ROLLS-ROYCE | MEDIA INFORMATION

MODELS OF THE MARQUE – THE 1980s:

ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM VI

Tuesday 11 February 2025, Goodwood, West Sussex

* A brief history of the Rolls-Royce Phantom VI, built between 1968 and 1993
* Last fully coachbuilt Rolls-Royce before the practice was revived in the Goodwood era
* Eighth chapter in a series celebrating landmark models from each decade of 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

*“The launch of Phantom VI marked a significant chapter in the Rolls-Royce story; it would go on to become the marque’s final model offered as a rolling chassis, ending a line unbroken since 1904. However, the coachbuilding era ended in suitably magnificent style with Phantom VI. Launched in 1968, just 374 were built in a production cycle that extended over two decades; however, the 1980s can be regarded as its true heyday – only six examples were completed after 1990. The last fully coachbuilt Rolls-Royce, Phantom VI had coachwork by H. J. Mulliner Park Ward, then a wholly in-house operation; the best-known commissions were likely those built for the Royal fleet, which remain in service today. It would be more than 20 years before coachbuilt motor cars of comparable quality and detail would become available, when Rolls-Royce began its modern-day coachbuilding operation at Goodwood with ‘Sweptail’ in 2017. This was followed by the announcement of a dedicated department within Rolls-Royce named Coachbuild, and the unveiling of Boat Tail in 2021, then Droptail in 2023. Phantom VI is thus an important marker in the Rolls-Royce story, as both the swansong of traditional coachbuilding, and a model for the new generation that would follow.”*

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

From its foundation in 1904, Rolls-Royce built rolling chassis, upon which clients commissioned coachwork from an independent coachbuilder. The marque produced its first complete monocoque cars in the 1960s, but continued to offer rolling chassis until the 1980s.

Phantom VI was the last Rolls-Royce to be made available in this form. In line with standard Rolls-Royce practice, established by Sir Henry Royce himself, Phantom VI was born out of the upgrades and enhancements to its predecessor, Phantom V. The accumulated improvements reached the point where Rolls-Royce engineers judged it sufficiently evolved to be worthy of a new designation.

Even so, Phantom VI already felt like something of an anachronism. Phantom V clients had been able to choose coachwork from four great names: H. J. Mulliner, Park Ward, Hoopers and James Young. By 1961, the latter two had closed their doors, while Rolls-Royce had acquired and amalgamated the other two to create its own in-house coachbuilder, known as H. J. Mulliner Park Ward, which would provide the bodies for virtually all Phantom VI motor cars.

Like all Rolls-Royce models, Phantom VI underwent various changes during its lifecycle, including a more powerful 6.75-litre V8 engine and a modern three-speed automatic gearbox to replace the original four-speed version inherited from the Silver Cloud era. It also had specially engineered brakes, which used the Silver Shadow-style high-pressure hydraulics to operate rams connected to twin master cylinders; the brake drums were designed for improved heat dissipation and more efficient linings.

Changes in safety legislation required front-hinged doors with burst-proof locks, flush interior door handles and a steering column that would collapse upon impact. New crash-testing protocols also meant the prototype Phantom VI chassis, PRH1500, suffered the indignity of being driven into a 100-tonne concrete block at 30mph (48km/h) – a test it passed so effortlessly it was subsequently rebuilt and is still in service as a courtesy car at a Swiss hotel to this day.

Although coachbuilding was by now a niche offer even for Rolls-Royce, Phantom VI provided a fitting ‘last hurrah’ for this longstanding traditional craft. The seven ‘Special Limousines’, codenamed ‘Alpha’, for example, were superficially similar to other Phantom VIs; but close examination revealed wider, chrome-plated window trims and 16” wheels with tyres inflated to 90psi. These modifications were required to accommodate the 5mm thick glass and 7mm of armour plating that rendered the rear passenger compartment both bullet and bomb-proof. No such provision was made for the luckless chauffeur, however.

Phantom VI was also the last truly coachbuilt Rolls-Royce to offer both Sedanca de Ville and Landaulette coachwork. The Landaulette was available opening either to the B-pillar or over the rear seat, the latter variant being the choice of HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother. Her daughter, HM Queen Elizabeth II, owned two Phantom VIs. The first, codenamed ‘Oil Barrel’, had its roof height raised by 13cm (5") and a Perspex rear cupola that could be quickly covered by a two-piece, black-painted aluminium dome when the occupants required privacy. The second, delivered for the Royal fleet in July 1987, was codenamed ‘Lady Norfolk’ and had a standard roof height. Both remain in service at the Royal Mews today.

Increasing difficulty in obtaining minor chassis and coachwork components manufactured in the Silver Cloud era finally put paid to Phantom VI production. The last iteration commissioned by a client was delivered in May 1991; its 117 bespoke features included a solid silver fruit bowl to sit atop the cabinet behind the division, kept in place by concealed magnets.

In its 23-year lifecycle, just 374 Phantom VIs were built. The very last example to be completed was a Landaulette finished in black over red, with red leather in the front and red velvet in the rear compartment. Rolls-Royce had originally intended to retain the car itself, but recessionary pressures finally persuaded the company to part with it in 1993.

Phantom VI was the last Rolls-Royce model with traditional coachbuilt bodywork. It represented both the pinnacle and the swansong of the traditional coachbuilder’s art, with a purity of line and finesse of detail unequalled until Rolls-Royce embarked on its contemporary coachbuilding renaissance at Goodwood, with ‘Sweptail’, more than two decades later.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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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. 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
* 1940s: Rolls-Royce Silver Dawn
* 1950s: Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud
* 1960s: Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow
* 1970s: Rolls-Royce Camargue
* 1980s: Rolls-Royce Phantom VI

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