

Haynes International Motor Museum – Bigger And Even Better!

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Improved Haynes International Motor Museum opens

Kim Henson was there...



A wonderful selection of cars from the 1920s and 30s is on display at the new Haynes International Motor Museum at Sparkford.

For me, it was certainly a case of déjà vu...

On a beautiful summer's day in July 1985, I was at Sparkford, in Somerset, on the site of an



old sawmill, witnessing the opening of a brand new motor museum. At that time, the new Museum accommodated just 33 vehicles, donated by Founder and Chairman John H. Haynes OBE (who, of course, was responsible for setting up the long-respected and influential Haynes Publishing business).

The Museum was set up as a charitable trust, to ensure that it would remain in perpetuity as a national collection, for the enjoyment of fellow car enthusiasts, families, tourists and schools. It was intended that the Museum would have educational value as well as providing entertainment, to give an insight into the development over time of cars and engineering.

Remarkably, on a beautiful spring day in 2014, I was back again at exactly the same spot, to be present at the opening of the new (expanded, revamped and even better!) Haynes International Motor Museum. Just as on that day 29 years ago, I was excited, pleased and privileged to be there.

MORE AND MORE...

During the following years, vehicles were added to the Museum's collection in increasing numbers, requiring extensions to be built every two years or so, in order to house the growing numbers of automotive exhibits.

However now, after 10 years of planning, plus two and a half years of concentrated building work to enable the project to come to life, what is effectively a new, much bigger Museum has been opened. It now accommodates over 400 cars and motorcycles to tell the intriguing story of motor transport through the years.

On 16th April, in front of 500 guests from around the world, the Hon. Ed Vaizey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, formally cut the ribbon to open the new Haynes International Motor Museum.

Welcoming Ed Vaizey and all the guests, John Haynes said that he was delighted to be able to share his passion for cars, and went on to explain that he was looking forward to further



enlarging the collection and sharing it with the public.

Marc Haynes, Managing Director of the Museum, added that the opening of 'Phase Two' marked the culmination of a thrilling journey for all involved in the project. He also mentioned that a new on-site hotel is planned for the near future, enabling more guests to travel from far and wide to enjoy their visits in a relaxed manner.

IMPRESSIVE

The new buildings feature a hugely impressive glass, 'S' shaped two storey entrance foyer, leading visitors into the Museum. This incorporates four new exhibition spaces and two modernised display halls, in addition to the cutting edge, virtual reality 'Paint-a-Car' activity (in which visitors can 'paint' a Mini).

There's also a new 'Café 750' (the name is deliberately linked to the first book that John Haynes published, on 750 specials), the amazing Haynes Motorland childrens' play zone, the 'Engine Rooms' suite of function rooms, and a gift/souvenir shop.

The rejuvenated Museum is more modern and more interactive than previously, to provide an exciting backdrop to the displays of cars, motorbikes and motoring memorabilia.

The exhibits are deliberately categorised into specific types within given display areas, helping visitors to better appreciate the different varieties of vehicles on show.

So each hall is themed, for example covering (in three new display areas) 'Minis and Micros', 'Century of Supercars' and 'Motorcycle Mezzanine'. In addition there's 'The American Room', 'Dawn of Motoring', 'Veteran, Vintage and Pre-War Classics', the wonderful, famous 'Red Room' (all the sporting cars housed here are painted red!), 'Memory Lane' (comprising British family cars), the 'British Motorcycle Collection' and the world's largest accumulation of Speedway motorbikes and memorabilia.

Personally I feel that one of the most interesting exhibits (among very many!) is an exact,



operational replica of the first production car ever built - an 1885 Benz.

In fact most of the vehicles on display are in full working order, and can be 'exercised' on the on-site test track.

Capacity for the Museum to expand further has been deliberately built-in to the new buildings.

Remarkably these days, the £5 million required for this huge, total re-vamp of the Museum has been privately funded. No Lottery Grant, nor governmental/public spending, was required!

The new Museum has already been of benefit to the local economy in the Sparkford area. Local contractors were used in the construction of the buildings, and additional Museum staff have been recruited. It is hoped/expected that the Museum will attract increasing numbers of visitors, boosting the regional Somerset economy.



A comprehensive automotive library and archive is maintained at Sparkford; a highlight of my visit was seeing this. Shown here is a small section of the shelving devoted to historical motoring magazines.



The Hon. Ed Vaizey MP was Guest of Honour at the opening of the new Museum at Sparkford, and is seen here unveiling the plaque to celebrate this event. Shown too is Chris Haynes (right), Mike Penn and Marc Haynes (left).



Ed Vaizey MP is seen here in an Austin Seven special, with John H. Haynes OBE alongside.



'Everyday' classics are not ignored at Sparkford; this



line-up
incorporates
many 'family'
cars of the
1950s/60s.



A small section
of the 'Red
Room'; this
display is just
incredible.



More sports cars
taking their
places within
'The Red Room'.



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HIDDEN TREASURES

Probably less well-known than the main exhibits, but still crucially important, are the Museum's workshops, employed for refurbishing and maintaining the vehicles within the collections. In addition, there's the wonderful library and archive.

I was fortunate to be able to visit the library and archive on the day that the Museum was opened, and was fascinated by the huge scope and variety of motoring-related books, magazines and documents housed within it. All were carefully and logically catalogued, and readily accessible in a light and airy environment.

WELL WORTH VISITING!

I feel that the new Haynes International Motor Museum is, quite simply, a superb place to visit, especially for anyone interested in motor cars and motorcycles. Group tours are available, if required.

It's much more than 'just' a car museum too. In addition to the attractions already described, there's a 40 acre show site, plus conference, corporate, wedding and other function facilities. Wedding car hire is available, and workshop services are available to members of the public.

The Museum is very close to the main A303 (access is easy from all points of the compass).



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For more information on the Museum, Tel. (01963) 440804 or go to:

www.haynesmotormuseum.co.uk