



ROLLING HOME

A PORSCHE DOES NOT STAND STILL. IT MOVES. IT JUST HAS TO. EVEN IF IT IS 50 YEARS OLD. THE 356 B 2000 GS CARRERA GT FROM THE PORSCHE MUSEUM GETS TO SHOW ITS STUFF BY RUNNING IN THE ENNSTAL CLASSIC. JUST THE WAY IT USED TO.

By Kristin Bergemann Photos by Bernd Kammerer

The Porsche Museum is still asleep. But there is already activity around the silvery 356 B 2000 GS Carrera GT, model year 1960. Just an hour from now, when the first visitors arrive, it will be long gone—on a fun assignment. Its exclusive display location in this futuristic setting may strike museum visitors as a well-earned retirement spot, but actually it is more of a rest-and-recuperation place where visitors can stand in awe before it. Until it is time for the next assignment.

Three men in blue uniforms are moving a ramp into position. One of them slides into the cockpit and releases the handbrake. Now push, guys, push! After a long intermission it is always a little harder to start a vehicle, but this racing car from another age does take off, leaving black tire tracks on the white marble floor. These are emblematic of the vivid embodiment of the corporate philosophy: the Museum on Wheels. Even after fifty years, the 356 with the long name can still rev up like it used to. You just have to give it a chance.

It is still two weeks before the vintage car will hit the road at the Ennstal Classic in Austria, one of the most important classic-car events. It will serve as an honorable ambassador of illustrious Porsche history, which is never about standing still, but always about motion. And it is true even for sports cars: it is better to wear out than to rust out.

It has been two years since the last great performance of the 356. At the Targa Tasmania, it warmed the spectators' hearts. True classic fans know the special features of the GT version by heart: movable aluminum body sections, Plexiglas windows, and leather straps in place of window cranks. Extremely sporty design and equipment permeate throughout this classic.

But right now things are still moving at a slow pace: down two levels in the elevator to the ground floor, and into the museum workshop. Before the long haul to Gröbming, where the race starts, the 356 undergoes



“No car sounds like it,” Derek Bell says shortly before the start

an intensive battery of tests like any other racing sports car. “We perform a thorough technical checkup and service on each and every vehicle,” says workshop manager Kuno Werner against the backdrop of the hydraulic lift supporting the new client.

When the vehicle’s operating condition has been ascertained from the ground up and in the harshest conditions, the most important ingredient is still missing—gasoline. The trip to the fueling station also counts as a test-drive. After such a long break, something might not work well, or not at all. Like this time. The fuel pump starts to fail, which the experts had somehow expected. “A very common defect in cars that stand still a lot,” says Werner, who has seen this before. The defective part is replaced. Then, at the end, the license plate. Done! S-061144 is ready to go. The car hauler transports it and four other museum pieces to Austria’s Styria province, 492 kilometers (306 miles) southward.

Welcome to Gröbming! Klaus Bischof, the director of the Museum on Wheels, supervises the unloading of the classic cars. The arrival of Porsche Museum specimens always causes a stir. The sun is smiling on the gleaming 356. Or is it maybe the other way around?

An old acquaintance has been waiting at the destination. Derek Bell personally receives the 356. The eyes of the 68-year-old former race-car driver are sparkling as he jokes, “She just never gets any older. How does she do it?” This will be the fourth time the British driver pilots the 356 in a historic rally. Neither the driver nor the car is used to putting on airs. Anyone who brings so much experience to the road mainly exudes calm confidence, even during the final inspection before the start, which is performed by the five-time Le Mans winner himself. “Before you close the door, be sure to press the door knob,” Bischof reminds him. Bell grins, then steps hard on the gas pedal. The engine roars. Sheer ecstasy! The smell of gasoline permeates the Alpine air—the perfume of legends.

Next it is time to wait in line for the race stewards—time for vehicle inspection. The heat index is 45 degrees Celsius (113 °F). The sun is scorching. There is not a breath of wind. Yet none of this seems to bother Derek Bell and the 356. They patiently await their turn in the queue. And they seem like old friends. Bell is leaning back against the vehicle and keeps gently patting the polished engine hood and pressing the air bubbles out of the big sticker with the starting number 117. It too must be perfect for a perfect race.

THE MOTORSPORT IDOLS COME HERE

Once again many celebrities sat behind the wheel of a Porsche at the Ennstal Classic.

Sebastian Vettel: The German Formula 1 driver piloted the Porsche Formula 1 racing car, Type 804, in which Dan Gurney had won a Grand Prix victory in Rouen in 1962.

Derek Bell: The Brit won the 24 Hours of Le Mans five times—four of them in a Porsche. In the Ennstal Classic he drove a 356 B 2000 GS Carrera GT, model year 1960.

Sir Stirling Moss: Between 1948 and 1962, the Englishman participated in 466 races, of which he won 194. This time he drove a Porsche 911 S from 1971, accompanied by his wife Misty.

Gerhard Berger: The ten-time Grand Prix winner enjoyed driving the yellow Porsche 917/10 TC, built in 1972: “I have always wanted to do a few laps in this car.”

Dr. Wolfgang Porsche: The chairman of the supervisory boards of Porsche SE and Porsche AG was behind the wheel of the Porsche 356 Carrera, model year 1964.



The 356 easily threads its way downhill through tight serpentine curves

FINALLY, ASPHALT UNDER THE WHEELS: WELCOME TO GRÖBMING! THE SUN IS SMILING ON THE GLEAMING 356. OR MAYBE IT IS THE OTHER WAY AROUND?



“This was the first real Porsche. No other car even sounds like it,” says Bell. “This car has a personality all its own. You can’t be too strict with it.” Tomorrow Bell can demonstrate how that works.

The next day, 10 a.m., time for the hill-climb trials. It is still pleasantly cool on the Stoderzinken, Gröbming’s home mountain. There is a mild breeze. The lush green Ennstal valley rests sleepily between the summits of the Dachstein massif. The snow-covered peaks are hiding behind scattered clouds. An Alpine road 8.4 kilometers (5.2 miles) in length is the only way to the top. It surmounts a vertical difference of 1,280 meters (4,200 vertical feet). The route passes through sharp hairpin turns and past yellowish rock formations, on which a few hardy pine trees manage to survive.

Distant engine noise can be heard, its volume rising and falling as the valley distorts the sound. Spectators waiting along the route are still sitting at picnic tables or on camping blankets. As the engine noise grows closer, they crowd along the edges of the road; the first vehicles are barely visible as colored splotches between the pine trees. But with every meter of altitude they gain, their shape becomes more discernible. What’s approaching is a caravan of automotive history.

Derek Bell and the 356 are in the thick of it, and doing well. The engine is running flawlessly. As expected. Bell is in complete control of the vehicle. That is no surprise either—as if time had stood still, but the cars hadn’t: accelerating, making sharp steering maneuvers, taking turns tightly. Just like before. And Bell knows he must use intuition, because even at the age of 50, this classic car cannot be completely controlled by intellect alone.

Once it has traversed the steep section, the caravan enters a route nearly 300 kilometers long (186 miles), passing lakes and national parks. Even in historical rallies it is the best time that counts, though not just the sum total but the most consistent

performance. Derek Bell is in his element—braking only when absolutely necessary. The 356 moves ahead with calm confidence, even in passing maneuvers—only then its steady growl turns into shrieks of joy from its four-cylinder boxer engine.

After two days, 845 kilometers (525 miles), and several test stages, the adventure is over. The 356 heads for home in the car hauler. Back in Stuttgart the experts at the museum workshop are ready for it. The 356 proudly displays the blemishes from this racing weekend. They amount to somewhat more than road dust. Derek Bell gave it his best in the Ennstal, of course! Even the windshield took a hit. “Falling rocks,” Kuno Werner notes dryly, “that’s par for the course.” Repairing the damage is entirely normal too: it means restoring the 356 to museum condition. In addition to being in fine operating condition, the main task now is to be beautiful.

An elevator ride takes the classic vehicle back up to Level Two, where several visitors are already waiting impatiently. A little more hard pushing and the job is done. The 356 B 2000 GS Carrera GT is back where it belongs, in its customary place of honor. “So where has it been?” a boy asks his dad, who points at the yellow sign that was posted to explain the specimen’s absence. At the Ennstal Classic. “Really? It can still run?” the boy retorts.

Now the 356 is a showpiece again, gleaming amidst the awe of museum visitors. As if it had never been anything else.



THE ENNSTAL CLASSIC

“Driving in the last remaining paradise” is the motto of the annual classic-car race in the Ennstal, held for renowned vintage cars, model year up to 1972. The starter field is limited to 205 vehicles. Rankings are based on target times. During the two-day rally, the classic cars cover 845 kilometers (525 miles) with a variety of rankings and test stages.
www.ennstal-classic.at



PORSCHE 356 B 2000 GS CARRERA GT

Model year: 1960
Engine: Four-cylinder boxer
Power: 175 hp (129 kW)
Top track speed: 220 km/h (137 mph)

**BACK HOME.
PORSCHE MUSEUM,
PLACE OF HONOR:
THE 356 B 2000 GS
CARRERA GT**