ROLLS-ROYCE | MEDIA INFORMATION

MODELS OF THE MARQUE – THE 1930s:

THE ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM III

Thursday 1 August 2024, Goodwood, West Sussex

* A brief history of the Rolls-Royce Phantom III launched in 1936
* The first Rolls-Royce motor car powered by a V12 engine
* Sir Henry Royce’s last major design before his passing in 1933
* Naming of the marque’s first all-electric model, Spectre, was inspired by ten experimental Phantom IIIs built from 1934 to 1937
* Fourth in a series celebrating landmark models from the marque’s history
* Year-long retrospective marks the 120th anniversary of the first meeting between Henry Royce and The Hon. Charles Stewart Rolls in 1904

*“Launched in 1936, Phantom III has a special place in the pantheon of great Rolls-Royce motor cars. It was the first to be powered by a V12 engine, setting the template for every Rolls-Royce up to and including the modern era, while also incorporating suspension and chassis technology that secured the marque’s enduring reputation for both peerless comfort and outstanding performance. There is a certain poignancy to this motor car, too. Production ceased in 1939 and, despite its technical advances and immense potential, never resumed, leaving a question of what might have been. It was also Sir Henry Royce’s last major design, which his death in 1933 meant he never saw completed. But, visionary that he was, he had established fundamental technical and design tenets that still hold true today.”*

**Andrew Ball, Head of Corporate Relations & Heritage, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars**

As early as 1930, Sir Henry Royce realised that his large-horsepower, in-line six-cylinder Rolls-Royce engines were reaching their technical limits. In simple terms, there wasn’t much more power or torque he could feasibly extract from them. He realised that Rolls-Royce risked losing ground to its American rivals, who were already busily producing luxury cars with much more powerful engines in V8, V12, and even V16 configurations.

Royce had a wealth of experience in designing V12 aero engines, and Rolls-Royce was equally adept at making them. It was therefore a logical and natural progression for Royce to create a V12 engine for the successor to Phantom II, which had appeared in 1929.

Royce’s new engine represented significant technical progress. The new V12 was shorter than Phantom II’s in-line six-cylinder unit, with a capacity of 7.3 litres compared to its predecessor’s 7.6 litres. These more compact dimensions allowed a shorter bonnet and larger passenger compartment, giving coachbuilders more scope than earlier Rolls-Royce rolling chassis. Most importantly, however, the new engine delivered the increased power Royce was seeking. In its initial form, it produced 165 H.P., compared to the 120 of Phantom II, rising to 180 in later motor cars.

The chassis, too, was a major leap forward in design. In another first for the marque, Royce equipped Phantom III with independent front suspension, an innovation that considerably increased both ride comfort and steering control. Characteristically, his design team also incorporated a great number of smaller engineering advances that owners and passengers would probably never notice but greatly reduced the transmission of noise, vibration and harshness caused by poor road surfaces. Taken together, these developments made the Phantom III one of the quietest and smoothest-riding cars of the 1930s. When fitted with Royce’s preferred lightweight coachwork, it was capable of reaching 100 miles per hour.

Royce saw experimental versions of the engine completed, but his death in April 1933 came a year before the first test cars were ready. Ten of these experimental Phantom III motor cars were built between 1934 and 1937 under the codename *Spectre,* a storied name that lives on today in the marque’s first all-electric model.

The first production Phantom III chassis, sporting a saloon-with-division body built by H. J. Mulliner, was delivered in August 1936. In all, 710 examples were produced, before Rolls-Royce ceased its motor car production in 1939; the last Phantom III was purchased in June 1940.

The directors of Rolls-Royce knew that, once peace returned, they would be operating in a very different world – and that there would be no place in it for a motor car like Phantom III. Perhaps even more so than in 1918, the marque would have to focus its energies on models that were more in keeping with the time, while continuing to build upon the standards of quality and refinement expected of a Rolls-Royce. So, despite its technical brilliance, superlative performance and immense potential for further development, its brief but transformative life was over. Yet its influence would be felt in every Rolls-Royce motor car right up to and including the V12-powered models still being built at Goodwood today. An enduring testament to both the excellence of Phantom III’s design and engineering, and the visionary talents of its creator.

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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); [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 2023 with over 6,000 motor cars sold worldwide. An [independent study](https://www.press.rolls-roycemotorcars.com/rolls-royce-motor-cars-pressclub/article/detail/T0414618EN/%C2%A34bn-for-uk-plc%E2%80%99%3A-rolls-royce-motor-cars-%E2%80%93-the-great-british-success-story) by the London School of Economics & Political Science confirms that since the company first launched 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.

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.

120TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2024, Rolls-Royce marks the 120th anniversary of the first meeting between its founders, Henry (later Sir Henry) Royce and The Hon. Charles Stewart Rolls on 4 May 1904. The meeting, at The Midland Hotel in Manchester, was arranged by a mutual friend, Henry Edmunds. Rolls agreed to sell all the cars Royce could make and the rest is, literally, history. Together, Royce and Rolls created what was soon dubbed ‘the best car in the world’ and gave their names to a dynasty of motor cars that continues to define superluxury motoring across the world.

The Rolls-Royce ‘Makers of the Marque’ series:

* Henry Edmunds, born 19 March 1853
* Sir Henry Royce, born 27 March 1863
* Eleanor Thornton, born 15 April 1880
* Ernest Hives, born 21 April 1886
* Lord John Walter Edward Douglas-Scott-Montagu, born 10 June 1866
* The Hon. Charles Rolls, born 27 August 1877
* Claude Johnson, born 24 October 1864
* Charles Sykes, born 18 December 1875
* Eric Platford, born 25 February 1883

The Rolls-Royce ‘Models of the Marque’ series:

* 1900s: Royce 10 H.P. / Rolls-Royce 10 H.P.
* 1910s: Rolls-Royce 40/50 H.P. ‘Silver Ghost’
* 1920s: Rolls-Royce 20 H.P. the ‘Twenty’
* 1930s: Rolls-Royce Phantom III

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