



By appointment  
to HM The Queen  
motor car manufacturers  
Bentley Motors Limited  
Crewe Cheshire



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**BENTLEY**

## Press Information

### **COACH-TRIMMER NOEL THOMPSON STITCHES HIS NAME INTO 50 YEARS OF BENTLEY HISTORY**

- **Bentley's longest-serving member of staff celebrates half a century at Bentley Motors**
- **Coach-trimmer Noel Thompson has worked on cars for Bentley's extraordinary customers for 50 years, including for the Queen**
- **In Bentley's Centenary year, Mr Thompson can claim to have witnessed half of Bentley's entire history**
- **Discover more on the history of Bentley at [bentleymotors.com](http://bentleymotors.com)**

**(Crewe, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019)** Bentley is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> working anniversary of its longest-serving employee this month. Noel Thompson, a coach-trimmer at the headquarters of Bentley Motors in Crewe, England, began working for the world's leading luxury automotive brand on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1969, when he was 16 years old.

Noel was one of 60 fellow apprentices to arrive on the shop-floor of the factory that day, where he spent 12 months receiving rotation training across various divisions, predominantly within engineering, before specialising in coach-trimming. An outstanding and highly-sought after line of apprenticeship schemes at Bentley has continued to train highly skilled craftspeople to this day.

For 22 years, Noel Thompson was fortunate to work at the factory at the same time as his own father, who was employed as a coach-painter for almost 40 years until 1991, a period when Bentley was a subdivision of



**EXTRAORDINARY  
YEARS**

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Rolls-Royce. Noel's grandmother also worked in the factory during the second world war.

When Noel joined Bentley in 1969, Bentley's headquarters was a very different place, he recalls, "When I first started, the factory was a bit old-fashioned. We used to push cars around by hand on cradles in the production line. The floors were still bare concrete and the air raid shelters from the 1940s were still in place and being used for storage. We were only producing around 1800 units per year and with a very limited range."

Volkswagen Group purchased Bentley in 1998 and Noel salutes the positive transformations he has witnessed: "The factory is now bright and modern with an automated track and shows little resemblance to the old days. Virtually every aspect of the business has changed for the better – more models, more retailers, better customer communication. We now have people travelling from all over the world to visit the factory every day."

Talking with factory visitors has always been one of the favourite aspects of Noel's job. In recognition of his outstanding craft and communication skills, Bentley now asks Noel to travel the world each year, representing the brand at global motor shows and events to demonstrate the art of coach trimming. He has worked at British embassies and consulates around the world, presenting his skills to captivated high-profile audiences to promote British craftsmanship.

Noel remembers many proud moments during his career so far, but a highlight was certainly the four days he spent at Buckingham Palace where he met the Queen and other members of the Royal Family.



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He says, "I've been incredibly lucky, very few people have a job for life these days and I am able to meet new people from all walks of life and share with them what we do."

### **The Bentley Factory**

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Noel Thompson meets visitors to the Bentley factory almost every day. Extraordinary Bentley owners, including celebrity and VIP customers, travel from around the world to visit Bentley's world-famous production facilities.

Whilst the experience is normally reserved exclusively for Bentley customers, general interest tours of the factory are also available to motoring enthusiasts on a limited basis. Details of tours can be [found here on the Bentley Motors website](#).

### **Coach-trimming**

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The automotive equivalent to upholstery, 'coach-trimming' is a term which dates the practice back far earlier than even Bentley Motors' own history. Noel Thompson is a highly skilled coach-trimmer, and his team are arguably some of the best in the world. Although Noel now specialises in steering wheels, he is trained to make any aspect of a car's interior. His craft involves punching perforated lines into soft leather hide to be sewn later entirely by hand.

Noel famously uses a dining fork to ensure that the stitches are evenly spaced on each and every unique steering wheel that he creates. He once said, "If it works, it works. So why wrap steering wheels any other way?" Noel claims to have sewn more wheels than anyone else at Bentley!

### **Apprenticeships**

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Bentley welcomes about 50 new apprentices through the doors of its headquarters in Crewe every year and works hard to recruit, nurture and train the future generation of experts. Apprentices at Bentley have the opportunity to work alongside people with decades of experience. Schemes are available in all areas of manufacturing and engineering, as well as Sales and Marketing, HR, Purchasing and Finance.

- ENDS -

### Notes to editors

Bentley Motors is the most sought after luxury car brand in the world. The company's headquarters in Crewe is home to all of its operations including design, R&D, engineering and production of the company's four model lines, Bentayga, Continental, Flying Spur and Mulsanne. The combination of fine craftsmanship, using skills that have been handed down through generations, alongside engineering expertise and cutting-edge technology is unique to UK luxury car brands such as Bentley. It is also an example of high-value British manufacturing at its best. Bentley employs around 4,000 people at Crewe.



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