

[See all News](#)

New Rollers get old scent of success

10 July 2000 • 12:00am



ROLLS-ROYCE owners who expect perfection from the world's most exclusive car have identified a problem with the latest models - they smell wrong.

The problem has been blamed on modern production methods that use leather-clad plastic in place of wood. After complaints from several customers, a solution has been found. The subtle aroma that defines Rolls-Royce luxury has been bottled.

Rolls-Royce's exclusive coachbuilders, SC Gordon Ltd in Luton, Beds, have started applying the secret scent to the inside of cars brought in for repair.

Hugh Hadland, the managing director, whose customers include royalty, celebrities and oil sheikhs, said: "Stepping into a Rolls-Royce is a sensuous experience, and smell is the most evocative of the senses. People say they don't understand what we've done, but that their car's come back different and better."

He started investigating the problem two years ago and a friend in the food flavouring industry offered to help. Both old and new cars have leather interiors, but in newer vehicles it is laid on moulded plastic. The older cars smelled deliciously woody, while new models had a plastic odour.

They created a chemical solution that mimicked the smell of older cars using the aroma of a 1965 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud as the model. Mr Hadland said: "People assume that the smell is leather, but we found that a major constituent of it is wood. On its own it smells quite peculiar, but in the car it mixes psychologically with sight and other senses to produce a wonderful effect."

He said the smell was just one aspect of a quality issue that needed to be addressed by the new owners of Rolls-Royce. Window and dashboard switches felt less substantial in the new cars, and a thinner metal was used to save weight, which gave the vehicle "a different feel".

Volkswagen bought Rolls-Royce from Vickers two years ago. BMW has secured rights to the Rolls-Royce marque and is [due to produce an all-new model in Goodwood, West Sussex](#), from 2003.

Fritz Fruth, a spokesman for BMW, said: "A BMW disguised as a Rolls-Royce would never be accepted by Rolls-Royce customers. We know how delicate these questions are."