

# LIEGE-BRESCIA-LIEGE

**Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
World's only International Rally for sub-500cc cars**

**July 17-20, 1958      ★      ★      ★      July 11-20, 2008**

**Entries roll in worldwide!.....[www.classicrallypress.co.uk](http://www.classicrallypress.co.uk).....New enquiries still coming in daily!**

Dear all,

Welcome to the December Newsletter of **Liège-Brescia-Liège 2008**. A very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year to you all: and while the turkey is going down, those of you who haven't already done so, why not get that Liège-Brescia-Liège entry form filled in and in the post? There's just time to get it to us before the price goes up at the end of December... And on that note, anyone who spotted the slip in the regulations which suggested that late entries in euros would be a bargain and is holding on for that, please take note of the amendment to the Regulations below.

The response so far has been terrific and we're well on the way to having at least one marque team each of Berkeley SE492s, BMW Isettas, BMW 600s, Fiat 500s and Messerschmitt TG500s, with a good possibility of Vespa 400s, Subaru 360s and others also fielding teams. The range of cars entered runs from 175cc Heinkel to 697cc BMW 700 Sport. Entries have come from far and near: Belgium, England, Germany, Netherlands, Scotland and USA are all represented, and competitors range in age from 13 to mid-70s - with a good spread, including some of you in your 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. Cars range in age from a 1955 Bond MkC to a 1967 Citroen 2CV. A recipe for a good fun event, we reckon!

If you're struggling to find a co-driver, or you'd like to co-drive for someone, don't hesitate to let us know - and the same



applies if you have a spare eligible car that you'd like to sell or rent out to others, or if you're looking for a car to buy. We are already working on matching drivers to co-drivers and cars to would-be owners, with some notable successes... And, if you don't yet have a co-driver (or car) but definitely want to come, get your entry in now at the lowest price and fill in the extra details later. There's no restriction or penalty for changing car or co-driver any time before the start of the rally, as long as you let us know as early as possible.

**Sponsors.** We said we'd tell you all about our sponsors in December: well, big corporations move slowly and we can't reveal all until they've got all their teams briefed and they're ready for a joint PR launch. But rest assured, we have a great package of support and entertainment lined up that will really make you want to sign up for the rally, if you haven't already: more news as soon as we get the OK to tell you!

**Photos.** Some of you who have entered haven't sent me photos of your cars - please do! We need them for the newsletters, for Press Releases and for the event brochure, which we hope will have a photo of every car. If you can email a photo (or photos - the more the merrier) that's ideal, but if not, send us a print and we'll scan it (and return it if you need it back).

**Preparation.** What should you do to prepare your car? First and foremost, this is a celebration of the 1958 rally, so we'd



BMW 600 -  
Henk Tappel and  
Jolanda Leenhouts



Berkeley SE492 -  
Graham and Jackie Higgs  
Restoration now well under way!

like to see cars prepared as they might have been back then: no modern go-faster goodies, please. There are, of course, areas that you should think about when preparing your car, to have the best chance that it won't let you down:

First, cooling. It'll be mid summer and we will be climbing hard at times. If your car is water cooled, don't wait to find out how it will cope, get the radiator re-cored now and flush the engine's cooling passages out well at the same time. I did the Rallye des Alpes in 1991 in my Rochdale Olympic, which had been my everyday transport covering 15,000 miles in the previous year without overheating. By half distance the effort of Alpine rallying in July had stirred up so much crud from the engine that the radiator was almost totally blocked and we boiled on every pass. If your car is air-cooled, check all the fins are clean of debris, make sure nothing is impeding the airflow, make extra vents or a means to prop the bonnet open so excess heat can escape the top of the engine bay (or make the bonnet quick-release so you can take it off if the going gets tough!) and consider adding extra ducting to help force the air to where it will help most.

Second, the brakes. These will take a pounding, so make sure they're at least as good as new. That means new linings, mechanism well lubricated and perfectly adjusted - handbrake as well as footbrake - and take two spare shoes.

Third, wheel bearings. They work hard in mountain driving and are marginal on many micros, so lubricate well, fit new ones if there's any sign of wear and carry spares.

Fourth, clutch. This also works hard in the mountains, so fit a new clutch plate and make sure the mechanism is perfectly adjusted.

Fifth, engine. Obviously, if it's worn out, rebuild it; if it's coked up, decoke it. And run it in well before the start. If you're thinking of tuning it, that's up to you, but remember reliability is the most important thing on this rally: no point being 30sec quicker than everyone else on the first test if your engine



Subaru 360 -  
Vic Sayer and  
Craig Lawson

packs up or overloads its transmission after 1000 miles (as the BMWs and Berkeleys learnt to their cost in 1958).

Sixth, steering and suspension. Make sure all bushes and bearings are as-new, well lubricated and moving freely. If any part is worn, replace it or rebuild it.

Seventh, interior. You're both going to be in there for a good few hours each day, so make sure you're comfortable. If the seats are knackered, sort out new springs and/or get them re-padded and re-covered.

Finally, don't uprate unless you're really sure you know what you're doing – and what the knock-on effects will be. I did a 17,000-mile rally round South America in 2001 in my 1955 Triumph TR2. It was one of the older cars on the event and everyone looked at us with a mixture

of horror and disbelief when we turned up at the start with a totally original, unmodified car. All the others had stiffened suspension, rally seats, tuned engines etc. We had our problems – the biggest was the brand new rear shock absorbers which both failed on the first day – but by the half-way stage, we were the ones that were laughing. The stiffened suspension had pulled out of cars' chassis so many times they were welding patches on patches and it wouldn't hold. The ones with rally seats were so uncomfortable they could hardly drive (let alone walk – one guy had to take a week off and others pulled out altogether).



Fiat 600 –  
Richard Disbrow and  
James Goodwyn

And the ones with tuned engines had horrendous problems with the low octane petrol, high methanol content etc and been faced with major engine rebuilds mid-rally. The old TR just kept plodding on and, every night, I'd take the wheels off, check everything, adjust where needed and replace worn bushes. We got through a dozen rubber wishbone bushes (no problem, I'd taken 16) but, unlike those with poly or nylon bushes, we came home without a single crack in the chassis and the TR was the only car driven home from the ferry on its return to the UK. If it worked 50 years ago, it'll work now: think carefully before you change it!

**Mountain driving.** Some of you have driven your micros on all roads and in all weathers, but others will be entering unfamiliar territory. Don't worry – all your cars are perfectly capable of coping with the roads on the rally – but there are a few points to remember that will help avoid scary moments!

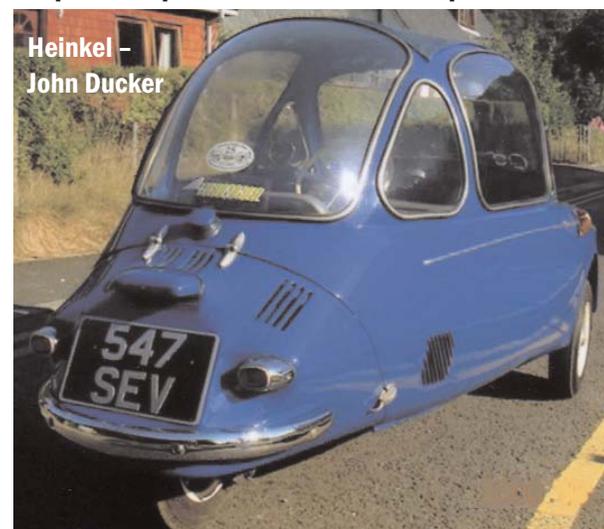
First, you're all on drum brakes, some of them very small. Drums are very effective, provided you don't over-use them. So, for descending mountain passes, drive in a low gear so that engine braking will help and, if your brakes are marginal, just take it steady – don't accelerate between the hairpins, take your time. And don't brake more than you need for them – look ahead and if the road is clear, use all of it so you don't have to use the brakes more than necessary.

Second, be considerate towards other road users (even if they're not considerate towards you): we're all very conspicuous and if one car upsets the locals or the police, the rest will suffer, so acquire the patience of a saint! Keep close to the side of the road wherever it's safe to do so, so that other drivers can pass easily, and pull over if you pick up a big queue behind you that can't get past.

Third, think of the engine when climbing. Carry as much speed round hairpins as possible – co-drivers, you can help by looking up around the corner and calling to the driver "Clear!" so he can take the 'racing line', clip the apex and get on up the pass without having to drop down a gear and try to accelerate up again. If there's a longish straight without too much gradient, build up speed so the airflow helps with cooling. And if you feel a sudden loss of power, especially with air-cooled engines, dip the clutch and roll to a halt in as safe a spot as possible, whip the bonnet up and let the engine cool: don't wait for a nasty grating noise and sudden stop that could spell engine bore damage.



BMW Isetta 300 –  
Mick and Sara Bell



Heinkel –  
John Ducker

# A LIEGE-BRESCIA-LIEGE 1958 COMPETITOR'S STORY:

**Edouard Boucquey was interviewed and photographed by Stoffel Muller – thanks, Stoffel!**

Edouard Boucquey was 27 years old when he and his brother showed up at the start of the Liège-Brescia-Liège rally with a 300cc Isetta in July 1958.

Fifty years later, we met Edouard in the pretty town of Profondeville, Belgium. It is clear that he has not lost any of his enthusiasm for this exciting rally. He remembers the event very well and shares his memories with us today.

The LBL was not his first rally. He had already won the Belgian championship with a DKW and had successfully completed two Liège-Rome-Liège rallies, also in a DKW. Finishing a Liège-Rome-Liège rally was in itself an achievement, he recalls. The fallout of cars was high with rallies organised by the Royal Motor Union from Liège: starting with 100 cars and losing two-thirds of the pack was the rule, not an exception.

The Liège-Brescia-Liège rally was intended to put these minicars to the test, and it certainly did! Compared to its bigger brother Liège-Rome-Liège, the outcome was surprisingly good. The same rule of thumb applied for the minicars that did not make it: from the 36 entrants, 27 started in Liège and 13 arrived sound and well at the finish.

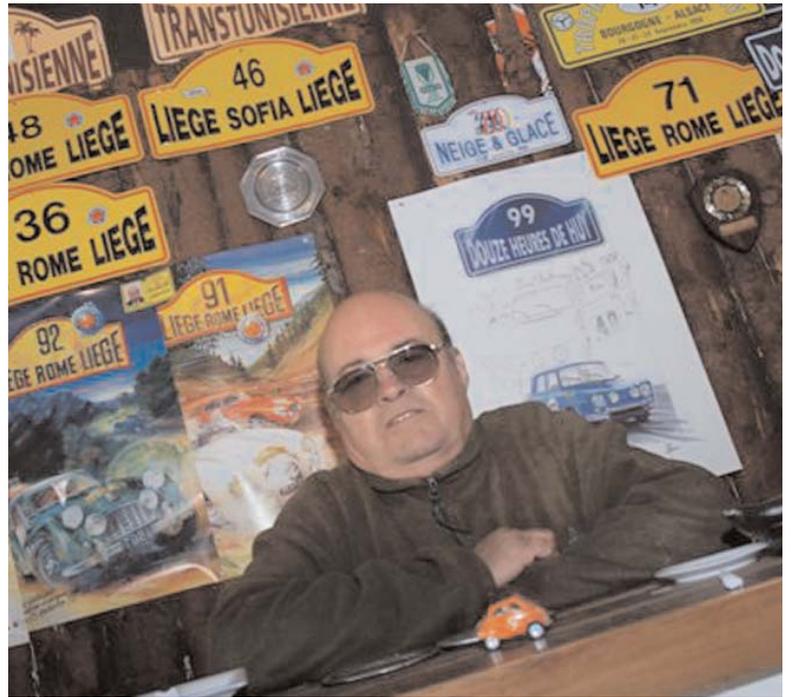
The Belgian Boucqueys participated in this event with a 300cc, single-cylinder Isetta, provided by the BMW factory in Munich, Germany. BMW was certainly impressed by his competition record when deciding he could drive the factory car. The BMW engineers did all the preparation of the minicar. The Boucquey brothers had nothing to worry about, BMW was very clear: “Don’t be concerned about the mechanics or the car. You have the green light from the factory to run the car at full speed and full load”.

Boucquey recalls that he took off the small bumper and replaced it by an L-shaped iron profile, which allowed him to put a fog light on the front, but that was the only modification he made.

The first test was a ‘hillclimb’ at Spa Francorchamps that had to be performed by all participants. The Isetta did surprisingly well (beating all the 328cc Berkeleys!), and after 50 years, we were very curious to know how they managed to get such a good result. “Well,...” said Boucquey, “we took advantage of the fact that I had friends and family coming over to watch us that day. I had asked them to stand at the side of the road where the finish was. One part of the hillclimb was relatively flat, and a lot of participants thought when they got there that they had arrived at the finish, and lifted off. However, the hidden ‘Finish’ of the hillclimb was further uphill, at 7km from the start. We did not stop going flat-out until we had passed my friends standing close to the Finish line. Maybe it was more ‘smart’ than ‘cheating’,” laughs Boucquey after 50 years...

“Despite what people may think, we had all the room we needed in this car,” says Boucquey. “The wide-opening door provided easy access. We did not do anything extra to reduce the weight of the car. We did add comfort by adding a triplex plate between the back of the seat and the engine covering. On the triplex plate we had sewed a pillow. It worked very well,” he laughed...

“We did not have any specific material with us to fix the car,” he continues. “Maybe a spark plug...that’s all. At one point the engine was misfiring...quite annoying, of course. While my brother was driving the car, I climbed in the back and unscrewed the engine cover. I asked my brother to hand over the First Aid kit. He asked, very worried, if I had hurt myself. I said no, of course not, I need a Band Aid to fix the connector of the spark plug lead that has come loose. The problem was fixed without further ado and no time was lost...”



By the time the factory-prepared Isetta arrived in Munich, the car faced a strange problem. The engine was idling at 2000rpm. Pulling back the accelerator pedal and cable had no effect. With 45 minutes’ time in hand, Boucquey took the car to the Munich factory where the BMW team was ready to troubleshoot the engine. 45 minutes and counting... After checking all possibilities and at the very last minute, the source of the hyperactive engine was found. A small wire from the sports air filter had been sucked into the carburettor but fortunately got stuck in the choke plate. To provide the engine with better breathing capacity, BMW had

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replaced the very fine mesh air filter with a heavier mesh filter. Having removed the evil wire, the Isetta was back on the road, still in the lead of its class, tells an enthusiastic Edouard...

This time, the Boucqueys were lucky, since it was quite a coincidence that this happened literally on their way to the factory that provided the car for this rally. From now on, they were on their own. There was no factory team following the Belgian brothers. 70,000 Isettas had already been produced at that time, so one could hope that reliability should not be a problem. A standard car could obtain a maximum speed of 85km/h. That speed was certainly not bad for 'das rollende Ei', a nickname for the German Isetta...

The factory had done a great effort in turning the Isetta into a real speed machine. They had replaced the standard 298cc engine (derived from an enlarged 250cc 4-stroke engine from the BMW R25/3 motorcycle) with a competition-prepared engine from a BMW race motorcycle. The fact that the Boucqueys had such a great lead proved that the Munich engineers had done a great job. The Isetta could reach 90km/h with the two Boucqueys on board. Edouard knew little about how the engine was adapted, but he remembers that the piston had been transformed by making tiny cavities (like on a golf ball) all over the outer wall of the piston to capture oil and ensure good lubrication at all times. He talks about a two-stroke engine; maybe the motorcycle race engine was two-stroke, or is his memory playing tricks? Any Isetta/BMW experts care to comment?

The Boucqueys felt good about their chances and were impressed by the accomplishments of the small Isetta so far. They had just passed a 'passage à niveau' (the Royal Motor Union's records confirm that the rally cars were delayed for 25 minutes by snow at the Brenner Pass) when a railway crossing barrier closed just in front of them... It stayed closed for a very long time. The brothers put their heads together to decide what to do. Standing at the foot of the mountains, would they take advantage of their lead time and go easy on the car as much as possible, or go flat-out (ça passe ou ça casse...)? They mutually agreed that they would go 'flat out', as had been instructed by BMW...

But their luck turned dramatically. Driving full-blast uphill, all of a sudden the car would not move any more. They quickly jumped underneath the car to check what was going on: it was not a pretty sight. The rubber cardan joint fixed to the four-speed gearbox was broken in many pieces! The cardan joint was not up to the bigger horsepower that the 'race engine' produced. This was very unfortunate and nothing could be done to fix it. At that moment they had to abandon the race.

The crew decided to take a short cut to Brescia (instead of going via Ljubljana) and take some rest over there, since they had not yet had the opportunity to get any sleep.

Still, the Isetta had to be returned to Munich. Instead of returning the Isetta after the finish of the race and doing double the expedition, father Boucquey took a rope, tied the BMW behind his big American Ford and pulled the little bubble behind it. In the bubble sat Edouard Boucquey, scared to death, trying to make clear with the horn to his father that he wanted the Ford to slow down. The brakes of the Isetta were not as powerful as the ones on the big American vehicle and having to bump into the big American trunk was not a pretty consideration. "This was definitely the scariest moment of all my life," he recalls! Boucquey must have thought many times of another German nickname that they gave to the cute Isetta: the 'Sargwagen' or 'riding coffin'. Nonetheless, the bubble car did not crash and did not burst. The car was handed over in Munich by a happy Boucquey, who could now join his father in his Ford on the way back to Belgium. BMW apologised for not adapting the Isetta's driveshaft to the higher output of the race engine.

## AMENDMENT TO REGULATIONS

### Article 5.1 Entry Fees

The Euro fee was incorrectly stated for April to June 2008 and should read as follows:  
GBP 2800 (EUR 4180) April 2008; GBP 2900 (EUR 4325) May 2008; GBP 3000 (EUR 4470) if paid after 31 May 2008.

## THE ORGANISING TEAM

for Liège-Brescia-Liège 2008

is led by Malcolm McKay

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