ROLLS-ROYCE | MEDIA INFORMATION

ROLLS-ROYCE GRAVITY RACERS:

THE FIRST VEHICLES OF THE GOODWOOD ERA

Thursday 14 March 2024, Goodwood, West Sussex (EMBARGO TO 09.00 GMT)

* Rolls-Royce Motor Cars celebrates the first vehicles ever commissioned in the Goodwood era
* Two hand-built gravity racers took part in the 2001 and 2002 Soapbox Challenges at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, before the company had officially relaunched
* A team of Rolls-Royce Apprentices have worked together to refurbish the cars
* The racers have now been loaned to the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts’ Club, and are proudly displayed at their Northamptonshire headquarters

*“It has been a great privilege to reminisce on the first vehicles ever produced at the Home of Rolls-Royce. Not many will know that, before any of the first Phantoms were handed to clients, a pair of hand-built gravity racers took part in the Soapbox Challenge at the Goodwood Festival of Speed. Having been retired from racing activities and subsequently displayed in our headquarters, we are delighted to announce that they have been refurbished by our Apprentices, who have worked tirelessly to restore them to their former glory. Over two decades on from their first outing, these priceless artifacts act as a pleasant reminder of how far we have come in the last 20 years at the Home of Rolls-Royce. We are confident that they will be cherished by our friends at the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts’ Club, where they will add to an already vast archive of Rolls-Royce’s rich and storied history.”*
**Andrew Ball, Head of Corporate Relations and Heritage, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars**

Today, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars commemorates the first vehicles of the Goodwood era. Contrary to popular belief, this was not the first new Phantom handed over to its commissioning client at 00.01 on 1 January 2003; in fact, Rolls-Royce’s modern renaissance began two years prior, at the Goodwood Festival of Speed Soapbox Challenge.

Before Spectre, Cullinan, Ghost or Phantom, there were the Rolls-Royce Close Coupled Drophead Gravity Racers. A teaser to the marque’s Goodwood resurgence, these four-wheeled, motorless vehicles – codenamed RR-0.01 and RR-0.02 – were true one-of-one commissions, built by the same skilled hands that would soon relaunch the brand in the West Sussex countryside. With ‘Project Rolls-Royce’ still in its infancy – planning permission for the new facility had only just been granted – the racers were commissioned to participate in the Soapbox Challenges at the 2001 and 2002 editions of the Goodwood Festival of Speed, a gruelling downhill race for gravity powered vehicles.

The lines on RR-0.01 offered tantalising clues to the design of the first Goodwood Phantom. Built from carbon and glass fibre, composite honeycomb plates and precision aluminium components, its monocoque shell bore a striking resemblance to Phantom VII, winning the award for the best design at the 2001 Festival of Speed. It was adorned with a unique, ‘March Hare’ mascot on its bonnet; the redesigned Spirit of Ecstasy would not make its debut on Phantom until the newly built Goodwood site officially opened its doors in 2003. In the 2001 Soapbox Challenge, it was driven by Ian Cameron, Rolls-Royce’s first Design Director of the modern era, who was able to overhaul the Bentley racer on the final corner.

RR-0.02 was inspired by the Silver Ghost, winner of the 1911 London to Edinburgh Trial and the 1913 Alpine Trial, accomplishments which cemented Rolls-Royce’s position as creators of the ‘best car in the world’. Like its illustrious predecessor, RR-0.02 was built with speed in mind, with its formula racing-style steering racks combining with its slick, tubular tyres to minimise rolling resistance; in a fitting tribute, Ian Cameron led the team to victory in the speed challenge at the 2002 Soapbox race, lifting the Newton Apple award for the fastest racer. It was also bestowed with the Merit of Excellence by the ‘Wazir’ of Goodwood, a discretionary award for racers of particular distinction, earning the honorary title of Grand Soap Wazir. Made from aluminium and carbon fibre, with a painted wood aft deck and leather trim, it was emblazoned with a one-of-a-kind, double-question mark monogram above its pantheon grille, offering further hints to the marque’s Goodwood revival.

Following these triumphs, the racers were proudly displayed in the main reception area of the newly completed Home of Rolls-Royce, attracting attention and admiration from curious clients and visitors for many years. A testament to the Goodwood site’s formative years, they would have their racing swansong in the fifth and final Soapbox Challenge in 2013. Once again, they successfully completed the course, with RR-0.02 reaching a top speed of 72mph on its way to the finish line just outside Goodwood House.

These remarkable vehicles have now been faithfully restored to their former glory by the next generation of skilled artisans and craftspeople at the Home of Rolls-Royce, ready for the next chapter in their fascinating history. The racers recently underwent a full-body and mechanical restoration, managed by a team of Rolls-Royce Apprentices. This included a complex repair to the front grille on RR-0.01, and a handmade replacement front-screen veneer on RR-0.02, both having been originally damaged during their racing exploits.

From Goodwood, the racers travelled to the headquarters of the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts’ Club at Hunt House in Northamptonshire. Here, they take pride of place in the Club’s unrivalled collection of Rolls-Royce records and memorabilia, over 20 years since they kicked off a new dawn for the marque.

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## FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find all our press releases and press kits, as well as a wide selection of high resolution, downloadable photographs and video footage at our media website, [PressClub](https://www.press.rolls-roycemotorcars.com/rolls-royce-motor-cars-pressclub).

You can also follow marque on social media: [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/rolls-royce-motor-cars/); [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/RollsRoyceMotorCars);[(X) Twitter](https://twitter.com/rollsroycecars); [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/rollsroycecars/); and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/rollsroycemotorcars).

EDITORS’ NOTES

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is a true luxury house, creating the world’s most recognised, revered and desirable handcrafted Bespoke products for its international clientele.

There are over 2,500 people working at the Home of Rolls-Royce at Goodwood, West Sussex. This comprises both its global headquarters and Centre of Luxury Manufacturing Excellence – the only place in the world where Rolls-Royce motor cars are designed, engineered and meticulously built by hand. Its continuous investment in its facilities, products and people has resulted in a series of ‘record years’ for global sales, peaking in 2022 with over 6,000 motor cars sold worldwide.

Since the company began production at Goodwood in 2003, it has contributed more than £4 billion to the UK economy and adds more than £500 million in economic value every year. Its continuous investment in its facilities, products and people has resulted in a series of ‘record years’ for global sales, peaking in 2022 with over 6,000 motor cars sold worldwide.

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is a wholly owned subsidiary of the BMW Group and is a completely separate, unrelated company from Rolls-Royce plc, the manufacturer of aircraft engines and propulsion systems.

The Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts’ Club caters for anyone with an interest in the motor car products of Rolls‑Royce. From just 11 people at the inaugural meeting in 1957, membership now stands at around 10,000. Membership is open to owners and non-owners alike and members are drawn from all walks of life and from countries across the world. For more details visit: [**www.rrec.org.uk**](http://www.rrec.org.uk).

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