

South Downs Report for TR Action 203

In March the South Downs group members braved the sleet and snow to visit the Rolls Royce factory at Goodwood. Most of us met up at the Five Bells to drive in convoy to the factory along the A27. Two more TR's tagged on at Lancing, the rest met at the Anglesey Arms. We all congregated at the pub for lunch and a half a shandy. It was nice to see five TR's (two TR 3's, two TR 6's and a TR7 V8) braving the weather for the afternoon, including three who decided it would be a good idea to have their roofs off!



At around 2pm we arrived at the very handsome building, which was Rolls Royce at Goodwood where the Rolls Royce Phantom is made. The building and grounds were only completed a few years ago and are very attractive in design, and well deserve the awards for the architecture. After a little introduction we were asked to wear the very fetching cream coats, which we were told were to protect the cars from damage if we were to go near them. As if we would! We split into two groups of ten for our tour, and after a few minutes into it I think we were all amazed at how clean and organized the whole place was, even the silence of the assembly areas was hard to believe for a busy factory.

The tour really started with us being shown the "Paint Shop", and then down onto the assembly line. We were made to walk inside yellow lines all around the factory for our own safety, and the cars! We were strictly told NO TOUCHING! I'm sure more than a few of us came away with slapped hands!

On the assembly line everything from carpets to batteries (there are two batteries in each car!) are fitted to the freshly painted shell of the Phantom. The whole line is an absolutely spotless, floor clean, everything is in its place (just like our garage at home!), and even the engineers were wearing shirts and trousers, no overalls! I think everyone was impressed with the engine rig, which was specially built at a cost of £1.5 million just for the job of fitting the engine; gearbox and drive train to the underside of the car in one go.

Every Phantom, which is built at Goodwood, is made to order, none are made to a bog standard specification. The very cheapest car being £256,000, and it was hard to see where all that money is spent. But with a 3-month order to delivery time, we could see why. The quality of the tiny bits and pieces, and the time which goes into making them is astonishing, One person asked how many man hours go into making the wooden interior, the answer was that they don't measure in hours, they measure in weeks!

All in all the afternoon was very enjoyable, but unfortunately no free samples were offered. Our thanks to all at Rolls Royce for letting us have this opportunity.

The slightly low turnout for the March meeting was disappointing but the fun had in the Mastermind Quiz made up for it. This years testing quiz comprised TR questions together with general car and general knowledge questions. The questions were easy; it's just that some of the answers were a little harder to come by in some cases! In the end four teams of three were drawn at random to contest for the coveted cups and in a close run final Graeme, Geoff and Gregg (again) ran out winners from Arthur, Peter and Martin by 18 points to 16.

April saw our first stab at an auction and we think overall it was a success. Due to a very generous donation of a number of mint condition manuals and other books, together with other lots entered by various members the net result was £140 to Group funds. There was some very spirited bidding for some of the lots (although for other lots it was like pulling teeth) but in the end every item bought proved to be a real bargain. So thanks to all who put forward lots and to those who purchased them, thereby making it possible for us to have something quite different on a club night and make a sizeable contribution to Group funds.

By the time you have read this May will have seen the first round of the Best Presented Car competition on our club night, our first show i.e. Eastbourne Magnificent Motors, involvement at the Kent weekender and finally another mid-month run on a Sunday kindly organised by Clive and Paul Bridle. We will fill you in on all this next time but until then why not pop and see what we are up to yourselves. We are always happy to see you.

Jane Worsfold