American style of 1930s Buicks donated to the National Motor Museum

Published: November 6, 2026

Author:

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/american-style-of-1930s-buicks-donated-to-the-national-motor-museum/



Donors Dave and Monica Wiltshire from Beckenham in southeast London and son Rob with Director of Collections, Andrea Bishop and Vehicle Registrar, Rebecca Town. Photo: National Motor Museum/ Bryn Jones.

The National Motor Museum tells us:

Two beautifully restored Buick cars have been donated to the National Motor Museum

Trust. Although the cars have an American brand, they are right hand drive, and one was actually built in London.

The cars have been donated by Dave and Monica Wiltshire from Beckenham in southeast London. And it was Dave with his late father Charlie Wiltshire that restored the cars.

An affirmation of the National Motor Museum Trust and its work, the Museum has been able to engage with donors over time to capture the history and provenance of the cars.

Andrea Bishop, Director of Collections at the National Motor Museum says, “We are extremely grateful to the Wiltshire family for the donation of these wonderful 1930s American style cars – they will be an excellent addition to our world-famous collection of vehicles. We’re sure they will be appreciated by visitors to Beaulieu in the next few years, and at our future home when the Museum relocates.”

The Buick Phaeton 1930 Model 45 (pictured below) was built in Flint, Michigan.



Buick Phaeton Model 45, 1930.

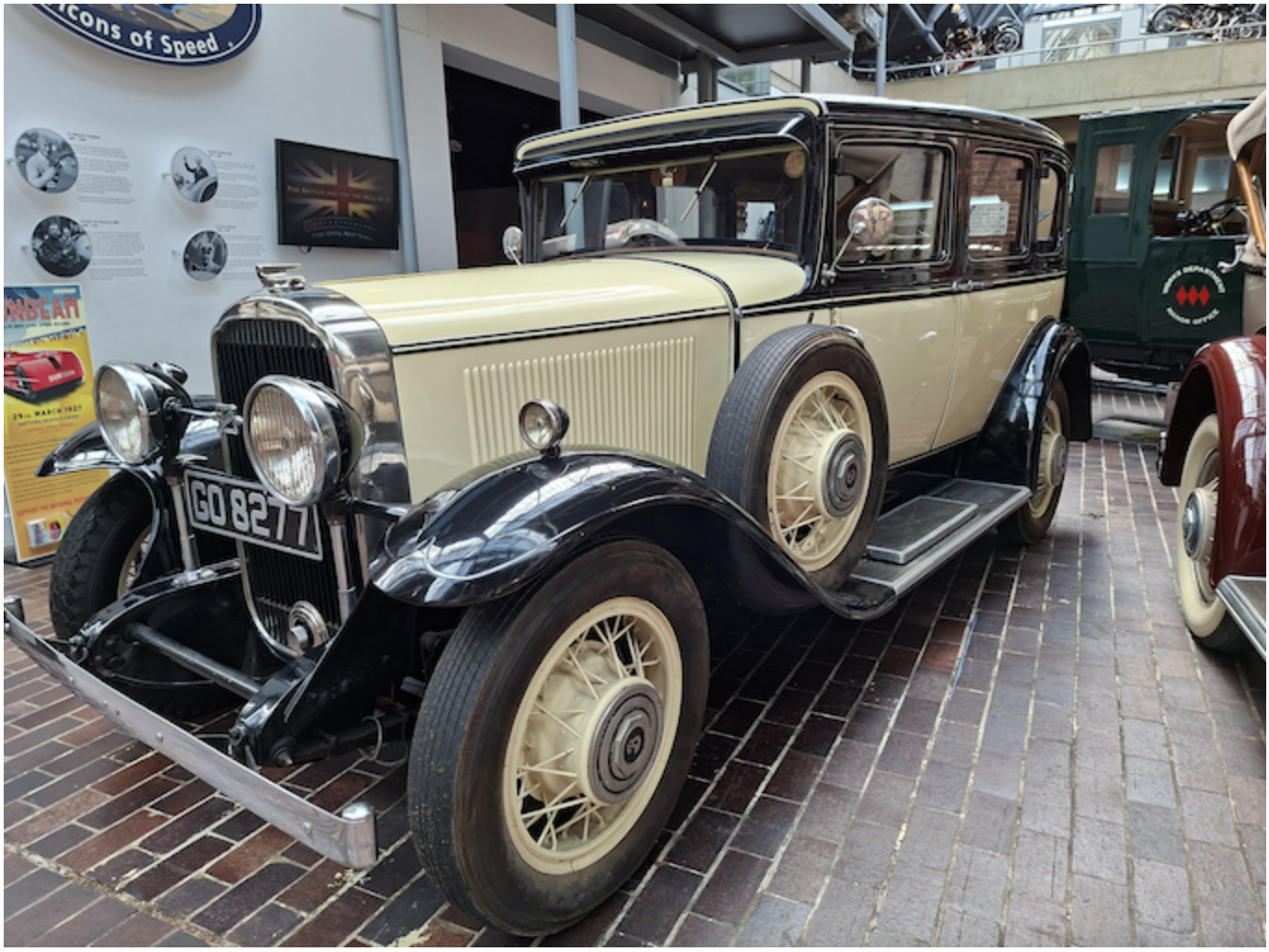
The car was made to order; hence it is right hand drive because it was exported to Uruguay where they drive on the left-hand side of the road. The base price was $1,300 but few were sold because of the Depression following the Wall Street Crash which occurred on 29th October 1929. Only 128 right hand drive Buick Phaeton cars were made and they are therefore rare – another one is known to exist in New Zealand.

Dave Wiltshire says, “My father, Charlie, and I restored the engine and mechanics, rewired the electrics and have a spare engine. It is the last of the straight 6 engines. I sprayed the body work, and the upholstery was restored with beige leather and red carpet to match the outside colours. It has a trunk which you can take off and fold up the rack. It has a new

multi plate clutch and a crash change gear box. Unusually the accelerator is between the brake and the clutch."

"The Buick Phaeton is a real showstopper with wow factor. It has all the extras you could buy, including a trunk rack, twin side mounts (for spare wheels), side mount wheel locks, wire wheels, chrome hub caps, wind wings, a stone guard for the radiator, a grab rail at the back, and a footrest."

Although the above car (1930 Phaeton) is only one year older, the 1931 McLaughlin Buick (pictured below) is different in many ways.



1931 McLaughlin Buick.

It is the first of the straight 8s with a synchromesh gear box. It is also right hand drive but this car was built at The Hyde in northwest London, with parts shipped out from Oshawa, Canada. This was because a high import duty was imposed on cars from the USA to the UK. General Motors made the decision to buy the McLaughlin Carriage Company is Oshawa, Canada (a Commonwealth Country). They then exported parts to the UK and built the vehicles in Britain to avoid the tax.

The cost of the car was £485 at a time when the average weekly wage was no more than £3.00 and the cost of an average house was £350. They were a luxury car at a time following the Wall Street crash in 1929 when there was little money around, this plus the fact that production at The Hyde only lasted 4 months makes this car incredibly rare. The Hyde closed after General Motors purchased Vauxhall cars in April 1931 and Buick assembly ceased in England. King Edward VIII had a Buick specially commissioned for him and Mrs Simpson which was frequently used during his short time as King.

Mr Wiltshire says, “My father and I restored the engine, transmission and running gear, and fitted a new single plate clutch plate. The bodywork and interior are original, I haven’t done anything to it, so it is a useful reference car. There is a toolbox on the passenger side running board. The doors lock and have a key and a handle. I had a special relationship with my father who was a trained motor fitter, I therefore grew up around cars. He had a 1938 Buick Special when I was a child. I found it surprisingly easy to get parts for the cars and visited Hershey in Pennsylvania, USA every year with my father. I became an avid reader of Hemmings and the Buick Bugle. Anytime I could pick up extras I did including manuals for both cars. I used the cars for weddings, birthdays, celebrations and shows, and we won six awards at The Bromley Pageant of Motoring. I drove both the cars. Because of them I have made long term friendships in England, the USA and New Zealand. Taking the cars for their annual MOT was amusing and generally involved great interest and a talk about antique cars.”

“The Buick cars have been a huge part of our lives since 1995 and although with sadness, we are now ready to hand them on. I remember visiting Beaulieu from a holiday on the Isle of Wight with my parents when I was 15 and think the National Motor Museum is a fitting home for the cars. We want to preserve the history of these Buicks. In 7 years the 1930 will be 100 years old and we should like the cars to be seen by enthusiasts, our son Rob, his wife Sarah, and our grandchildren and anyone else.”

National Motor Museum

The National Motor Museum Trust Limited is an independent charitable organisation founded in 1972, which runs the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu in the New Forest. Continuing the work of the flagship Montagu Motor Museum, the Trust has a world-famous collection of vehicles and associated motoring items on display at the National Motor Museum at the Beaulieu attraction. The Museum opened to the public in 1972 and in 1989 the nearby Collections Centre was established. The collections at the National Motor Museum total 1.9 million items. They comprise, vehicle, object, reference library, archive, photographic and film & video Collections, all of which were Designated as being of national and international significance in 1997. The Museum shares the story of motoring on the roads and racetracks of Great Britain, and its mission is to engage and inspire people with the story of motoring through world class collections.

For more information about its collection and services, see www.nationalmotormuseum.org.uk.