

1926 SUNBEAM TIGER

Few cars embody the courage and ingenuity of the heroic age of speed quite like this Sunbeam Tiger, affectionately nicknamed “Ladybird.” A landmark in British engineering, this remarkable machine changed motoring history – making 2026 especially significant as we mark 100 years since its record-breaking speed run and 130 years since the birth of its legendary driver, Sir Henry Segrave.

Segrave was one of Britain’s great sporting pioneers: a former fighter pilot, Grand Prix winner, land speed record holder and powerboat racer. Knighted by King George V for his achievements, he became the first Briton to win a Grand Prix in a British car when he drove a Sunbeam to victory at the 1923 French Grand Prix, before then turning his attention to speed records.

On 16 March 1926, at Ainsdale Beach, Southport, Segrave drove the very 4-litre V12 Sunbeam Tiger in front of you to a new world Land Speed Record of 152.33mph, becoming the first person to exceed 150mph over a measured kilometre. Although boosted by supercharging, the Tiger remains the smallest-capacity car ever to hold the Land Speed Record.

Segrave claimed two further land speed records before tragically losing his life in 1930 while pursuing the water speed record. His legacy lives on through the Segrave Trophy, awarded annually by the Club to individuals who, in our view, demonstrate ‘Outstanding Skill, Courage and Initiative on Land, Water and in the Air’.

Still in private ownership – and still capable of astonishing performance – the Sunbeam Tiger survives today as a rare and potent symbol of Segrave’s fearless ambition.

It will be on display at this year’s Club Concours alongside other significant Segrave cars – scan the QR code below to secure your tickets.



Brief Technical Specification

Engine: V-12 cylinder, 3976 cc

Top speed: 157 mph; the car broke its own record in 1990

Maximum power: 300 hp

On display Tuesday 21 to Monday 27 April, courtesy of Dr Vijay Mallya.

For more information, please see the cabinet outside the library on the first floor.