Sunbeam 1000hp awarded accolade of Car of the Year

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THE INTERNATIONAL
HISTORIC
MOTORING
AWARDS
2026

Ian Stanfield (left) and Hothouse Media Managing Director Geoff Love (Credit IHMA Gun Hill Studios).

The National Motor Museum tells us…

The World Land Speed Record car, Sunbeam 1000hp, was crowned ‘Car of the Year’ at the 2026 International Historic Motoring Awards on Friday evening.

The iconic car, which has been fully restored by the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu in advance of its centenary celebration at Daytona Beach next year – won the award after a public vote declared it top of a shortlist of outstanding vehicles from around the world. The vote attracted thousands of votes and the according to the award organisers, Hothouse Media, the Sunbeam 1000hp – the first car to ever go over 200mph – was the clear winner.

David Lillywhite, Editorial Director with Hothouse Media says, “Congratulations to the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu team for a well-deserved win. We’ve followed the progress of Sunbeam 1000hp and were delighted that the public vote – against nine other similarly important and world-beating vehicles – went in favour of this incredible machine. The near-400 people at this year’s awards ceremony, from all around the globe, seemed equally delighted.”

The International Historic Motoring Awards are the most prestigious accolades in the world of classic and historic motoring, and the award ceremony, at The Peninsula Hotel in London, was hosted by racing driver and broadcaster Amanda Stretton. The evening celebrated the restorers, specialists, events, museums, clubs and individuals who have shaped the collector car world over the past 12 months, with winners from Britain, mainland Europe and the US. Celebrating excellence, innovation and dedication across the global historic motoring community, the Awards shine a spotlight on individuals and organisations that preserve, promote and enrich our shared motoring heritage.

The Sunbeam 1000hp restoration has taken over three years – with many additional years of preparatory work, with the National Motor Museum's workshop team expertise being tested with such a mammoth motoring heritage project.

Led by Senior Engineer Ian Stanfield, the workshop team found more problems than expected while dismantling the front engine – one of two of the Sunbeam's colossal 22.5 litre Matabele V12 aero engines – and extensive work was carried out, both on and off-site, to repair the original parts. Collaboration partners and supporters have worked extensively with the Museum to get the project over the line.

Without a manual to work to, the Museum's engineers returned the car to the exact specification in which Henry Segrave drove it in 1927. The Sunbeam began 2026 with one of its engines in pieces, yet by August it was on display at the 75th Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. From there it called in at Jay Leno's Garage for filming before going on display at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, where it remains for the rest of the year. Next spring it returns to Daytona Beach for a centenary run, 100 years after Segrave's record, before heading home to the UK.

National Motor Museum Chief Executive, Jon Murden says, "We are thrilled to be recognised by the International Historic Motoring Awards and for the Sunbeam 1000hp to be declared 'Car of the Year' is a great accolade, especially as it was as a result of a public vote. I'm so proud of this achievement and the National Motor Museum workshop team, and I'm delighted that our Senior Engineer Ian Stanfield and his team's expertise and perseverance secured the restoration of the iconic car. The honour reflects the hard work and passion of our whole team and supporters."

Ian Stanfield, National Motor Museum Senior Engineer said: "It means the world to me to win this award. Not everyone gets to work on such a unique car, and we are so proud of what we achieved with our workshop team and volunteers. It will be a privilege to be behind the wheel next year during the centenary celebrations at Daytona Beach, in the driver's seat that Sir Henry Segrave sat when he set the World Land Speed Record."

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

About the 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.