
1927 Rolls-Royce 40/50 H.P.

Lot sold	USD 199 140 - 265 521 GBP 150 000 - 200 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1927	Condition	Used
Chassis number	14RF	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	652		

Description

First owned by HRH The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII)

1927 Rolls-Royce 40/50hp Phantom I Saloon

Registration no. UC 6

Chassis no. 14RF

Rolls-Royce's 'single model' policy had proved to be an outstanding success for the company, but immediately after the end of the Great War the recession in the motor trade prompted the introduction of a smaller, cheaper, 20hp car to be built alongside the existing 40/50hp Silver Ghost. Henry Royce's new design incorporated a number of modern features such as overhead valve-gear for its six-cylinder engine, a centre-change gearbox and 'Hotchkiss drive' rear axle, the advanced newcomer's arrival only serving to emphasise the Silver Ghost's Edwardian origins. However, the 45/50hp model would soon benefit from developments pioneered on its smaller sibling.

Long-awaited successor to the 'Ghost, the New Phantom arrived in 1925. 'After seven years of experiment and test, in the course of which no promising device had remained untried, the 45/50hp Phantom chassis emerged, and is offered to the public as the most suitable type possible for a mechanically propelled carriage under present-day conditions,' announced Rolls-Royce.

Retrospectively known as the Phantom I, the newcomer boasted an entirely new push-rod overhead-valve, 7,688cc, six-cylinder engine with detachable cylinder head, a unit considerably more powerful

than that of its Edwardian predecessor. The New Phantom, like the 20hp, adopted a disc-type clutch and adjustable radiator shutters; its chassis though, remained essentially the same as that of the later four-wheel-braked 'Ghost and would continue fundamentally unchanged until the arrival of the Phantom II in 1929 brought with it an entirely new frame. Some 2,212 Phantom I chassis had left Rolls-Royce's UK factory by the time production ceased.

Chassis number '14RF' was originally ordered by HRH The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII). What happened to the Rolls-Royce after its royal duties ceased is not known, as for many years it lay undiscovered in a Suffolk farmyard until chanced upon by professional car restorer, Edward Overton. Mr Overton had gone there to buy a Bentley chassis and offered to buy the Rolls-Royce chassis as well, only for the farmer to refuse, saying "No, that's the King's car". Taking note of the engine number - 'OM15' - Mr Overton was able to confirm the farmer's story. Despite the farmer's initial reluctance to sell, a price was soon agreed.

The Phantom had been comprehensively dismantled and it took several weeks to locate all the parts and other material, which included the chassis-plate and a photograph of the Rolls-Royce at St James's Palace. Mr Overton was building a batch of Bentley Specials at the time, and the Rolls-Royce was put to one side for attention at a later date, which would turn out to be the late 1980s.

Once the frame, engine, transmission, and axles had been restored and the car brought to rolling chassis state, a replica of the original Gurney Nutting Weymann-type saloon body was fabricated using period photographs as guide. A photograph of '14RF' carrying its original Gurney Nutting body may be found on page 63 of Rolls-Royce The Derby Phantoms by Lawrence Dalton.

A pair of 1928 front wings was located and altered to comply with those shown in the photographs, while the rear wings were made from scratch together with a suitable rack for the trunk. The radiator shutters were missing and it took five years to find a set, which gives some indication of why the project took some three decades to complete. Unfortunately, mechanically-operated trafficators could not be found so period electrical ones were installed instead. Following the rebuild's completion, the fascinating story of the royal Phantom's discovery and restoration was published in Majesty magazine (copy available). Having successfully covered some 1,000 miles in the rebuilt Rolls-Royce, Mr Overton decided it was time to move the car on to a new owner. Described by the private vendor as in very good condition, this imposing Royal Phantom is offered with a V5C Registration Certificate and the aforementioned magazine article.

Bonhams 1793

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