

Interior Colour Schemes  
and Fittings on  
Phantom III Bodies  
1936 to 1940  
by  
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Windovers cabriolet (design 5097), chassis 3CP116, for Crown Prince Azam Jah Berar of Hyderabad shown in the last article (above left) when mustard yellow and crimson with a red hood. The above photograph was taken on 26 November 1956 at the Hooper works in London after the car had been repainted and the upholstery redyed from gold to black. Note the recessed door handles and window winders.



This is the second article in a series of four to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of sales production of the Phantom III. In the first article I discussed the original colour schemes of coachwork mounted on Phantom III chassis. We ended with a discussion of the picking out (or coach) lines painted usually on the mouldings. I mentioned that these picking out lines often complemented the colouring of interior fixtures or upholstery.

In this article I will talk about the colours of upholstery, both front and rear, headlinings, carpets and woodwork, and end up with some observations on the contemporary costs of coachwork as well as complete Phantom III cars as I know them. This will provide, I hope, a logical lead into the third article in the series, which will be about the way Phantom IIIs were advertised in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

In the last article I commented that very often the decisions made about exterior colour can be a most contentious one when restoring a car. A similar statement can be made about how the interior of a car is restored. Now, as in the 1930s, rules are less definitive, as more individuality was expressed through interior fittings. But, generally the rule of thumb was of understated luxury.

Perhaps the first impression on stepping into a Phantom III – other than an acknowledgement of the size of the car – is of the upholstery. This was generally a utilitarian part of the car; it is, after all, where we are most in direct contact with the vehicle whether as a driver or as a passenger. So, attention was keenly given. Often new owners were asked into coachbuilders' premises to try the seating on for size and comfort. But it was to materials and colours that close attention was also given.

Sources of information about interior upholstery in particular for the 386 of 727 production (or 53%) of which I know are generally the same as for exterior body colours: Company sales records, surviving coachbuilder records, reports of motor shows and road tests, and some advertisements. Whereas fairly young used Phantom IIIs were often resprayed, it was less common for dealers to reupholster relatively new cars. Despite this, recording of exterior colours was more prevalent in reporting and advertisements than how the interior was fitted out, so the proportion from which I draw conclusions is less. Regrettably, there is very little information about how the interiors of bodies from non-English coachbuilders were finished.

Right: 22. The centre division of Park Ward sedanca de ville on chassis 3BT33. The woodwork is in elaborate burr walnut, and the dials are for an altimeter (!), clock and miniature speedometer.



Below: 1. The interior of a new standard Hooper limousine, chassis number 3CM79. Beige cloth to the doors and the front of the disappearing occasionals, standard colour headlining, walnut woodwork, and a mohair floor mat. Note the sliding division window and the silk division roller blinds.



Above: 11. The Crown Prince Pratapsingh of Baroda was specific in his requirements for the interior of his Windovers saloon, chassis number 3CP112. The most outstanding feature of course, is the leopard skins used to cover the floor and doors. The upholstery is in leather but, unusually, so is the headlining.



Above: 19. The last article showed the King of Egypt's Hooper limousine 3CM63, finished in red and black. This shows the centre furniture of the division in the car as new; the fan was carved from ivory. In other respects, a standard Hooper interior.

Below: 26. This is the interior of the first of three cars used by Rolls-Royce for display at the 1939 New York World's Fair, a Hooper limousine de ville on chassis 3DL156. Comment was made about the unusual rear quarter window blinds with panels of Purdah glass. Note also the swivelling armchair occasional seats, the electric division button, cigar lighter and radio controls on the elbows just inside the door and, just shown, the rear sunshine roof. The car was in black with fawn cloth to the rear compartment (and fawn leather to the front) and straight grain walnut woodwork.



Upholstery differed in cars with and without a division. Cars without a separating division usually had the same material front and rear. Such cars became more popular as both men and women owners wanted to drive their own cars. But, still the majority of Phantom IIIs carried formal bodies where the owner was more often than not, 'behind the glass'. Such cars usually had leather upholstery to the driver's compartment, and cloth to the rear. But, some formal bodies had leather both front and rear. Cloth covers were not uncommon to protect the expensive leather.

In formal cars, the leather in the drivers' compartment usually matched the car colour in those with a single exterior colour, or the secondary (usually side) colour of a two-toned car. The rear compartment was most often in a neutral cloth colour – beige, fawn or tan – or in a colour that toned with the second colour on cars not totally finished in black.

The following table shows prevalence of colour as I know it of leather/cloth combination upholstery:

Black leather, fawn/beige cloth	88	Brown leather, brown cloth	3
Fawn leather, fawn/beige cloth	19	Green leather, fawn/beige cloth	3
Black leather, grey cloth	13	Grey leather, fawn/beige cloth	2
Brown leather, fawn/beige cloth	13	Green leather, green cloth	2
Grey leather, grey cloth	11	Black leather, blue cloth	1
Blue leather, fawn/beige cloth	11	Black leather, red cloth	1
Blue leather, blue cloth	8	Fawn leather, silk	1
Red leather, fawn/beige cloth	6		
Blue leather, grey cloth	4	Total	187
			25.7% of production

In owner-driver cars (or cars without a division) the front and rear compartments were usually in leather, although some cars had cloth both front and rear. Here the same rules generally applied as in formal cars: the upholstery in black or single-colour dark cars was usually in either brown or fawn, beige or tan, or to tone with the second colour of a two-tone car. Pigskin was also not unusual in such cars.

The following table shows prevalence of colour as I know it where front and rear compartments were upholstered in the same material:

Brown leather	33	Light green cloth	2
Blue leather	33	Blue cloth	2
Grey leather	30	Brown leather, fawn leather	2
Fawn leather	29	Cream leather	2
Green leather	20	Black leather, silver leather	1
Pigskin	12	Grey cloth	1
Fawn cloth	8	Gold leather	1
Red leather	8	Tapestry	1
Light blue leather	6	Green leather, fawn leather	1
Black leather	5		
Black leather, brown leather	2	Total	199
			27.4% of production

The cloth used by English coachbuilders was generally "West of England". Leather was usually Connolly Bros. "Vaumol", mostly in crushed grain. In some instances of which I am aware, smooth furniture leather was specified.

Floor coverings were almost always carpet to the rear, matching the seating cloth in colour and edged in hoary cloth or leather toning with the car's main exterior colour. Many cars were fitted with mohair rugs in cream or fawn. Formal cars usually had black rubberised carpet or linoleum to the front compartment (although it is now common to put carpet in both compartments when restoring a car). Owner-driver cars often also had carpet to the front compartment. Open tourers usually had rubberised carpet or linoleum throughout.

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Above left: 10. Another Barker body of the same design, this time on chassis 3AX185. The car was finished in light and dark blue, and the interior matches the lighter colour, with dark blue carpets.

Above right: 8. Windovers limousine, chassis number 3BU156. The interior is unrestored, and shows the beige cloth to all seats, with leather protecting the armrests. Note the cream silk blinds, the recessed light and net for storage in the rear quarter.

Below left: 20. Another Indian car, this time the Raj of Jodhpur's Hooper limousine on chassis 3BU102. This fan is metal; note the blue leather of the rear upholstery, and swivelling occasional seats. The car was finished in dark blue and black.

Below Right: 15. Quartered woodwork on the door capping of chassis 3CM92, a Barker saloon. This was a favoured design, especially on cars that showed any Art Deco influences.



Below top left: 6. Yet another unrestored car, this time an H. J. Mulliner saloon with division, chassis number 3AZ34. Beige leather to the rear compartment, piped in brown, with matching door finishes. The car was painted brown, with gold and orange picking out lines. Note the rear speedo and clock.

Below bottom left: 18. A car that wasn't restored, but the body scrapped and the chassis broken for parts. Chassis number 3CM7, an H. J. Mulliner limousine originally finished in black with fawn ribbed cloth upholstery to the rear compartment.

Below right: 17. The interior of the Windovers limousine body on chassis 3CP44, disinterred in 2005 in the USA. This is an indication of the challenges involved in restoring such a car!



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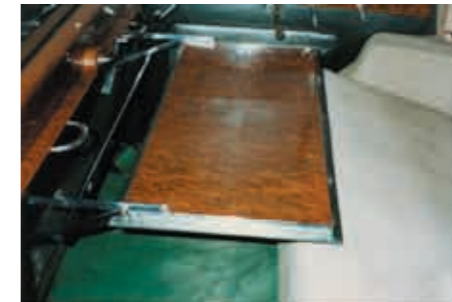
Above: 28. Another page from the Jack Barclay Ltd. catalogue, stressing the comforts and features of the cars on offer.

Below left: 27. From the 1938 Jack Barclay Ltd. catalogue is this drawing of Barclay's Trials car 3CP34, the exterior of which was shown in the last article. Such was the detail in which these interiors were illustrated. Barclay made a point of including many accessories in his Trials (demonstrator) cars. One trusts the King of Romania was pleased when he bought the car in 1938!

Below right: 29. From the October 1937 H. R. Owen Ltd. catalogue of Gurney Nutting cars is this drawing of a Spartan interior of their "Visa-Saloon". Such a car cost £2,895 in 1937.



Above: 12. The unrestored interior of H. J. Mulliner saloon with division, chassis number 3DL126. This car is now owned by Paul Hesse of Sydney, but this photo were taken by the author in Los Angeles in the early 1990s. West of England beige cloth upholstery, mohair carpet but unusual by the wood panelling to the doors, finished in weathered sycamore.



Above top left: 24. The rear compartment of Barker sedanca de ville on chassis 3BT17. This photo was taken in Robert McDermott's works in Melbourne. Shown to illustrate the unusual full-width table in burr walnut.

Above left: 25. An H. J. Mulliner limousine body on chassis 3AX151, showing the full dining service accommodated in the division, along with two thermos bottles.

Above right: 23. The occasional tables, with matched mirrors, in the body on chassis 3AZ152, an H. J. Mulliner saloon with division. The car was finished in navy blue with black wheel discs, with navy blue leather to the front and grey cloth to the rear.

Below left: 13. More wood panelling, but this time taken to extremes on the American-bodied Inskip sedanca de ville on chassis 3BT163. Not only are the doors and rear quarters wood panelled, but so too is the interior shape mirroring the wheel arch. An example of the skills of the 1930s craftsman.

Below right: 14. Another American body, an Inskip saloon with division on chassis 3CP36. The interior is in wonderful original condition; headlining, upholstery and door panels all in the same colour; note the brown mohair floor rug. The protuberance at the top of the division is a clock. Gurney Nutting sedanca de ville 3AZ154 can be seen in the background.







Above: 2. Another Hooper limousine, chassis number 3BT145, a restored example to show the colouring of the upholstery, headlining and mohair rug. Note also the parcel and hat racks to the roof.

Above top right: 9. A Barker saloon with division, chassis number 3BT143. This is a photo taken in the early 1950s and shows the leather upholstery, beige carpet, raised footrests and the standard tables in the division.

Above: 4. A Thrupp & Maberly saloon with division, chassis number 3BU146, in an unrestored state. The seats are finished in beige cloth and brown leather; and there is brown carpet. The car was finished in black. Note the size of the heater in the division.

Headlinings were most commonly in fawn, beige, grey or blue grey. They usually toned with the upholstery. Cabriolet (or allweather) bodies, and landaulettes usually had their folding heads lined in wool; tourers and drophead coupés usually had no headlining.

In many Phantom IIIs often a most striking feature is the woodwork. Woodworkers employed by coachbuilders were often amongst the most skilled of tradesmen and they put enormous efforts into their work. The range of woods available for decoration of cars was extensive and comprised the most common of timbers to the most exotic. Walnut in its various forms (straight grain, Circassian and burr) was by far the most common timber used. All timbers I have been able to ascertain on Phantom IIIs are as follows:

Walnut	209	Teak	3
Ebony	13	Rosewood	2
Mahogany	9	Burly bass	2
Sycamore	8	Black pearwood	1
Maple	6	Birch	1
Coromandel	3	Total	257
			35.5% of production

Many door cappings, dashboards and division furniture pieces were artistically designed and decorated. Woodwork would generally tone in with the upholstery or the exterior colour, but were highlighted by various effects of the grain. Quartered veneers were very popular, as increasingly were Art Deco designs. Stringing with other timbers was used to outline decorative veneers, and stringing in German silver, gold, silver, pewter and other metals added luxury to the timbers. Ebonising was popular on black cars and there was some lacquering in other colours. A few cars of which I know – including a couple illustrated here – had wood panelling also to the doors.

The total cost of a Phantom III varied dramatically, and the cost increased progressively in the four years of production. The mean cost increased faster than the rate of inflation in the U.K. at the time (which averaged 2.9%), as owners included more and more accessories in their cars. The basic chassis price rose from £1,850 in 1936 to £1,900 from 1937 to 1940. It was common for Rolls-Royce to offer discounts of 10, 15 and 20% to dealers and coachbuilders (depending on how many chassis they generally took). From 1938, as sales of the chassis crashed in numbers, discounts of 25, 30 or 33 and a 1/3 on chassis were not uncommon.



Above: 7. The delightfully eccentric body on chassis 3AZ86, an Arthur Mulliner drophead coupé. The car was finished in green and black, and the interior in fawn leather, with matching leather door trims. The car must have been uncomfortable to drive by its original owner and probably even more uncomfortable for current owner Dennis de Ferranti when he drove it from England to Beijing a couple of years ago!

I know the original cost in pounds of 208 bodies mounted on Phantom III chassis; the range is £523 for 3AZ132, an H. J. Mulliner drophead coupé, to £1,210 for 3CM112, an H. J. Mulliner limousine de ville. There is an excellent website, E.H. Net – How Much is That (<http://eh.net/hmit/>) that allows you to state prices in the U.K. (and the U.S.) in a particular year and compare them with prices in any other year up to 2005. So, in 2005 terms the body on 3AZ132 cost £23,672 and that on 3CM112 cost £51,462. Using an exchange rate of \$Aus1 to 41p, this translates as \$Aus57,740 for 3AZ132 and \$Aus125,520 for 3CM112. And remember this is for the coachwork alone.

The average price as I know of them for bodies on the four Phantom III chassis series, in pounds at the time, the equivalent in 2005 pounds, and Australian dollars, are as follows:

A series: £723, or £32,725, or \$Aus79,820  
 B series: £738, or £31,717, or \$Aus77,360  
 C series: £856, or £36,788, or \$Aus89,730  
 D series: £912, or £38,788, or \$Aus94,600  
 (A chassis at £1,850 was the equivalent of £79,508 in 2005, or \$Aus193,920.)



Above: 3. A new Windovers sedan de ville, chassis number 3BU98 with beige cloth and brown mohair rear seats, and brown mohair rug.

Above top left: 16. A period Jack Barclay photo of the front compartment of chassis 3BU42, a fairly standard H. J. Mulliner saloon with division. This shows the fawn leather front seats; the rear was in fawn cloth. The car was dark green with silver lines.

Of the production of 717 Phantom IIIs sold new (that is, minus the ten experimental cars), I know the final sale price of 132 (or 18%). The cheapest at £2,120 (or \$Aus222,200) was 3BU164, a standard Hooper limousine, and the most expensive at £3,392 (or \$Aus341,770) was 3DL182, a Charlesworth limousine for King Farouk of Egypt.

Rolls-Royce was losing money on every Phantom III chassis sold – some hundreds of pounds on each, it is estimated. Many coachbuilders could not afford to manufacture bodies at a loss, some going bankrupt and others only surviving by selling out to competitors (Hooper bought Barker, for example, and Rolls-Royce bought Park Ward), by mass producing bodies for lesser vehicles or undertaking other work. Even so, the prices for complete cars were very high in comparison to most other makes. As the inevitability of war in Europe became more apparent, there was a steep decline in sales of Phantom IIIs from the middle of 1938. Selling them was a challenge for Rolls-Royce, the coachbuilders and the dealers. The way these companies advertised the Phantom III will be the subject of the next article.

(Information on the sources of the photographs is available from the author - Editor.)

Celebrating 70 Years  
 Rolls-Royce  
 Phantom III  
 1936 - 2006