

BUICK by Royal Appointment

A couple of years ago an article was run in Buick News about the Prince of Wales (the one that scarpered, not the current one) and Mrs Simpson's Buick and its luxurious silver fixtures.

However having come across a 1986 copy of the UK Buick Club's magazine (supplied by WA member Alan Chapman who migrated to WA with his family and his Buick '37 8/80 Roadmaster), it seems that there were six royal Buicks.

The firm of Lendrum and Hartman in London's west end was the franchise in 1936 for sales and service of Cadillac, Buick, La Salle and Marquette motor cars.

One day a salesman approached Hartman and announced that "His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is in the showroom and he wants to buy a Buick." The future King of England wanted to be a Buick owner - what joy!

In fact the Prince of Wales did order a special Limited limousine which was to have many extras and unknown to all at the time, would be the car to feature in the abdication crisis. Also ordered at that time was a similar car, although this time on a slightly shorter Roadmaster chassis, which would be used by Mrs Simpson, the lady the Prince intended to marry. The cars were ordered from the Buick-McLaughlin plant in Oshawa, Canada and duly arrived after Merle G Armstrong, manager at Lendrum and Hartman, had personally supervised their construction. Both cars featured blanked out rear quarter lights, smaller rear windows and numerous little extras were added to the already sumptuous interiors.

The senior of the two cars became CUL 420 while Mrs Simpson's Roadmaster was registered CUL 547. Hartman, fearing some kind of hitch in construction, took the precaution of having a third car constructed in the unlikely prospect of a failure in the original pair. This car, of which little is known, became CLN 6. As the Royal Mews was predominantly occupied by Daimlers, the Crown Equerry, Colonel Sir Arthur Erskine, asked if Lendrum and Hartman could also supply a mechanic who would be in charge of the Royal Buicks, and this was duly instituted.

The Buicks proved very popular with their Royal owner but it must be remembered that Mrs Simpson as an American, was already aware of the cars' finer points, owning several Buicks prior to her association with the Prince.

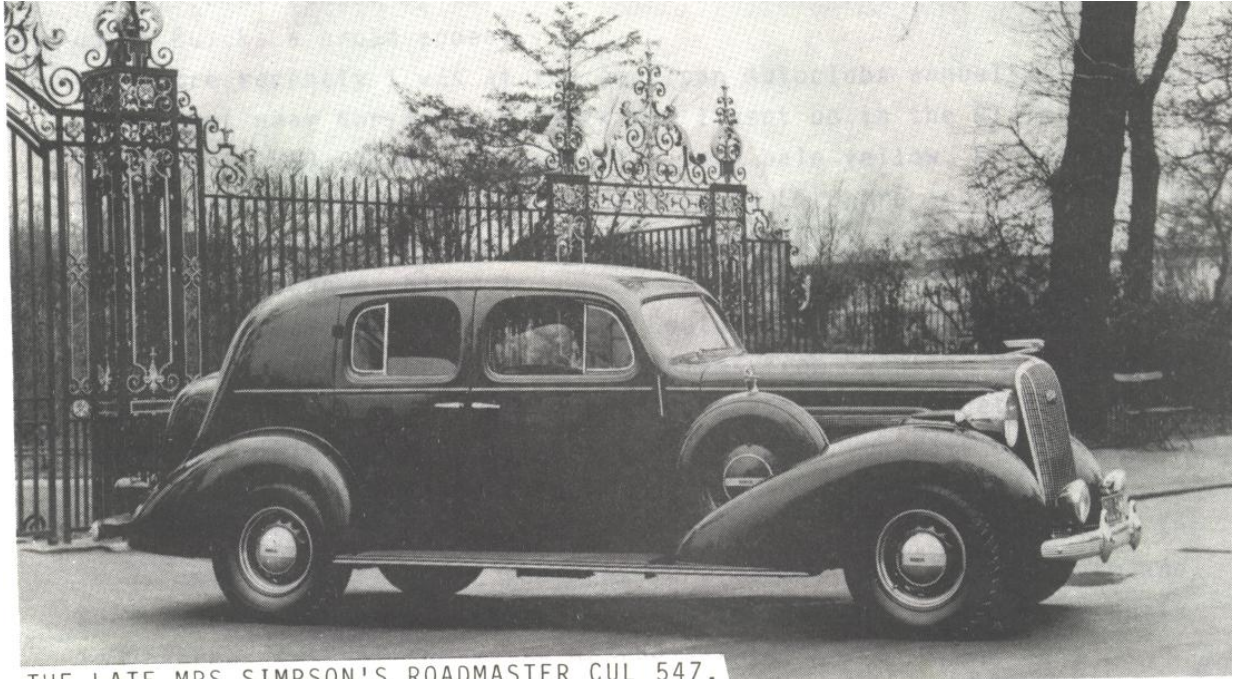
After the abdication in 1938, the now downgraded Duke of Windsor, ordered a new car to replace his 1936 model. This was to much the same specifications as the earlier car and was delivered in flawless black paintwork with whitewall tyres, registration EYL 369. The Duke of Kent also ordered a 1938 Buick Limited which was subsequently registered YR 11, a registration number that is retained by the Royal Family to this day.

In 1939 another new Buick was prepared for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor but its fate is unknown. It was not ready for delivery until October 1939 by which time World War II had been declared. Rumour has it that the car was literally abandoned on a quayside somewhere awaiting shipment to France. Apparently no one had the authority to return the car to London nor a clear order as to where the car should be despatched.

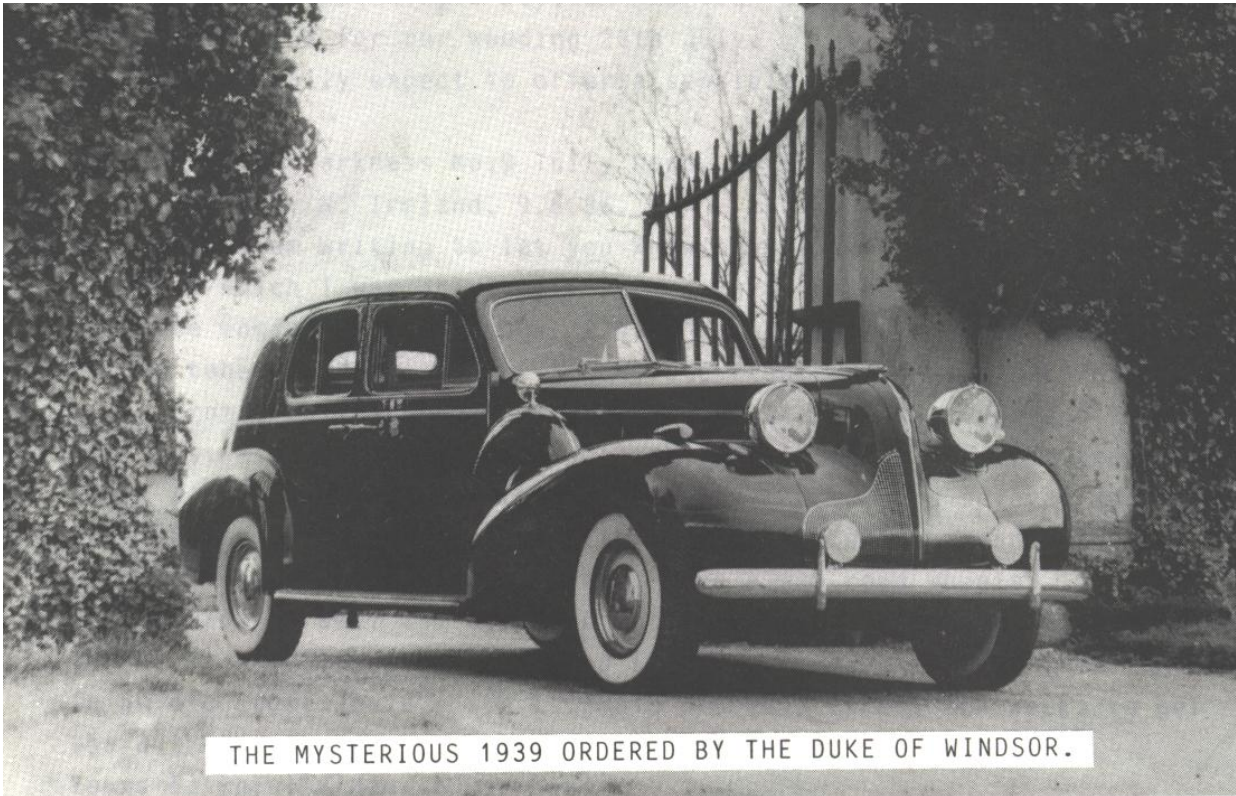
Of the five cars prepared for the royal brothers, only one is known to exist, and that is CUL 420, the Duke of Windsor's original car which is safely in the collection of Nicolo Bulgari in Rome.

I wouldn't have thought, being Buicks, that you would need a new one every two years but then perhaps the ashtrays were full!

L. Haime (WA Buicks).



THE LATE MRS SIMPSON'S ROADMASTER CUL 547.



THE MYSTERIOUS 1939 ORDERED BY THE DUKE OF WINDSOR.



THE DUKE OF KENT'S 1938 LIMITED YR 11.
