it is worth noting that all the previous winners are returning for another stab at this challenging event. Gareth Burnett, winner in 2014 and 2016 is bringing his familiar Talbot 105 Alpine, Peter Kite has forsaken his 2015 winning Frazer Nash for a similar Talbot 105, whilst Clinton Smith, one of only four winners of a coveted Alpine Cup, has yet to nominate his mount.

And finally James Gately, one of the unluckiest but nicest men on the planet, is again coming all the way from California to see if he can finally beat his European jinx. He has twice been close to winning the Alpine, and retired within sight of the finish of the Blue Train whilst leading, so hopefully 2018 will be kinder to him...



Feeding the Inner Man and woman...

One of the more enjoyable aspects of doing route surveys is finding (and sampling!) suitable places for you to enjoy lunch or light refreshments. Over the years we have built up quite a 'bank' of suitable establishments but we are always on the lookout for new and interesting places for you to visit.

Day One takes you into the Jura Mountains to the west of Divonne-les-Bains where there will be time to enjoy lunch at a restaurant with a panoramic view over one of the largest man-made lakes in France.

Day Two heads south west into the Bugey before turning east to Annecy. Morning coffee will be at a lonely auberge which enjoys the most magnificent views of the Alps and Mont Blanc, whilst lunch is at a charming hotel/restaurant run by three generations of the same family in the centre of a tiny village.

Despite not being able to reach many of the higher roads of Day Three due to snow cover, we can report that morning coffee will be taken at our favourite mountain refuge at the top of one of the toughest climbs in the Alps and that lunch will be in a mountain top restaurant on the other side of the valley although the route to get there will not be a short hop...



The Nations Cup

One of the most successful innovations created on The Blue Train Challenge was the Nations Cup, a team award that enabled different nationalities to compete against each other. With eight different nationalities already entered we have now decided to introduce the award on the 'Alpine' as well.

The concept has again proved popular with the Swiss, the nation already fielding a strong team of including Kelly and Arthur Stuhlinger (Jaguar XK120) and Hampi Durrer (MG TF), plus the 1932 Alvis Speed 20 of Beat Hirs and his charming and enthusiastic wife Elisabeth, and the 1935 Lagonda of the irrepressible Urz Mezger, who will no doubt be sporting his familiar Glengarry!

We are delighted this year to also be welcoming very strong contingents from both Belgium and the Netherlands.

The German flag is currently flown by Bernd and Christiane Dannenmaier (1935 Riley) and Wilfried Schaefer and Sandra Hubner who came so close to a good result on the Blue Train Challenge in their Talbot. Hopefully we can soon attract a few more of their fellow countrymen.

The Alpine Trophy

For the first time this year, 'pre 62' sports cars will be allowed to enjoy the same route and facilities as the vintage cars on the Alpine Trial. This idea was a great success on last year's Blue Train Challenge, so we are again pleased to welcome participants in this type of car for the 'Alpine Trophy'.

In addition to Bill Holroyd's Frazer Nash, crews already entered include Colin and Veronica Weekley in a 1960 Healey 3000, Mick and Grace de Haas in a Porsche 356, Hampi Durrer's MG TF, the Stuhlinger's Jaguar and Stefan Costermans in an Aston Martin DB2/4 DHC - you don't see many of those on rallies!

History Lessons

There are many theories as to the origins of the Alpine Trial, but informed opinion usually cites the ones organised by the Royal Austrian Automobile Club as being the first. From 1910 until the outbreak of WW1 in 1914, the first 'Alpenfahrts', as the Austrian Alpines were known, were organised. They started and finished in Vienna.

However, Reliability Trials were very much a British invention, and were first introduced into Europe in 1903 by a Bavarian portrait painter (*yes, really..*) called Herbert von Herkomer. Prior to this, European events were basically races, where competitor was matched against competitor, rather than against the challenge the organisers set, as in a Reliability Trial.

Herkomer had been working in England when he saw the RAC 1000 Mile Trial and, on arriving home, persuaded the President of the Bavarian Automobile Club that the concept was worth trying. Between 1905 and 1907, the Herkomer Trials were the supreme reliability test for Touring cars in Europe

It is widely acknowledged that the most famous Alpine Trials, and the ones that we try to emulate in period and style, were the International Alpine Trials organised by a consortium of National Motor Clubs between 1928 and 1936.

The first followed a 1095 mile route through the Alps from Milan to Munich. Of the 84 starters, 59 made it to the finish, of which just six were awarded a 'Coupe International des Alpes'. Interestingly, the Alpine Cups weren't cups at all, but statuettes of *Danaide*, a 2000 year old Roman nymph...

Keith and Anthony