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1956 ROLLS ROYCE SILVER CLOUD 1 BY FREESTONE & WEBB

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SILVER CLOUD 1 BY FREESTONE & WEBB

Year: 1956

Chassis no: SWA56

Registration: SUF397

Price: £85,000

VEHICLE DETAILS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION / SERVICE HISTORY

1956 Rolls Royce Silver Cloud 1 by Freestone & Webb

Transmission: Automatic

Chassis No: SWA56

Odometer: 99,763 miles

Reg Number: SUF 397

This charming Silver Cloud (retrospectively known as a series I) is one of that notable minority that went on to be bestowed with a coach-built body. This example has had a massive restoration of both mechanics & cosmetics & presents beautifully being both imposing & elegant.

The rolling chassis was completed at Crewe in 1955 before going on Freestone & Webb's Unity Works in Willesden, North London. Freestone & Webb had been founded in 1923 and had built a reputation for building bodies of distinction for Rolls-Royces and Bentleys (and a few Alfa Romeos, Mercedes Benz and Packards).

Freestone & Webb had popularised and become associated with a style known as "Razor Edge." The body fitted to our car was indeed in that style but officially known as "4 Door, 6 Light Sports Saloon." This example is known to be the first of

only eight built in this style and the only one remaining in the UK.

The interior fitting and finishing were undertaken by Harold Radford Limited, who would eventually acquire Freestone & Webb. The car was completed in 1956 at a total cost to the customer of £7,741.3s.3d. – in excess of £240,000 in today's money. The Silver Cloud bears the chassis number SWA 56, engine number SA28, body number 1782 and design number 3206/A

Not too much is known about our car's early life other than a spell overseas featured. The Rolls-Royce was re-imported to the UK in 1989, going on to be registered here in January 1992. The late owners, long-standing Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts Club members, acquired the Silver Cloud & embarked upon a full restoration program. A Bare metal respray was undertaken in 2025 by Classic Restoration Services of Chichester to the highest standards in Royal Garnet over Masons Black at the finish of the restoration.

The Freestone & Webb 16-gauge aluminium over ash frame saloon body lends the car a rakish and aerodynamic persona but remains highly evocative of its time. The front profile of the car is standard Silver Cloud fare with the iconic grill looking especially tall and prominent in this iteration. The twin headlamps, auxiliary driving lamps, badge bar and curvaceous wings give the car enormous road presence. The car's brightwork is fresh and shiny & in lovely condition.

The Silver Cloud stands on a set of 15-inch steel wheels finished with chromed and body coloured hub caps and accompanying beauty rings. The recent 4-ply radial tyres feature a deep white-wall detail, and the rear pair are mostly hidden behind full spats. The whole ensemble further underlines the Silver Cloud's archetypal 1950's luxury limousine look.

To the interior is brand new Burgundy leather again installed by Classic Restoration services to the highest standards with Burgundy Wilton lether carpets under foot. In the front there are a pair of generously stuffed seats that meet in the middle and offer twin fold down armrests. These function as commodious, separate perches but can also be aligned, and the rests stowed, to create a three-seater, full-width bench. The rear bench is finished also in Burgundy leather arranged into vertical box pleats. A concealed fold down central arm rest is present. The rear seat passengers also benefit from the provision of walnut veneered, glass topped picnic tables complete with vanity mirrors with all the cars interior woodwork removed & refinished to a mirror like shine. The wood is all of highly figured burr walnut & makes the cabin an opulent place to sit in. Recessed, built in passenger footrests also feature.

Door cards front and rear are finished in Burgundy leather with Burgundy piping, chromed door furniture, walnut cappings and carpeted kick panels. The leather edge-bound carpets are finished in maroon & are brand new. The new headlining is courtesy of tightly fitted, beige West of England cloth. A fascinating and unusual feature is the orange tinted, Perspex sunroof with solid sliding West of England cloth under-panel; this giving the interior a light & airy feel when the slider is in the open position.

The burr walnut veneered and inlaid dashboard is scattered with a full quota of white on black Smiths gauges and chromed switches and buttons. The original, slender refinished black coloured Bakelite steering wheel is present. To ensure the driver and front passenger don't feel neglected, a small sliding picnic table features here, too. This is just below the contemporary CD head unit. IN the clove box is a fold open ladies vanity mirror.

The deep boot is trimmed with a maroon fitted carpet. The spare wheel is housed under the boot floor and tools and a jack are in their appointed places. The overall condition of the cabin is probably better then when it left Freestone & webb, being in brand new condition throughout.

The first series of Silver Cloud featured Rolls-Royce's familiar six-cylinder inlet-over-exhaust engine in 4887cc. At this stage, of course, power output was simply described as "adequate" by Crewe & we can confirm that the power is sufficient to propel the car to slightly unseemly triple digit figures if required whilst it cruises very comfotably at the motorway speed limit. Whatever the magic number was (probably somewhere around the 150 – 170 bhp mark) it was "adequate" enough to propel the 2-tonne car past the 100mph benchmark.

Power is relayed via the smooth four-speed General Motors Hydramatic automatic gearbox to the rear wheels. The brakes are drums all round and are powered by a semi-hydraulic and semi-mechanical system to ensure redundancy in case of a loss of hydraulic pressure having been stripped & fullly rebuilt. Suspension is configured for cosseting comfort and consists of a live axle on leaf springs at the back and a very good independent coil system at the front, copied from a 1930s Packard. The shocks are lever-arm, adjustable at the back between a smoother ride or sharper handling.

The under-bonnet presentation is to show standards with the engine having been fully rebuilt with new pistons fitted & a rebore done & the crank reground etc by expert restorer Nigel Sandell. As a result the car displays very high oil pressure even when hot. There are some nice bits of detail in here, such as the various labelling of parts, mechanics' instruction plates and deeply embossed chassis number plate.

The undersideis in very good shape for the car's age and mileage. The Silver Cloud comes compete with a very impressive document archive with 2 ring file folders far to voluminous to photogrph in their entirety; suffice to say that the bills found inside are simply eye watering & approach some 200,000 pounds. The brakes have been gone though & rebuilt with new cylinders etc & also the king pins renewed etc.

The V5 registration document is present which classifies the Silver Cloud as an Historic Vehicle. This renders the Rolls-Royce MoT exempt and zero rated for VED in the UK. Despite this the car helds a current advisory free test which was valid until February 2025. A great many earlier MoTs are also present showing but a few incremental miles each year.

There are some fascinating build records present from both Rolls-Royce and Freestone & Webb documenting the original specifications of the Rolls. The bulk of the remainder of the archive consists of many, many invoices recording work undertaken, and parts procured for the car.

It's well worth taking time to study this impressive history to fully appreciate its cared for history. The Silver Cloud represents a key juncture in Rolls-Royce history, considered by some as the last of the "real" Rolls-Royces with the traditional "body on chassis" arrangement.

By today's anodyne standards they certainly showcase the much-admired craft of, arguably, the world's greatest luxury car manufacturer. It is a very rare example, being just one of eight ever produced in this configuration and part of a very exclusive group of coach-built Silver Clouds.

Viewings are STRICTLY BY APPOINTMENT at our Northampton showrooms.

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