

Street of nostalgia ahead for the National Motor Museum

Published: May 8, 2024

Author:

Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/street-of-nostalgia-ahead-for-the-national-motor-museum/>



The National Motor Museum at Beaulieu is opening a new permanent exhibition, entitled 'Streets Ahead: Motoring in Mid-century Britain'. This depicts a typical street scene from the decades following the Second World War.

They tell us:

(All words and images © National Motor Museum).



The new gallery explores a time when Britain underwent a period of rapid social, cultural, and economic change. *Streets Ahead: Motoring in Mid-Century Britain* will use artefacts from the Museum's extensive motoring collections to enable a view of social history through the prism of vehicles from the era.

Museum Chief Executive, Jon Murden says, "The re-development of this section of the Museum into *Streets Ahead* is a wonderful addition to our displays. It is an opportune moment to look back, at a time when the high-street is experiencing yet another revolution in shopping habits."

The new gallery will transport visitors to a bygone era from the 1950s to the 1970s. New shop displays will show items from the Museum's collections, many on exhibition for the first time. A charming toy shop with treasured playthings, a motoring clothing shop boasting sensible or fashionable outerwear and accessories, a travel agent that brought holidays abroad and trips and excursions to further reaches of the country to the masses for the first time. A mobile hardware store will be parked up showing a form of shopping when roads and perhaps lives were less busy.



National Motor Museum Senior Curator, Gail Stewart-Bye says, "The decades following the Second World War saw full employment, a growing population, greater affluence, the emergence of the 'teenager' as a distinct sector of society, and an explosion in the affordability and availability of consumer goods, all of which fuelled a booming economy.



Gail says that motoring was central to this transformation, “Cars and motorcycles became accessible to more people than ever before. Mass motor vehicle ownership, and the freedom for everyone to travel, was part of the shared experience of post-war life. Through travel, fashion, in entertainment, and while growing up, motoring became a significant part of popular culture.”

The *Streets Ahead: Motoring In Mid-Century Britain* gallery will show the cars, bikes and other vehicles that were once part of everyday life. Visitors will be able to enjoy stories of motoring that helped defined the era. Included in the street scene will be a London bus near a ‘talking’ bus stop where you can hear local people’s memories of bus journeys. Alongside the bus is a milk float (a Brush Pony Electric from 1947). Other vehicles in the street will be Austin A40 Somerset (1953), Ford Anglia Super 1200 (1966), Land Rover (1948), Standard Vanguard (1951), Triumph Herald (1960), Rover P4 (1963), Hillman Imp (1963), Morris Commercial PV Shop (1951), Morris 1000 Post Office Van (1970), Austin A35 5cwt Van (1961), Ford Consul Cortina MkI (1963) and a Mini (1959). Motorcycles include BSA Sunbeam Scooter (1964), BMW R50 with Steib sidecar (1957), Yamaha 195cc (1972) and a Triumph Twin 3TA (1962).

The gallery is being supported by Scalextric and Corgi.

The exhibition is included in the admission ticket for the Beaulieu attraction, and further details are available from www.nationalmotormuseum.org.uk

To launch the new gallery over the Bank Holiday weekend 25, 26 and 27 May 2024, actors from the Gobledgook theatre company will take on roles of characters you may have encountered on the street in mid-century Britain; a traffic warden, a bus conductor, and a motor salesman spiv.

Examples of the vehicles on display within the exhibition are included in the slideshow below...

This slideshow requires JavaScript.



Further information:

- The National Motor Museum Trust Limited is a 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 250 vehicles and associated motoring items, which are on display in the National Motor Museum. The nearby Collections Centre houses and cares for a vast array of motoring artefacts, photographic images, specialist reference library and film and video library. For more information about its collection and services see www.nationalmotormuseum.org.uk
- Visitors to Beaulieu can enjoy a full day out with features including the ancestral Montagu home Palace House, 13th century Beaulieu Abbey, adventure play area Little Beaulieu, and grounds and gardens. Tickets can be bought in advance. For tickets or more information see www.beaulieu.co.uk or call 01590 612345.
- A full calendar of events and exhibitions is held at Beaulieu by the National Motor Museum, including Collection Centre Open Days, Classic Grille Evenings, Meet the Curator events and Transport Torques. Details are available at www.nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/events