ROLLS-ROYCE | MEDIA INFORMATION

MODELS OF THE MARQUE – THE 2000s:

THE ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM VII

Monday 24 March 2025, Goodwood, West Sussex

* A brief history of the Rolls-Royce Phantom VII, built between 2002 and 2017
* The first motor car to be crafted at the Home of Rolls-Royce at Goodwood
* Penultimate chapter in a series celebrating a landmark model 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

*“For those of us working at the Home of Rolls-Royce today, Phantom VII is where it all began. The first motor car ever to be built at our Global Centre of Luxury Manufacturing Excellence, it ushered in our modern era in 2003 and, in terms of design, engineering, craft and manufacturing, set the template for everything we’ve done since. Though it marked a decisive new beginning for the brand, echoes of earlier Rolls-Royce models are everywhere: from one angle you see Silver Shadow, from another Silver Cloud; and elsewhere an undeniable link to the coachbuilt limousines of earlier decades. Through these inherited traits, Phantom VII represented an up-to-the-minute interpretation of the traditional, formal British saloon. At the same time, it started completely new conversations in modern luxury, and the unlimited possibilities of Bespoke.”*

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

At one minute past midnight on 1 January 2003, the Chairman & Chief Executive of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars handed the keys of the first Phantom VII to its new owner. The moment marked the beginning of a new era for the brand and was the culmination of a process dubbed ‘the last great adventure in automotive history’.

In 1998, BMW Group acquired the rights to manufacture Rolls-Royce motor cars. In less than five years, it had designed and constructed a new head office and manufacturing plant, and designed, tested and built an entirely new motor car worthy of the Rolls-Royce name – a timescale almost unprecedented in the industry.

**THE REBIRTH OF A LEGEND**

The design for Phantom VII was initially developed in a secret studio, discreetly located in a former bank building on the north side of London’s Hyde Park. For Chief Exterior Designer, Marek Djordjevic, the project was a dream come true. He was instructed to begin with a clean sheet of paper, and was given only three stipulations: the car, codenamed RR01, should have very large wheels; the famous radiator grille; and, of course, the Spirit of Ecstasy mascot.

To understand the essence of what a Rolls-Royce should be, and the characteristics that made it so special and identifiable, Djordjevic turned to designs from the past for inspiration. Three in particular caught his eye: the classically elegant Silver Cloud; the contemporary, understated Silver Shadow; and above all, a coachbuilt Phantom II of the early 1930s.

The heritage Phantom provided him with classic Rolls-Royce signature elements that would profoundly inform the new model’s design: a roofline just over twice the height of the wheels; a long wheelbase, with the front wheels well to the fore and a minimal front overhang; a long bonnet, visually linked to the passenger cabin by an accent line of brightwork; and an imaginary line drawn rising from rear to front along the lower edge of the body, reminiscent of a motor yacht at speed – the famous ‘waft line’ still exhibited by every Rolls-Royce model today.

**THE EPITOME OF COMFORT**

Phantom VII was designed first and foremost around the comfort of its occupants – an overarching design approach known as the Authority Concept. The driving position provided a commanding view of the road ahead, with the primary controls intuitively positioned, in groups and shapes to make them operable by touch alone so the driver could keep their eyes on the road. Secondary controls were either concealed in compartments, such as the centre armrests, or operated by the Controller. A solid metal cylindrical dial, exposed by opening part of the front-seat armrest, the Controller took care of functions including communication, navigation, entertainment and the motor car’s setting configuration, all displayed on a rotating central fascia screen.

For rear-seat passengers, the Authority Concept manifested itself in wide, rear-hinged coach doors allowing them to enter and exit the cabin easily and decorously. Once inside, the doors closed with the touch of a button. The seats themselves were offered in a choice of configurations: ‘Individual’ with a fixed centre armrest and console; or ‘Theatre’ with a raisable armrest and angled side-bolsters permitting occupants to sit at a slight angle towards one another to aid conversation. The seats were also slightly higher than the front seats, so the passengers could see through the windscreen more easily – and admire the Spirit of Ecstasy proudly crowning the long sweep of the bonnet ahead.

**WHERE PAST AND PRESENT MEET**

While Phantom VII’s overall silhouette reflected traditional Rolls-Royce proportions, and its interior upheld the marque’s reputation for peerless comfort, its engineering and construction were at the leading edge of 21st Century technology.

Of all the engineering innovations introduced by Phantom VII, the most enduringly important was its construction method. Instead of the usual monocoque structure, in which the bodywork and frame are integrated into a single shell, Phantom VII was built on an aluminium spaceframe – a skeletal framework of some 200 extruded sections to which the suspension, engine and body panels are attached. This method is often used in racing and high-performance vehicles, owing to its superior strength-to-weight ratio. The Rolls-Royce version was also designed around the marque’s requirement for hand-built perfection; when measured from bumper to bumper, the length of every motor car built on it would be accurate to within 0.5mm. Achieving this precision required skilled craftspeople to hand-weld 150 metres of seams in 2,000 separate locations. The Phantom VII spaceframe provided the foundations for the contemporary Architecture of Luxury, which underpins every model built at the Home of Rolls-Royce today.

**EXTENDING ITS INFLUENCE**

The Architecture of Luxury harnesses another key benefit of the spaceframe. Infinitely scalable and modifiable, it gives Rolls-Royce engineers and designers the freedom to create motor cars of different shapes and dimensions on the same underpinnings. Today, that remarkable flexibility is demonstrated in models as diverse as Spectre and Cullinan; but the original Phantom VII spaceframe provided the first example of this adaptability.

At the 2004 Geneva Motor Show, Rolls-Royce unveiled an experimental car, 100EX. Four inches shorter than Phantom VII, it was a two-door drophead coupe, with a V16 cylinder engine and a fabric hood concealed by marine-style bleached teak decking, inspired by the classic J-Class racing yacht of the 1930s. It was so well received that a production version, with a V12 engine, was approved; Phantom Drophead Coupé, as it was known, is now one of the rarest and most desirable motor cars of the entire Goodwood era.

The following year, Rolls-Royce launched Phantom VII Extended Wheelbase (EWB), in which the chassis was lengthened by 250mm (9.8in) to create additional space in the rear cabin.

In 2006, another experimental Phantom, 101EX, appeared at Geneva. This was a fixed-head coupé based on the Drophead, and was the first to feature the Starlight Headliner now seen on almost every Rolls-Royce motor car. The Phantom Coupé also became a series production car, again in extremely limited numbers.

**A NEW POWER RISING**

Another link to the past was provided by the engine. Rolls-Royce had used a V12 engine with Phantom III in 1936, and again in Silver Seraph in the late 1990s. That Phantom VII should be similarly equipped was obvious and indisputable.

Rolls-Royce’s engineers were aware that the Phantom VII engine required a significant amount of power to deliver the effortless ‘waftability’ they wanted from their new model. Phantom VII was therefore fitted with a brand-new, specially designed engine with a capacity of 6.75 litres – the traditional displacement for a Rolls-Royce motor car engine. A derivative of this engine is still used in Rolls-Royce motor cars today – with the obvious exception of the all-electric Spectre and Black Badge Spectre.

**THE ULTIMATE CANVAS FOR BESPOKE**

Phantom has long been revered as the ultimate canvas for Bespoke, enabling clients to create truly singular expressions of their vision. Among the most notable Private Commissions and Collections were Phantom Aviator, which paid homage to the golden age of flight with aviation-inspired details and a cockpit-like interior; Phantom Serenity, a masterpiece of handwoven silk and delicate embroidery that redefined luxury craftsmanship; and the Art Deco Collection, which celebrated the bold geometric forms and opulent materials of the Roaring Twenties, translating the era’s glamour into a contemporary Rolls-Royce aesthetic. Each of these creations exemplified the boundless possibilities of Bespoke, reinforcing Phantom’s status as the pinnacle of individualisation.

**A CRUCIAL LEGACY**

Phantom VII remained in production until 2017, when it was replaced by the current eighth generation. For 14 years, it was the marque’s pinnacle product and re-established, then reinforced Rolls-Royce’s long-cherished reputation as ‘the best car in the world’. As the first – and until the launch of Ghost in 2009, the only – motor car to be handmade at Goodwood, it was the foundation on which all Rolls-Royce’s subsequent growth and success was built.

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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. 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:-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 Stewart 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
* 1990s: Rolls-Royce Silver Seraph
* 2000s: Phantom VII

Watch this space for more…

CONTACTS | GOODWOOD

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| --- | --- |
| Director of Global Communications  Emma Begley: +44 (0)1243 384060 [Email](mailto:emma.begley@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Head of Corporate Relations and HeritageAndrew Ball: +44 (0)7815 244064 [Email](mailto:andrew.ball@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Head of Global Product CommunicationsGeorgina Cox: +44 (0)7815 370878[Email](mailto:Georgina.Cox@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Global Bespoke Communications  Malika Abdullaeva:  +44 (0)7815 244874 [Email](mailto:Malika.Abdullaeva@partner.rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Head of Global Luxury and Corporate Communications Marius Tegneby: +44 (0)7815 246106 [Email](mailto:Marius.Tegneby@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Sustainability and Corporate Communications ManagerLuke Strudwick: +44 (0)7815 245918 [Email](mailto:luke.w.strudwick@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
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CONTACTS | GLOBAL

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| --- | --- |
| The Americas Gerry Spahn: +1 201 930 8308 [Email](mailto:gerry.spahn@rolls-roycemotorcarsna.com) | Asia Pacific (South) and India Juliana Tan: +65 9695 3840 [Email](mailto:Juliana.Tan@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia Frank Tiemann: +49 160 9697 5807 [Email](mailto:frank.tiemann@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Central and Western Europe  Ruth Hilse: +49 89 382 60064 [Email](mailto:ruth.hilse@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| China  Ou Sun: +86 186 0059 0675 [Email](mailto:Ou.Sun@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Japan and Korea  Yuki Imamura: +81 90 5216 1957 [Email](mailto:Yuki.Imamura@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Middle East and Africa Haya Shanata: +971 56 171 7883 [Email](mailto:haya.shanata@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | United Kingdom and Ireland  Isabel Matthews: +44 (0)7815 245127 [Email](mailto:isabel.matthews@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |