



Vroom vroom: classic cars take centre stage

Each autumn for the past 16 years, Switzerland has been the destination of some of the most well-maintained and collectable classic British cars. This year, on October 4, Morges will once again host the Swiss Classic British Car Meeting.





Ed Hammond's Austin 16 completed the Peking to Paris route last year; Right, typical, vintage luggage

They will visit seven European capital cities in seven days, starting in the UK and taking the ferry to Norway, driving to Oslo, then visiting Stockholm, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris and finishing in Bern. No more an feat in a 1940s car – then or now!

The journey will be undertaken just as it was in 1947, in two Austin 16s; they will be joined by no less than three Austin 7s. The Austin 7 is the diminutive 'baby' car of the 1930s and predecessor to the famous Mini.

After arriving in Bern, the cars will continue their epic journey to Plainpalais in Geneva (the original site of the Geneva Auto Show) for a radio interview – again, just as they did in 1947. Then they will drive to Morges, where they will be on display the next day in the Chateau grounds, along with other beautiful pre-1960 Austin cars, including one of the earliest Minis known to exist.

History outstrips the show

One annual event participant is British-expat Ed Hammond, owner of many classic cars, including one of the Austin 16s that successfully completed the 2007 Peking to Paris race. His history with British classics goes back a long way.

In February 1948, Hammond's father bought a new Austin 16, and took him and his mother to Nice and back. In 1949, they did a tour from Boulogne via Reims, Basel, Zurich, Davos, Como,

Nice, the Route Napoleon to Annecy, then through Martigny, Geneva, the Col de Faucille, Dijon and finally back to Boulogne.

"In 1998, I decided to repeat the trip 50 years on. I looked for a similar family saloon from that period to drive in. After a long search, I found the Austin 16 that I still have, and [my wife] and I thus repeated the 1949 trip," Hammond says.

Talking about 2007's Peking-Paris Rally, Hammond notes that he "needed to register a car to confirm a booking. The only car I had that qualified was the Austin 16, so I registered that, intending to get a more appropriate car. As time went on we realised that the Austin 16 would fit the bill very well. John, my co-driver, is a good mechanic and I have an intimate knowledge of the workings of the car. It rewarded our faith in it, as we completed the rally without having to be trucked or towed!"

This year Hammond will be back in Morges with his classic Austin 16. He loves the setting and noted to me that he would be back, even if he and his wife were living abroad.

Event origins

I personally discovered the event when surfing the Internet for information on classic British cars in 2003. Having always been a keen photographer, I rang organiser Keith Wynn and offered to take photos at the yearly event. To my delight,

Beautiful setting along Morges' waterfront

By Stephen Butterworth | Organiser Keith Wynn gives us the inside scoop on this auto paradise, highlighting this year's manufacturer spotlight – Austin, or more correctly 'the Austin', as it was known in its heyday. This year Wynn is organising a very unusual event, involving Austin cars of the '30s and '40s.

Some 60 years on, five event participants are going to repeat the 1947 Austin publicity stunt to underline the company slogan, "You can depend on an Austin".



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Event organiser Keith Wynn in Morges; below, 1953 Jaguar XK140, one of the many classics on display

he accepted, and thus my annual pleasure of photographing exquisite classic cars began in 2004.

In order to make people aware of this event and the dedicated team that make it happen, I spoke with Keith Wynn.

**Stephen Butterworth, *Swiss News*:
What was the catalyst for starting
this event?**

Keith Wynn: The meeting started 16 years ago. At that time, I belonged to a small enthusiast car club, in Geneva called *La Bielle Epoque*, which is a French play on words. There were 12 of us, and in 1992 we decided that we

should organise some sort of event to attract new members. As usual, everyone was very enthusiastic at the first club meeting, which we held in the car park at Signal de Bougy near Aubonne.

By placing a small advert in *La Vie de l'Auto*, we managed to attract nearly 200 cars, despite some very authentic British weather of fog, rain and cold!

Although the club flourished, I decided to make it an annual event, and we went back to the same place in '93. By this time, the meeting was still growing in size and we needed to find sponsorship. However, the rules at Signal de Bougy prevented advertising, so we had to look for a new site.

My wife suggested Morges, because it has three roads leading through it, and we could maybe use one of them. I wrote – not very hopefully – to the police in Morges. They agreed to try the meeting, and when they asked me which road, I did not dare hope that they would accept the lakeside road. However, lucky for us, they did just that, and that is where we have been ever since.

**How many
people are
involved
in running
the event?**

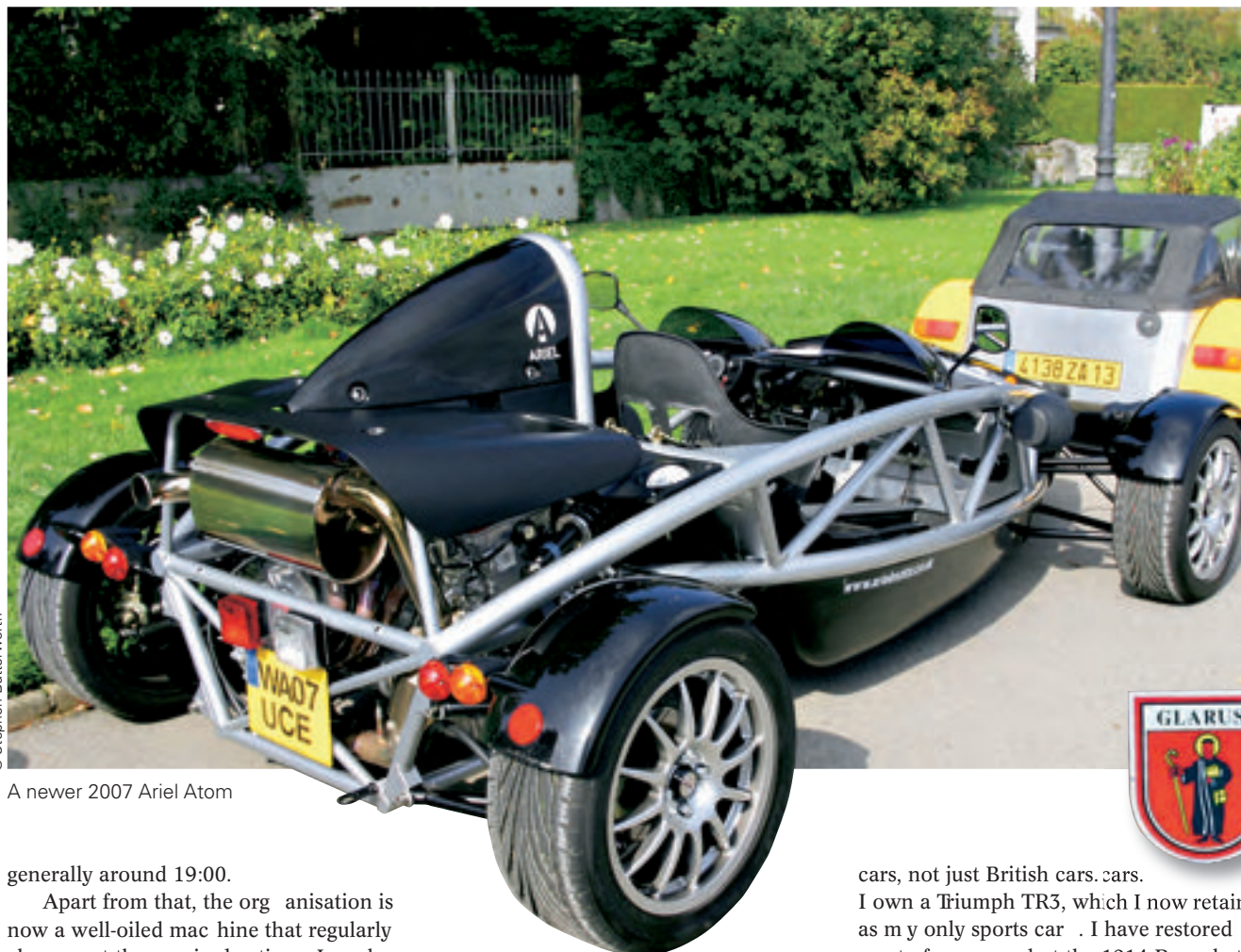
For the actual organisation, I pull all the strings. That is not to belittle the important contribution of the numerous volunteers who help with different aspects of the meeting, some working months in advance of the big day: such as the graphic designer who designs the poster in January, through to assistants, helpers and my wife at reception, plus of course, one very enthusiastic and competent photographer.

They all work very hard on the day for nothing more than the satisfaction of being part of the meeting. There is also plenty of hired help to put up tents and arrange the parking, so many thanks to all of the sponsors.

**What is the most time-consuming part
of organising this event?**

I suppose the actual day of the meeting is the most time-consuming because, for my wife and me, our day starts at 5:00 and doesn't finish until all the cars have gone,





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A newer 2007 Ariel Atom



generally around 19:00.

Apart from that, the organisation is now a well-oiled machine that regularly churns out the required actions. I work with an 18-month calendar, so it is never too hectic.

Most people do not believe that the organisation of the 2009 event is already under way in April the year before. But, participants need to know the date of the next meeting, and in order to fix dates with the police and communal authorities, I have to start very early. Clubs contact me with ideas for the "Make of Honour" sometimes a year or two in advance, hanging the day on anniversaries of their particular make or model.

I have noticed that there are a lot of modern British cars present. This surprises me since few modern vehicles can be described as 'classics', in the real sense of the word. I assumed there would be an age limit.

This is a very good question, and quite a thorny issue. The reason that I turn a 'blind eye' to the modern cars is that over the years, I have noticed that a participant may come in a modern British car for the first time, in order to test the wa-

ter, and then come back in subsequent years with something really interesting.

I try to discourage too many 'regulars' from turning up in modern cars, but it is difficult to draw the line. When someone arrives in a hot-off-the-press Aston Martin Vantage, to me that is an interesting car. Yet another New Mini is not quite as interesting, but it may be owned by a young enthusiast who aspires to acquire an older car.

You see, my real hope is that many event will encourage young enthusiasts into our movement, because when you consider the quality of the restoration and maintenance that goes into our old cars, in the end we are not the owners, we are only the guardians of these vehicles. Our cars will exist long after we have gone, and who will be there to cherish them if it is not the young of today?

Do you own or restore British classics?
I am an owner and restorer of classic

cars, not just British cars. I own a Triumph TR3, which I now retain as my only sports car. I have restored most of my cars, but the 1914 Rochet-Schneider Landaulet, which took me ten years to restore, has to be the highlight. However, like all restorations, I had moments of utter despair whilst I was doing it.

What is the most pleasurable part of the event for you?

The pleasure that it gives to others – to the participants and the visitors. That is priceless.



Information about the 2008 meeting

If you now feel a sudden whetting of appetite to experience the wonders of British classics first-hand, why not rev up your engine, put your foot on the throttle and treat yourself to a drive down Memory Lane in Morges?

www.british-cars.ch
www.british-cars.ch/pdf/detail_angl.pdf