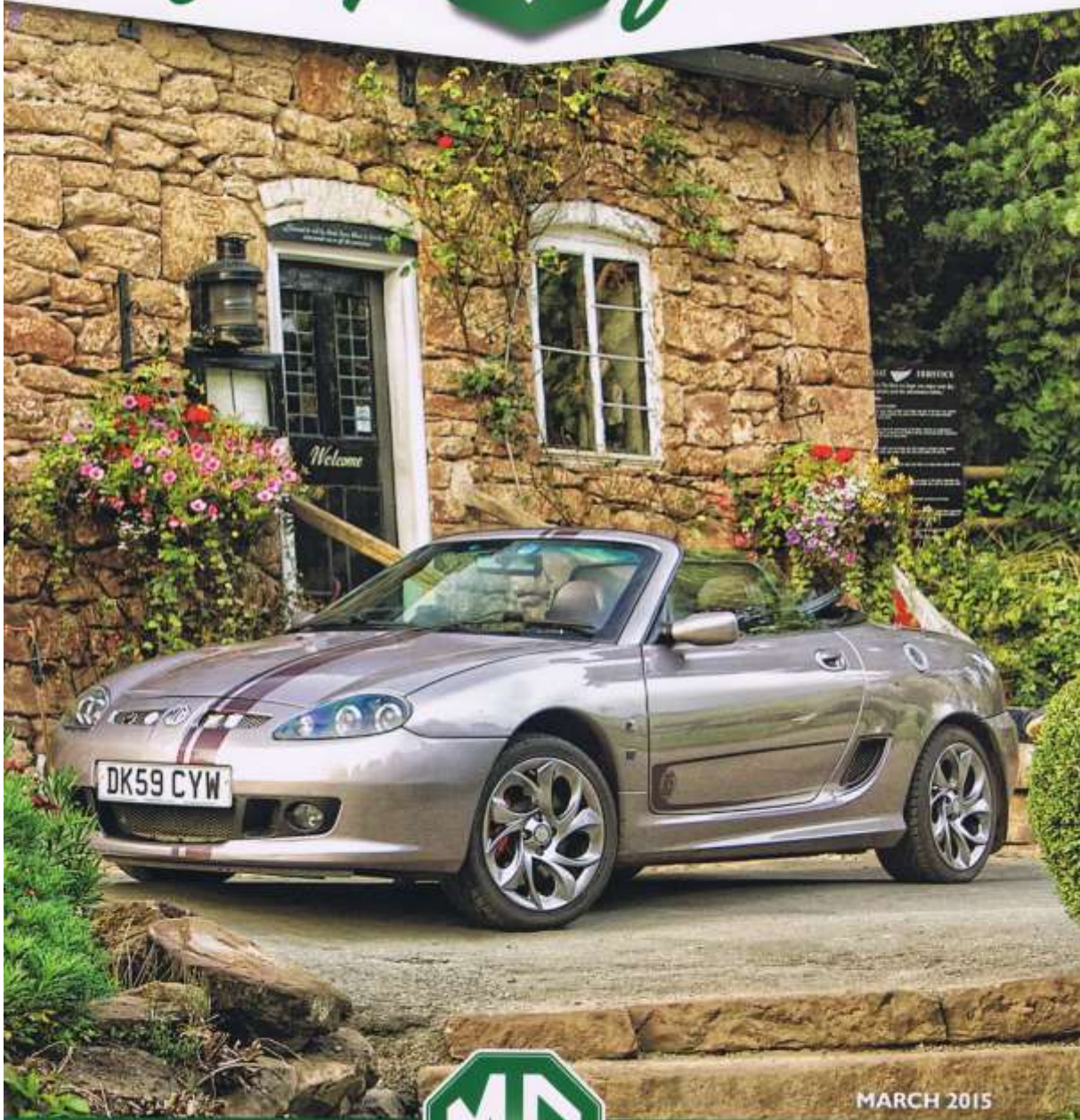


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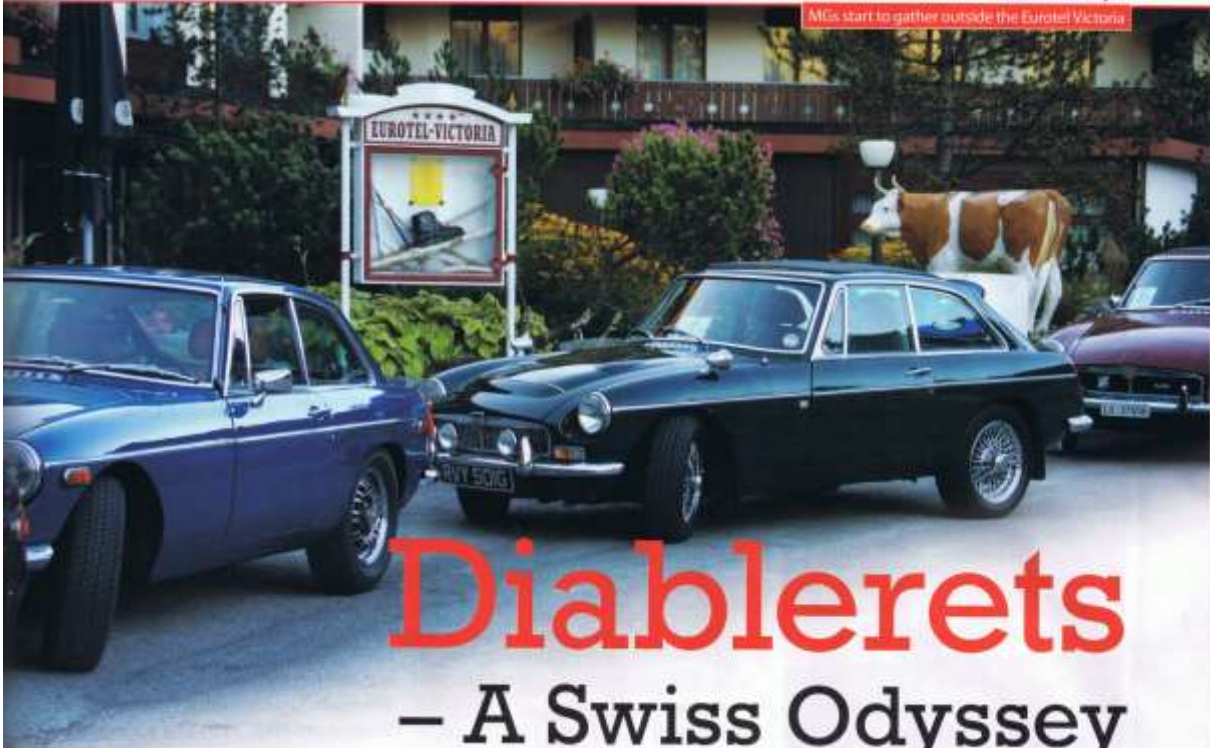


MARCH 2015

THE MARQUE OF FRIENDSHIP

THIS MONTH >

- Oil Pressure and the Rocker Assembly
- Project Shed – The up-date Part 2
- Bob Olthoff and his MGA Twin Cam revisited Part 2
- The California Cup Autotest



Diablerets

- A Swiss Odyssey

By Robin Livett

The permanent move to Switzerland by my son has meant many enjoyable trips, several of which have conveniently overlapped with Car Club events and classic car shows in Germany and Switzerland, the Morges event being one of the more iconic.

This year it was once again the Swiss-MGV8\IG meeting during the weekend of 26-28 September and as usual brilliantly organised by Victor and Evelyne Rodrigues-Huguenin, ably assisted by Eric Pfandler.

We always cross the Channel by Eurostar and make a leisurely drive to Reims for the first night. A mandatory visit to the wonderful 12th century cathedral which was the venue for the crowning of the French kings and queens; this followed by classic bistro dinner in the old city centre.

Friday September 26 was the start of this year's venue, which was based in Les Diablerets at the four star Eurotel Victoria and commenced with an evening drink and



Gala club dinner. With a day in hand, Thursday morning would therefore be a leisurely drive from Reims to Offenbach, through Germany to Basle, and then on to Gruyeres for an overnight stop with my son.

Complications with insurance values meant that this year we would be going to the V8 meeting in the C, a brave decision because this would be the first major trip

since its complete restoration and rebuild by Steve Illing at Abingdon Car Restorations, an estimated 1,200 mile round trip.

Friday morning was blue sky and sunshine as it can be only in the Swiss mountains, and we chose a scenic route which we knew well, following the river Sarine and the single track railway to Gstaad. The route winds through Montbovon and just before Chateau-d'Oex turns right up the mountain to the well known skiing areas of Les Mosses, Leysin and Le Sepey.

Diablerets lies at the foot of the Glacier 3000 mountain cable car, and is surrounded



West front of Reims Cathedral

by the Col de Mosses range to the north and the Les Diablerets range to the south east, with the 3,123 metres Oldenhorn dominating the view.

The hotel was superb, and as we arrived Victor and Eric were on hand to greet us.

Eighteen cars had made the journey from many departure points, with three intrepid travellers from Germany, France and England. Apart from the C and an MGA which hastily replaced a stubborn RV8, the members had brought a superb collection of RV8s and MGB GT V8s



The stunning medieval town of Gruyères



Moleson Ski Resort



The route to Gstaad

The evening drinks and dinner were a welcome moment to renew old friendships and meet several new faces. Victor and Evelyne explained the comprehensive programme of events that was certainly going to keep us more than occupied for the two days. Saturday would be an early start in convoy to a reserved parking in La Lecherette and then onward to Etivaz for the Desalpe, an ancient ritual of bringing the cows down from the high pastures before the start of the winter snow; returning in the afternoon after a visit to Lake Hongrin; and then on to Col du Pillon for a trip to Glacier 3000.

The evening would be a night ascent and descent on the telepheric for a traditional soiree montagnarde at the Chalet des Moilles.

A surprise additional event before our Gala Dinner was the arrival in front of the hotel of the Borghi One Off racing car built by Michel Borghi; he and his wife Ruth live in Diablerets and are members of the V8 Register.

The concept car 'Borghi 01 Diablerets' was built by the two brothers Michel and Philippe Borghi, residents of Diablerets and aged 21 and 22. This 'One Off' was a unique

project and was not replicated. Unfortunately Philippe was fatally injured in a racing accident in Switzerland.

The body shell is fibre composite and is mid-engined with a Conrero tuned Renault-Gordini-1300. The windscreen configuration was produced on the basis of a Ferrari LM. The car is only 92cms high, 1.75m wide and 4.0m in length. Weighing just 670kgs it has startling performance. It was displayed at the 1969 Geneva Motor Show, and in 2014 won the Best in Show at the Zurich Classic Car Show. Michel still drives the car at various Classic Racing Car events in Switzerland.

A splendid dinner was followed with a warm welcome from our Swiss friends, and it was only the threat of an early morning start that eventually forced us to our rooms. Saturday 27 dawned sunny and hot, and the convoy to La Lecherette wound its way through the spectacular route through the Col des Mosses massif. Reserved parking in the main square drew admiring inspections from the crowds awaiting the shuttle to L'Etivaz,

our destination for the descent of the mountain farmers' milking cows to their winter quarters.

The arrival in L'Etivaz was extraordinary; the town was in festival mode with all the local villages wearing their distinctive traditional costumes. A group of young farmers was parading through the crowds ringing the huge bells worn by the lead cows, and every fir tree was festooned with flowers and berries. The arrival of each family was met with a clarion and they drove the cows through the main street and onwards down into the valley. The peculiar head adornment worn by the cows was the



Danish V8 MGB GT outside the Eurotel Victoria



Enjoying the evening drinks



Cheers!



Borghesi One Off racing car built by Michel Borghesi

single leg milking stool used on the steep slopes, tied to the horns and covered in the family's colours.

No Swiss festival can be without a serenade of the long mountain horns, and the local players climbed high above the village and produced a magnificent performance of classic tunes. Visits to the cheese factory, the local produce stands and the rustic catering marquee kept us occupied until the moment of departure to recover the cars. A short detour was arranged to Lake Hongrin and then on to Diablerets passing by Col de Pillon. Arriving at Diablerets, the more intrepid of us took the cable car to Glacier 3000 which sits in the permanent snowfield with magnificent views of the Jungfrau, the Matterhorn on the Swiss-Italian Border, and to the west in the far distance, Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe.

A short relax at the hotel and we were meeting in the lobby to start our evening festivities. With the organisation of Michel Borghesi we would take the cable car to the mountain valley where the traditional Chalet des Moilles was situated, and be entertained by an alpine evening of Cheese Fondue Vaudois and Swiss Folklore Music

Young farmers gather around the large cow bells, each displaying their family's motif



A family in colourful traditional dress leads the cows through the town



Cows parade through the main streets



The long mountain horns

and then return by a night descent in the cable cars to Diablerets.

Victor confirmed our hectic last day schedule which would leave the cars and descend to Aigle by Historic Train, a visit to the Herve collection and a glass of their famous wine at the Chateau d'Aigle, returning to Diablerets by train for presentations and a farewell to friends.

The ASD or Aigle-Sepey-Diablerets railway celebrated its 100 years in July 2014. Prior to that, the tortuous journey from Sepey to Diablerets alone took nearly five



Family leads its goats through the town



Chalet des Moilles



Michel, Dani and Victor enjoying a drink



Les Diablerets Cable Cars



MGs parked in the main La Lécherette town square



A local produce stand

hours by diligence. This extraordinary feat of engineering was conceived in 1833 and the first trains ran on July 6 1914. We were fortunate in having Dani Ingold, a V8 member-owner of the Company Fulgurex, one of if not the premier precision model engineers constructing scale locomotives, and keen supporter of the ASD Association, responsible the preservation of the history for the line and the continued running of one of the famous locomotives.

A brisk walk in the now scorching sunshine from the hotel to the station found No 1 resplendent in its 1941 colour scheme. The descent to Aigle required a short stop at Sepey to allow the up coming train to pass on this single track line. Dani Ingold provided us with an animated history of the construction, running and preservation of the line. The Musee Ormonts has been created in Vers-l'Eglise and is well worth a visit. Fulgurex have produced an exquisite limited edition of No 1 (information can be obtained from fulgurex, sa@bluewin.ch).

Our arrival at Aigle was at Chateau Aigle Station, just a few hundred metres from the famous vineyards.

But firstly, before sampling the wines of the region, we had a visit arranged with Rene REY, the curator of the fabulous collection of cars of Musee Fondation Herve, better known as the Count Jacques de Wurtemberg. Apart from the rare MGs there was a wide range of cars, including a DB1 raced very successfully by the Count. As several of the rare MGs also formed part

Sampling wines from the local region



No 1 train at Aigle



Organising team and train driver by No 1

of Dani Ingold's own collection he gave a fascinating insight to their history and a detailed explanation of their development and performance.

A light lunch Vaudois was followed with a selection of the Aigle wines. Presentations were given for the various categories and a merry group made the short walk back to the Chateau and on to the station where No 1 appeared on time for a prompt 2.40pm departure.

Arriving back at the hotel, bags were

collected, cars loaded and suddenly it was goodbyes until next year. Once again the SWISS-MGV8/IG had arranged an extraordinary festival of events. Sincere thanks were given to Victor, Eric, Dani and Michel. More detailed information can be found on their website www.swissmgv8.ch.

For Josie and me it was just a pleasant afternoon's run retracing our footsteps to Gruyeres for a well earned couple of days' relaxation with our son before returning to Oxfordshire. ●



Dani Ingold gives an insight into the collection



Diablerets staff