Countdown to World Land Speed Record breaker Sunbeam 1000hp centenary run – just six months to go!

Published: September 29, 2026

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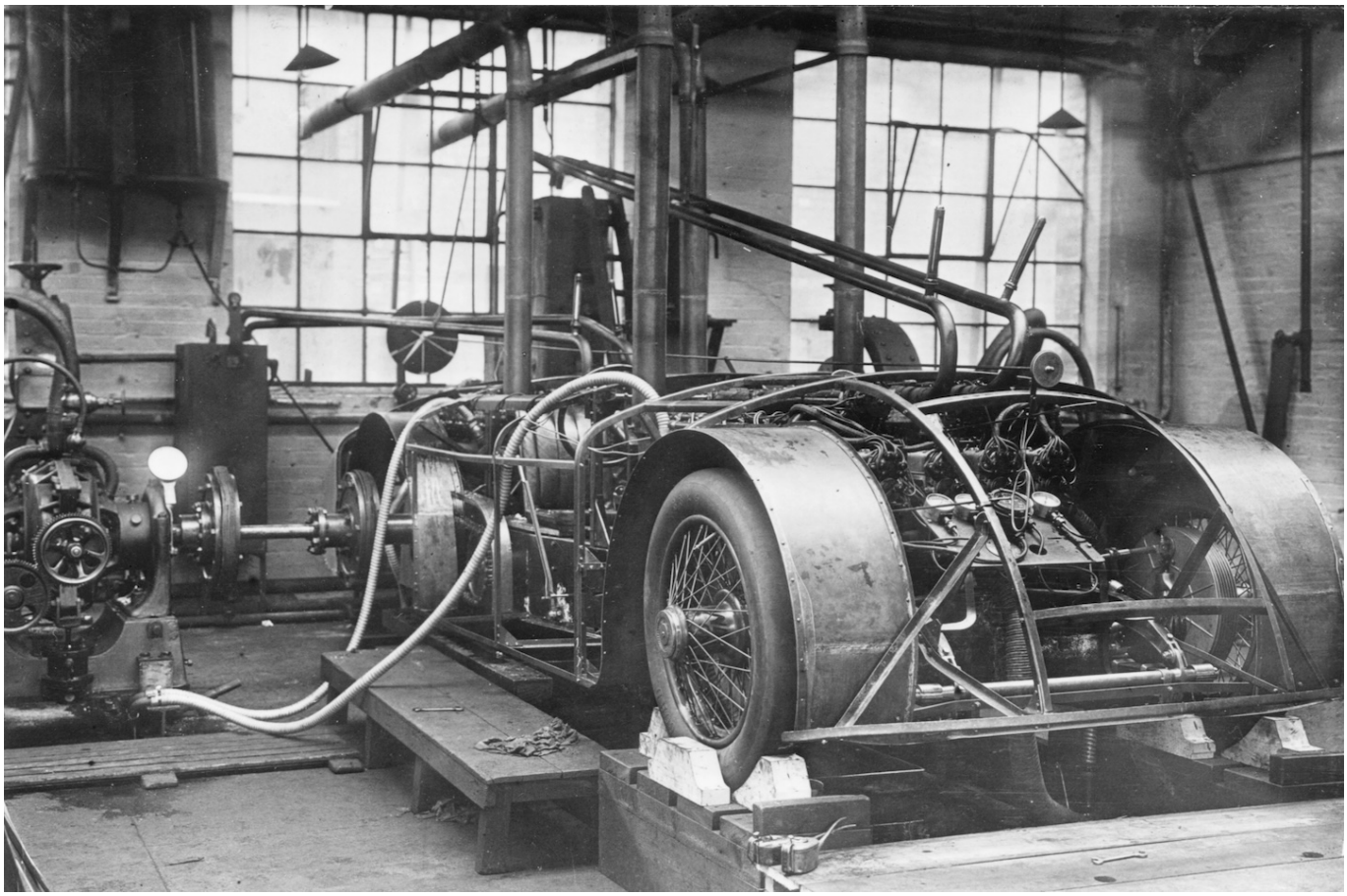
Online version:

https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/countdown-to-world-land-speed-record-breaker-sunbeam-1000hp-centenary-run-just-six-months-to-go/



Sunbeam 1000hp under construction.

The National Motor Museum tells us…

(All words and photographs from the Museum).

At this time in history a century ago, work had not yet even started on constructing World Land Speed Record breaker Sunbeam 1000hp.

Yet within just four months the massive machine, powered by two colossal 22.5 litre Matabele V12 aero engines which shook the building during testing, was created from start to finish in the Sunbeam works in Wolverhampton.

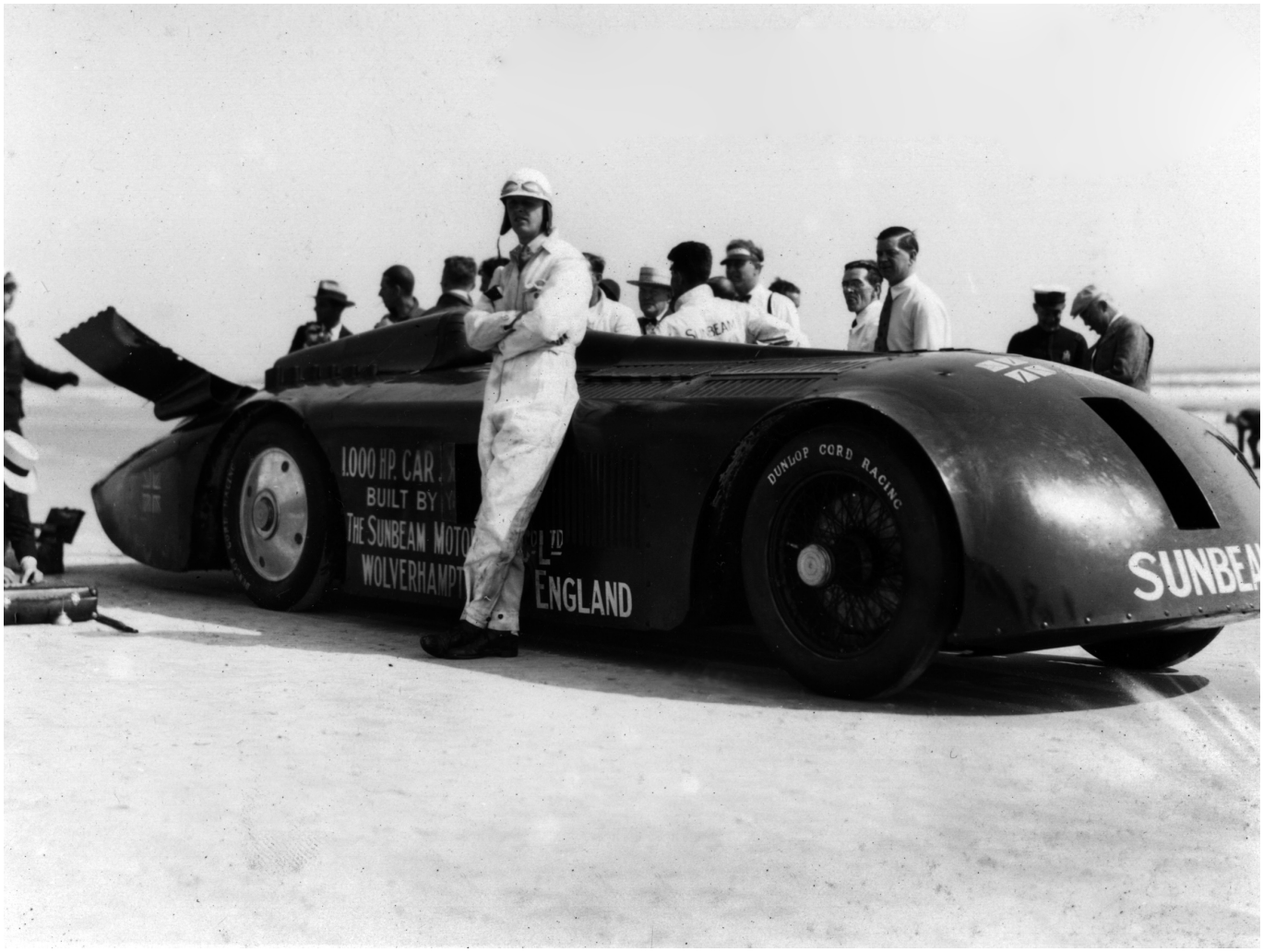
Work under the watchful eye of chief engineer Captain J.S. 'Jack' Irving began on the legendary Sunbeam on 11th November 1926, as he brought Louis Coatalen's concept to life. And by 2nd March 1927, the car was being loaded with 18 crates of spares on the Berengaria liner in Southampton, bound for New York.

Sunbeam 1000hp at Wolverhampton factory before being shipped to Daytona.

There can only have been limited time for testing, which showed the car's rear lifting in the wind tunnel at speed and the drive chains running almost red hot during tests. Any problems needed quick solutions, as the engineering team worked to create a machine capable of smashing the Land Speed Record with Henry Segrave at the wheel.

In March 1926, Segrave had already set a record at 152.33 mph in another Sunbeam, the red 4-Litre Tiger nicknamed 'Ladybird', though within six weeks it had been taken by John Godfrey Parry Thomas driving 'Babs' on Pendine Sands close to 170 mph. Segrave wanted to not only top that but break through the 200 mph barrier.

The Slug', as it was affectionately known by the works team, had only run a few hundred yards in Britain before its first test run on Daytona Beach in front of 10,000 spectators. After that initial run on March 21st, there were only days left for modifications before the record attempt on March 29th.



Major Henry Segrave with Sunbeam 1000hp at Daytona Beach in Florida,

The speedy construction and arrival of the strange beast in Florida led to the American press dubbing it the ‘Mystery’ when it appeared on their shores.

Award nominations as countdown begins

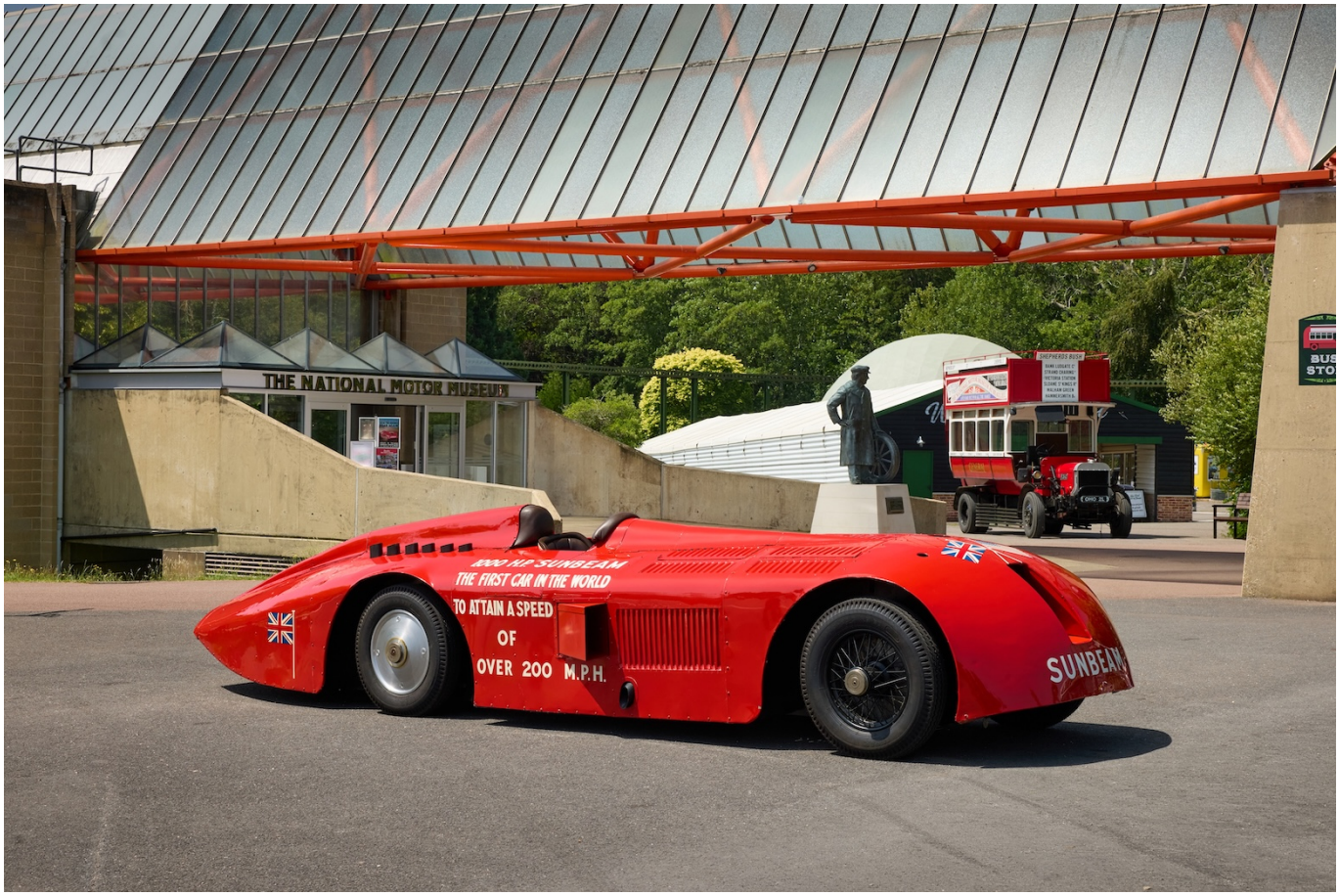


Image © Matthew Ivan Howell.

There are now just six months until the restored Sunbeam 1000hp runs on Daytona Beach once again to mark the 100th anniversary in 2027.

A painstaking heritage project by engineers at the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu has restored the entire car and twin engines back to working order and is now earning the dedicated team, led by Ian Stanfield, nominations for top awards.

Sunbeam 1000hp has made the shortlist for International Historic Motoring Awards Car of the Year. To add your vote to help secure the esteemed award visit:www.magnetomagazine.com/articles/vote-now-for-the-esteemed-2026-ihma-car-of-the-year-award/.

The impressive car, which played such an important role in World Land Speed Record history, is now on show in the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles after making a star appearance at the world-famous World famous Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

To follow Sunbeam's itinerary in the USA, its history and restoration see https://nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/sunbeam1000hp.

The Sunbeam 1000hp restoration was made possible by the much-valued support of hundreds of individuals and collaboration partners.

Image © Matthew Ivan Howell.

The National Motor Museum needs your support to ensure the preservation of the museum's collections for future generations, enabling further restoration projects and the

delivery of high-quality learning, educational and community initiatives. Funds are also needed for Sunbeam 1000hp, to complete the project and enable its run at Daytona in 2027. To donate online, please visit: https://nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/support-us/donate-to-the-national-motor-museum-trust/

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.

Beaulieu

Your ticket to Beaulieu includes entry to the National Motor Museum with its new gallery Driven: Britain's Motoring Story and hands-on We Had One Of Those. Step back in time at Palace House with its refurbished former private wing, 13th century Beaulieu Abbey and the Secret Army Exhibition, have fun in Little Beaulieu and enjoy unlimited rides on the monorail while exploring the beautiful grounds and gardens. For tickets and details see www.beaulieu.co.uk or call 01590 612345.