The 3rd Flying Scotsman - London to Edinburgh by Vintage Motor-Car

CLASSIC RELIABILITY TRIAL
FLYING SCOTSMAN
LONDON TO EDINBURGH

Rallying Against the Clock... and Britain’s Most Famous Train
Friday 1 April – Sunday 3 April 2011
From Brooklands to the Welsh Marches, and on to the Scottish Borders with the finest driving roads of England in between – how special is this?

The ordeal begins with the famous “Brooklands Breakfast” in the original clubhouse of the World’s first-ever motor-racing circuit, where vintage motorists have been gathering for motor-sport since 1907. After Scrutineering and pre-rally briefing, crews are flagged away and we are on our way.

Heading west from London, crossing the Thames at Henley, the route heads through the picturesque villages of the Chiltern Hills. After a good morning’s run it’s time for a lunch halt, and a chance for the Organisers to sweep up the Time Cards and begin counting up the penalties racked up so far.

Crews now head west, a major change to previous years, into the dramatic countryside of the Welsh border-region. We have found some stunning roads heading north to the famous railway town of Crewe and the Wychwood Park Hotel, our first overnight Halt.

The scenic beauty and tranquillity of the Yorkshire Dales makes for great open-road motoring and is ideally suited to pre-war cars. We have always found them delightfully free of traffic, and the grandeur of vast sweeping moorland makes a superb backdrop as we head to our second overnight halt at Carlisle.

From here it’s only a short drive to Gretna Green and the border into Scotland. This rarely explored area of Galloway offers an opportunity to test your map reading skills as the route twists and turns over the hills and through the forests of the Border Country. This leads us to a final dash to the Dalmahoy Hotel outside Edinburgh, where a Scottish Piper will welcome you under the finish arch. We all dine together for an informal social evening and Prizegiving Ceremony, where hopefully the right person collects the right trophy – a feat rather dependent on your skills with the Scottish beverage... So ends a remarkable three days of motoring in what has become established as Britain’s longest, and some say toughest, Vintage Challenge.
How do I survive all this?
The Flying Scotsman is organised along totally authentic lines and is nothing more, nothing less, than a grand pre-war Time Trial with a bunch of highly eccentric drivers, who all are determined to enjoy each other's company in the evenings, and like nothing more than to drive like hell all day down remarkable roads in an effort to stay on time. This ambition, we can now say with the benefit of two year's past experience, is totally impossible. You have to be nuts to think you can do any good, and it's always a delight to see so many drivers wilt at the knees as their ambitions of getting hold of a “True Grit” tankard, or even a Class award, evaporates in the haze of the event's red mist.

Is it competitive? You bet. There is nothing quite like this. Does it really matter? Some say it does. Most are more concerned with seeing a long bath, and a long bar, at the end of the day.

Why me?
Because to discover the truly wild roads of Great Britain, and see it all with a mate through the windscreen of a pre-war car, is one of the finest weekends you'll enjoy all year... there's nothing like this in terms of driving experiences, and the camaraderie of being totally surrounded by equally remarkable company. You might actually cart home an armful of silverware, because the Organisers certainly can't keep it polished for another year.

What do I need?
A reliable car. A car that can keep going is better than one that has ten more horsepower, but stops more often to pick up the pieces. And period clothing helps - the camera crew will favour you.

What if I breakdown?
Most sort out a get-you-home rescue scheme for dire emergencies. Others sit it out by the roadside and await the attention of our two roving workshops with the skill and patience to mechanic things back together again. Only a few fail to get going - even fewer fail to reach the finish party.
At the end of the day, there is a wonderful, satisfying feeling only mountaineers could understand – the satisfaction of having endured some pain while laughing your head off is not for normal people. Don’t say nobody ever tried explaining it though. If you are still mystified, we could pass on the phone numbers of people like Gerry Acher, (Aston Martin International), or Robert Ellis (Frazer Nash, mostly, apart from the Halfords gaffa-tape), while others are like us - mostly lost for words at the end of it all. Remember, life is short. What else are you going to do… this beats mowing the lawn.

**What sort of car?**

Anything pre-war, with a pre-war chassis, and a pre-war engine design. Exceptions? We are open to persuasion that an HRG is essentially a pre-war car, and so too is an MG T-Type. If it’s got two leaf springs at the front, then you certainly stand a chance. We want 60 cars, and more importantly, 60 crews with the right attitude – one of the remarkable things about this event is that you are not surrounded by loads of whingers and moaners. And they come from all over the world to join in.

**What do I get?**

A remarkable route – look, it has to be really remarkable if it’s to be better than last time, which only had three sets of traffic lights between Brooklands and Edinburgh. The Route Book is the work of Alan Smith and Kim Bannister, who spend weeks and weeks and weeks planning, plotting, arguing (no, discussing), and then driving it all and then going back out to check it, and when they are satisfied, someone suggests we all go and check it again. It’s a pity there are no mistakes in it, as frankly it would keep you on your toes a bit more if there were… this is, alas, something you can take for granted. It’s the work of a genius.

You get Heidi sorting your hotels, and meals, last time we all rocked up at a castle stuffed with suits of armour for a full silver-service Sunday lunch. The serving wenches were also rather tasty, according to Paul Carter. You also get the help of the team in the Rally Office, Barbara is your Entry Secretary and has simply enormous patience… someone has to know the things you’ve forgotten. And our back-up ‘sweeps’ are real heroes.
Who are we?

We have been organising this sort of thing since 1988 when we staged the first-ever international rally for vintage and classic cars, taking over Tower Bridge for the launch of the Pirelli Classic Marathon to the Dolomites. Philip Young kick-started the Historic Rally Car Register and is generally credited with being the founder of rallies for older cars. We have all been involved in epics such as the Peking to Paris, Around the World in 80 Days and more demanding events such as the London Dakar. Before we meet at Brooklands we will have hopefully conquered Africa on the London Cape Town World Cup Rally – no other event has kept the wheels turning for the full length of the African Continent. Coming up are more social events such as the dinner-party tour of the best of Africa, the Safari Challenge, and The Trans-Am drive across America to Alaska. With 60 events behind us we could go on, but that’s enough to assure you that you are in good hands. Call Heidi or Barbara if you enjoy a chat – and emails will always get an answer.
What do I do now?

Fill in the form – get that off and don’t forget the cheque, deposit, or, more helpful (look, you know you are coming) the full amount and let’s get that nailed down early. It helps the Organisation – and therefore your enjoyment – if the event is properly planned early, as we don’t like arguments with hotels for extra rooms or extra meals just because someone wants to leave it all to the last minute. With that done, you go on a mailing list, your name goes up in lights on the website, and we keep you posted with newsletters. We can put you in touch with others competitors if you wish, as we hope you will want to have a bash at the Team Prize.

Is it difficult – will I get lost?

Tricky question. It’s designed to achieve a daily classification, with results that consume half a forest of green paper. Yes, it helps if you can read a map, if you can work out average speeds, appreciate that a Tulip book is not a bound volume of pressed-flowers, can work out the times you are supposed to be at certain points, and do devilish things called Regularities, but, if you are new to all this, we can help you up the learning curve... We do a booklet on timing, and you could even indulge in some personal preparation and have some one-to-one training. Not everyone takes any of this seriously – look, nobody comes more serious than Nigel Raeburn, and even he has been known to make a hash of it, so why fret about the black arts of rally science. The most important advice is to tell the driver to worry about the car and to stop the silly questions like “Are you sure?” Once in at the deep end, you’ll soon appreciate what’s needed to stay afloat with the rest of us.

What do I bring with me?

A trip-meter (any type) is a good idea and a tool-kit, but leave all the weighty items behind. Waterproof things with blobs of bathroom silicone sealer, that’s important - there are always some who fail to get that right. A good friend, a sense of humour and a lot of determination. You do not need a competition licence.