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A rain-washed 'London to Brighton Veteran Car Run' is enjoyed despite the weather

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Author:

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Heavy rain, wind, surface water and localised flooding did nothing to dampen the spirits of participants in and spectators of this year's



RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run...

The world's longest-running motoring event goes ahead each year despite all that the elements can serve up, and this year's (celebrating 120 years since the momentous 1902 Gordon Bennett Race) was no exception...

According to the official Veteran Car Run press release...

Close to 350 intrepid participants in this year's RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run (6 November) experienced a real insight into the hardships of Victorian motoring, as rain storms swept through the south of England.

With the vast majority of the pioneering pre-1905 vehicles completely open to the elements, and the rain lashing down, valiant crews faced one of the wettest trips ever in the famous event's 126 year history. This year's torrential downpours were in complete contrast to the autumnal sunshine enjoyed 12 months ago.

The 2022 conditions, though, were a reminder of the challenges faced by those celebrating the passing of the Locomotives on the Highway Act on the original Emancipation Run back in 1896. This legislation raised the speed limit for 'light locomotives' from 4 mph to 14 mph and abolished the need for the vehicles to be preceded by a man carrying a red flag.

Adding to their challenge, those plucky pioneers of 1896 not only faced pouring rain but also many unmetalled, muddy roads liberally coated with decades of horse droppings.

The weather didn't dampen spirits back then and, while unpleasant at times, didn't dampen spirits now. Onlookers were impressed by the big grins on drivers' faces. Undaunted by the lashing rain and flooded roads, more than 300 of the brave-hearted starters valiantly completed the hallowed 60-mile course to claim a very well deserved finisher's medal.

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As is now traditional, the dawn start in the capital's Hyde Park was preceded by the ritual tearing up of the symbolic red flag. **This year, the ceremony was carried out by those driving three fearsome Napiers which were honouring the 120th anniversary of Selwyn Francis Edge's milestone victory in the 1902 Gordon Bennett Cup from Paris to Innsbruck. Edge's momentous win, driving one of the Napiers present in London today, was Britain's first international motorsport success and the origin of British Racing Green.**

The Napiers – driven by Evert Louwman of the Louwman Museum, Doug Hill of the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu and Martin Chisholm, driving the 1902 victor now owned by Daniel Sielicki – were also given the honour of being first away from the start at daybreak.

Other early starters included former F1 driver Max Chilton at the tiller of the 1901 Pope Waverley entered by Harrods, comedian Rowan Atkinson aboard the remarkable 1893 Salvesen Steam Car, and HRH Prince Michael of Kent, President of the Royal Automobile Club, driving the 1903 Daimler owned by the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust.

Having left a damp Hyde Park, the antique cavalcade splashed its way past many of London's most famous landmarks including Buckingham Palace, Admiralty Arch, Trafalgar Square and The Cenotaph before entering Parliament Square.

To provide less congested routes through south London, the route then split into two with half the field crossing Westminster Bridge under the iconic 'Big Ben' and the other half crossing Lambeth Bridge.

As the rain intensified, the two routes converged north of Croydon with the entire drenched field then heading towards a very welcome halfway stop – and shelter – at The Hawth Theatre in Crawley.

Providing an element of precision to what is a non-competitive journey, the section just north of the CARS Pit Stop at The Hawth included a Regularity Time Trial. Supported by the event's official timing partner, A. Lange & Söhne, this required drivers to get as close to a pre-chosen average speed as possible. This year's winner was a 1902 De Dion Bouton driven



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by William Nall.

Once refreshed in Crawley, cars and crews headed back into the driving rain, passing through the rural villages of Sussex and then over the South Downs and through the streets of a flooded Brighton to a very welcome finish on a wet and windy seaside Madeira Drive.





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Once at Brighton sea front, the bedraggled but cheery finishers enjoyed hard-earned sustenance with the legendary event's title partner RM Sotheby's providing hot-pots of stew while Aberfeldy Single Malt Whisky served much-appreciated hot toddies.

"I have certainly had easier and more comfortable Veteran Car Runs but few if any have been more rewarding than this year's epic London to Brighton," said Ben Cussons, Chairman of the Royal Automobile Club. "The inclement weather certainly gave everyone a taste of what early motorists back in the Victorian era had to endure in the days before cars offered any real protection from the elements.

I congratulate all those who accepted this year's challenge, and congratulate even more everyone who endured all that Mother Nature could muster. They came smiling through. I would also like to thank all the wonderful volunteers who lined the route, cheering us on all



the way and, of course, our ever enthusiastic partners without whom this very special annual homage – the world’s longest running motoring event – quite simply would not be possible.”

For more information on both the St James’s Concours and RM Sotheby’s London to Brighton Veteran Car Run, log on to the official website: veterancarrun.com.

More information:

About RM Sotheby’s London to Brighton Veteran Car Run

With its unique atmosphere and camaraderie, the RM Sotheby’s Veteran Car Run from London to Brighton (staged specifically as a non-profit making event) commemorates the Emancipation Run of 14 November 1896, which celebrated the Locomotives on the Highway Act. The Act raised the speed limit for ‘light locomotives’ from 4 to 14 mph and abolished the need for these vehicles to be preceded by a man on foot waving a red flag.

The first commemoration of the Emancipation Run was held in 1897 with a drive to Sheen House in Richmond Park. Then, in 1927, the inaugural re-enactment followed the original Brighton route and has taken place every November since, apart from the war years and 1947 when petrol was rationed and 2020 during the global Covid-19 pandemic. The Royal Automobile Club has managed the Run, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2021, with the support of the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain since 1930.

For more information visit: www.veterancarrun.com

About the Royal Automobile Club

The Royal Automobile Club was founded in 1897 and its distinguished history mirrors that of motoring itself. In 1907, the Club was awarded its Royal title by King Edward VII, sealing the Club’s status as Britain’s oldest and most influential motoring organisation.



The Club's early years were focused on promoting the motor car and its place in society, which developed into motoring events such as the 1000 Mile Trial, first held in 1900. In 1905, the Club held the first Tourist Trophy, which remains the oldest continuously competed for motor sports event. The Club promoted the first pre-war and post-war Grands Prix at Brooklands in 1926 and Silverstone in 1948 respectively, whilst continuing to campaign for the rights of the motorist, including introducing the first driving licences.

Today, the Club continues to develop and support automobilism through representation on the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and the RAC Foundation while promoting its own motoring events including the new Summer Run, London Motor Week, the Veteran Car Concours and the RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

The Club also awards a series of internationally recognised trophies and medals celebrating motoring achievements. These include the Segrave Trophy, the Torrens Trophy, the Simms Medal, the Dewar Trophy and the oldest trophy in motorsport still being competed for today, the Tourist Trophy.

About RM Sotheby's

RM Sotheby's is, they tell us, the world's leading collector car auction house. With over 40 years of proven results in the collector car industry, RM's vertically integrated range of services, from auctions (live and online) and private sales to estate planning and financial services, coupled with an expert team of Car Specialists and an international footprint, provide an unsurpassed level of service to the global collector car market. RM Sotheby's is currently responsible for the most valuable car ever sold at auction. This year RM Sotheby's annual London sale moved to the spectacular new venue of Marlborough House in St James's on Saturday 5 November with a preview on the previous day.

For more information visit: rmsothebys.com