



The Calm During the Snowstorm as Scrutineering Precedes the Return of The Flying Scotsman

The driver's hand brushed the freshly fallen snow from the bonnet of his 1924 Bentley, nearly 100 years old and covered in frozen precipitation, not the sort of conditions a pensioner should be subjected to, and that's just the car. This machine though will no doubt be as unruffled by the weather as it's pilot, snow and cold be damned. Wrapped up against the freeze that had descended upon Northumberland, and much of the UK, overnight, the driver and his navigator continued to clear the snow, and despite the protection of gloves they would both be feeling the tingle and chill of the flakes upon their fingers. Cold of hand and warm of heart though, or so it is said. Never has the old adage rung truer than on this frigid spring day, as whilst digits may have been frosty as they gripped steering wheels that were cast-iron cold, hearts were full as the gathered group met old friends and prepared for the return of the greatest rally purely for vintage motorcars, the 2022 Flying Scotsman.

It has been three years since the last time these enthusiasts gathered for this celebration of vintage motorsport, two of those as topsy-turvy as the weather that continued to torment the region during this, the scrutineering day. One minute the sun shone brightly, reflecting off the snow that lay all around and then, in the next instant the blue sky was obscured by cloud as the latest blizzard blew through and danced its erratic steps through the gathered cars.

A great percentage of the nearly 100 strong field are of course open top, but for the most part this sort of weather won't bother them in the slightest, "I think it's going to be a cold rally" said Stuart Anderson, one of a number of veteran Bentley drivers, "this is the sort of stuff we enjoy though, and we don't have a hood anyway." The field is full of characters like Stuart, old enough to know better, daft enough not to care. It takes a certain type of informed fool to attempt a rally of over 600 miles in a pre-war car, and I mean that with the utmost of respect. After all, these men and women have the spirit of the pioneer and adventurer within them, without people of their ilk we would never have ventured out of the cave and so a little bothersome weather will likely only heighten their enjoyment of the next three days of rallying action!

Three days that will track a carefully chosen course across the border into Scotland via Kielder Forest, gathering momentum as the cars escape the borderlands and push for the higher ground of the Cairngorms before heading south again after Aviemore, towards the trip's terminus at the famous and traditional finish at Gleneagles. Along the way there will be the usual mix of challenging regularities to push the navigational skills of those in the





maps seat and some exhilarating speed tests, that give those with a twitchy right foot the opportunity to display their abilities.

The lavish finish location will be nothing less than those that make it deserve, and it is a case of 'those that make it' as the task ahead is no easy weekend tour, for crew or machine. Some will undoubtedly fall foul of the rallying gods, and whilst none of us want a high rate of attrition, some retirements are inevitable, it is all part of the game. The sweeps often earn their money on this event, but today they were unusually quiet with nothing more major than the odd failed brake light to sort out. The only excitement came with the late arrival of four machines that were held up in customs, because of course everyone is smuggling vintage cars these days...

There will be plenty of excitement to come though, fate is but biding its time before it deals hands both fair and foul to the assembled hopefuls. How the cards will fall nobody can say, what is for certain is that after a three-year absence everyone is excited to get going and we will be in for a tremendous three days.

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