

## **Adriatic Adventure 2019**

### **Day One – Trieste to Ljubljana – 255 kms**

Trieste is a city constructed from many different cultural influences, its architecture charts its history and the story of those that have called it home over the centuries. Appropriate then, that this morning it waved off a plethora of classic and vintage motorcars, from the Piazza Unità d'Italia, the Unity of Italy Square, under the gaze of the grand old municipal building. These cars, embarking upon 12 days of competitive rallying are untied under the banner of the Adriatic Adventure and their two person crews will, over the coming days, experience some of the best rallying that this region and its countries can offer.

Before that though, there was the task of getting out of the city itself. I don't know what it is about the roads of an Italian metropolis, but they seem infinitely more dangerous than the inner-city streets of other countries around the world. Everything seems to travel that much faster, with less regard for the rules of the road and navigating the arteries out of Trieste felt more arcade game than classic rally. But escape we all did, along the route of the old Trieste-Opicina hillclimber no less, and I'm sure many of us channelled our inner Nuvolari as we enjoyed the winding ascent.

Once out into the open, the day continued to take us up as we travelled into Slovenia with a swift gain in altitude and regularities and link sections that took in more motorsport history, taking on roads that had in the past formed parts of the Liege-Sofia-Liege rally of the sixties. Unlike its cousin, the Monte-Carlo Rallye, the LSL has not survived, but it was difficult to understand why as we drifted around the gravel and loose surfaces that made up much of the regularity sections and ducked through the tunnels cut into the rocks that paved the way for spectacular veranda roads.

Quaint villages punctuated the route, with varying architecture and buildings, from ski-lodges to old farmhouses and wonderful Churches. There was plenty to see and indeed many locals had set up camp to watch as the caravan of vehicles trundled through, it would have been nice to stop and find out what they made of it all, but this rally waits for no one, a fact that Aston Martin DB6 pilot Julian Reddyhough and his navigator Adrian Pope found out as they suffered engine woes on the first regularity and had to wait for the recovery teams. Such is life on a rally at times, this is motorsport after-all and the venerable Aston wasn't alone in suffering for its sport as the Triumph TR5 of Humphrey and Mark Walters also threw a wobbler and bought the Father and Son duo to somewhat of an undignified halt. "It was making death noises" said Walters senior, a technical term if ever there was one.

Another crew struggling today were Matthias Bittner and Denis Billion, although their miseries began with map reading issues, with woodland spies reporting many a wrong turn throughout the day. They were also spotted inside a garage, presumably though the mechanic had misheard Saab 96 and instead pulled out the manual for a Saab 39 – Grippen Fighter Jet, as when the car was last seen it was reported to be sounding like an aircraft. If anyone does hear from the crew, please inform them they have clearance to land and to come down out of the clouds.

The day concluded in Ljubljana, which is apparently a romantic city. The romance for this rally is still very much fresh and, in the honey-moon stage for the competitors, and after the wonderful roads today long may it continue. Onwards through Slovenia tomorrow, for more adventures on four wheels.

**Syd Stelvio**