

National Motor Museum, Beaulieu

The **National Motor Museum, Beaulieu** (originally the **Montagu Motor Museum**) is a museum in the village of Beaulieu, set in the heart of the New Forest, in the English county of Hampshire.

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History



Lord Montagu with one of his classic MGs, 27 March 2007

At first the museum consisted of just five cars and a small collection of automobilia displayed in the front hall of Lord Montagu's ancestral home, Palace House, but such was the popularity of this small display that the collection soon outgrew its home and was transferred to wooden sheds in the grounds of the house. The reputation and popularity of the Beaulieu collection continued to grow: during 1959 the museum's "attendance figures" reached 296,909^[6].

By 1964, annual attendance exceeded half a million and a decision was taken to create a purpose-built museum building in the grounds of the Beaulieu estate.^[2] A design committee chaired by the architect Sir Hugh Casson was created to drive the project, and the architect Leonard Manasseh was given the contract for the design of the building^{[2][3]} which was primarily the work of his partner Ian Baker.^[4]

By 1972, the collection exceeded 300 exhibits.^[5] In a ceremony performed by the Duke of Kent the new purpose-built museum building in the parkland surrounding Palace House was opened on 4 July 1972.^[6] the name was changed to the "National Motor Museum", reflecting a change of status from a private collection to a charitable trust and highlighting Montagu's stated aim to provid Britain with a National Motor Museum "worthy of the great achievements of its motor industry".^[6] The opening of the museum coincided with the UK launch of the Jaguar XJ12 which made it an appropriate week for celebrating the UK motor industry.^[6] The museum is run by the National Motor Museum Trust Ltd, a registered charity^[7]

National Motor Museum



Established	1952
Location	Beaulieu, Hampshire, England
Type	Automobile museum
Website	www.beaulieu.co.uk <div>www.nationalmotormuseum.org.uk</div>

An unusual feature of the new museum building in 1972 is the [National Motor Museum Monorail](#)^[6] passing through its interior. This was inspired by the light railway running through the [US Pavilion](#) at the [Montreal World's Fair, Expo 67](#).

The museum today

See [List of vehicles at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu](#)

Today, in addition to around 250 vehicles manufactured since the late-19th century, the museum has a collection of motoring books, journals, photographs, films, and automobilia of the world and is affiliated to the [British Motorcycle Charitable Trust](#).^[8]

An exhibition of [James Bond vehicles](#) appeared in 2012.

The "On Screen Cars" exhibit has a display of TV and film cars including Del Boy's Reliant Regal as featured in the BBC sitcom [Only Fools and Horses](#) and [Mr. Bean](#)'s lime green Mini.

The exhibit "World of *Top Gear*" has cars created by *Top Gear* presenters Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May

The museum also hosts a collection of the well-known Rolls-Royce radiator mascot – the *Spirit of Ecstasy* – also known as the *Flying Lady*. The collection includes The Whisper, a figurine commissioned by John Walter Edward Douglas-Scott-Montagu, the 2nd Baron to his friend [Charles Robinson Sykes](#) who sculpted a personal mascot for the bonnet of his Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. Sykes originally crafted a figurine of a female model, [Eleanor Thornton](#), in fluttering robes, pressing a finger against her lips – to symbolise the secret of the love between John and Eleanor, his secretary. The figurine was consequently named *The Whisper*.

Additional attractions include the [National Motor Museum Monorail](#), veteran bus ride, playground, restaurant and a substantial part of the [Palace House](#) and grounds, including the partially ruined [Beaulieu Abbey](#). Among the monastery buildings to have been preserved are the domus (now used for functions and exhibitions), and the refectory which is now the parish church.

Beaulieu attractions

The National Motor Museum is one of several attractions on Lord Montagu's Beaulieu estate which are marketed jointly as "Beaulieu". One admission ticket includes the following attractions:

- [Beaulieu Abbey](#)
- National Motor Museum
- [Beaulieu Palace House](#)
- World of *Top Gear*
- Secret Army Exhibition – an exhibit about the [Special Operations Executive](#) (SOE) training at Beaulieu during [World War II](#)
- Gardens
- [National Motor Museum Monorail](#)

See also

- [List of motorcycles in the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu](#)
- [List of vehicles at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu](#)



National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, main hall.



One of the exhibits: 1910 Bugatti Type 15.

References

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2. Bulmer, Charles (24 May 1969). "Expansion at Beaulieu". *Motor*. No. 3492. p. 64.
3. "Architect Leonard Manasseh at age 100 - Blog - Royal Academy of Arts" (<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/leonard-manasseh-ra-100-birthday>) *www.royalacademy.org.uk*. Retrieved 25 June 2017.
4. Brittain-Caitlin, Timothy (2017-04-15). "Leonard Manasseh". *The Guardian*. London. p. 44.
5. Garnier, Peter, ed. (27 April 1972). "News: National Motor Museum" *Autocar*. **136** (3967): 9.
6. Garnier, Peter, ed. (13 July 1972). "National Motor Museum Opened at Beaulieu: Realisation of a dream". *Autocar*. **137** (3978): 36–37.
7. Charity Commission National Motor Museum Trust Ltd, registered charity no. 1107656 (<https://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/SearchResultHandler.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1107656>)
8. "British Motorcycle Charitable Trust" (<http://www.bmct.org/index.html>) Retrieved 29 November 2009.

External links

- [Beaulieu website](#)
- [The National Motor Museum Trust website](#)

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