



# A touch of vintage romance

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*When couples choose a classic Armstrong Siddeley for their special day, they embrace decades of timeless elegance*



**PICTURES:** A green and black Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire Star dressed in ivory ribbons takes bride Hannah to the big day (opposite). The newlyweds later pose for romantic photographs against the iconic backdrop of Cromer Pier (above).

Perhaps the most joyous moment of any wedding is the elation felt by all as the newlyweds step into the sunshine amid sprays of confetti having tied the knot. The formalities of the ceremony are left behind as they turn their attention to the celebrations ahead.

How a couple travels to their wedding reception varies widely today. Some arrive in sleek sports cars or limousines, while others opt for a horse-drawn carriage, a vintage tractor or even a boat on the Broads.

Yet nothing captures the romance of the occasion quite like a classic car, built in an era when motoring was synonymous with luxury.

"Couples come to us looking for something different because modern cars all look the same," explains Gary Palmer, who runs Cromer Classic Wedding Cars with his wife Angela. "These old cars have such character, with curves instead of sharp edges, chrome that catches the eye and leather interiors. Many couples tell us the seats feel like their sofa at home - so comfortable and far more lavish than anything modern." Even practical details make them ideal for weddings, including taller doors that open wide so brides can step in gracefully without worrying about their dress.

Gary's passion lies with Armstrong Siddeley vehicles, a marque with distinguished heritage dating back to 1919. During wartime, the company turned to aircraft development and its post-war cars proudly carried the names of aircraft such as the Hurricane, Typhoon, Whitley and Lancaster. When Rolls-Royce acquired Armstrong Siddeley in 1962, the Armstrong Siddeley Club managed to acquire all spare parts, records and even the company name to ensure these magnificent machines would continue to grace Britain's roads.

The Cromer Classic Wedding Cars fleet showcases this legacy with carefully selected models. The Hurricane and Typhoon are sportier two-door variants, both featuring distinctive Art Deco lines and the Hurricane offering a convertible top that lets couples feel the Norfolk breeze. For those seeking stately grandeur, the four-door Whitley and Lancaster provide spacious interiors in sumptuous leather - some in classic

cream and black, others in elegant blue and silver.

The crown jewel is Gary's Sapphire range, the pinnacle of 1950s British luxury motoring. One of his Sapphires, among the last produced in 1960, boasts electric windows, air conditioning and power steering - some remarkable innovations for the era.

Each carries the iconic Sphinx mascot on the bonnet (referring to the engine being as silent and inscrutable as stone) alongside turbine jet engines on the Sapphire 346 range that nod to the company's aviation heritage.

Every vehicle has been lovingly restored by Gary himself, with mechanical reliability being his greatest





**PICTURES:** The Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire Star in cream and black (top, right) and Typhoon Convertible (above, left) are both popular choices for couples looking for vintage charm on their wedding day.

concern. "The last thing a couple needs on their special day is to worry about transport, so we do everything possible to ensure these cars are running beautifully when it matters most," he shares.

Thoughtful touches complete the service. Angela grows and selects fresh seasonal flowers from her garden to decorate the cars, with ribbons matched to wedding themes. Even unusual requests like tiger-print details are accommodated, ensuring every couple receives their dream ride.

Gary always handles the driving personally, giving his services for the full day so that events can unfold naturally, whether that involves short local journeys or extended photographic tours along Norfolk's stunning coastline.

"We've arranged drives down the pier at Great Yarmouth, along Cromer's seafront and even across the sands at Brancaster," Gary recalls. "We're led entirely by what the couple wants and those moments stay with them forever."

Some requests are delightfully personal, with one couple revisiting the site of their first date at Great Yarmouth's Flamingo amusement

arcade. Another bride shared champagne with her parents in the back seat before the ceremony, a moment of family intimacy that perfectly captured the relaxed luxury these cars provide.

The wedding car often provides the only opportunity for couples to share some quiet time on their whirlwind day. Knowing how precious that privacy can be, Gary steps aside, allowing the newlyweds a few treasured minutes to sit together and take it all in before the reception begins.

"The cars prove equally popular with wedding guests of all ages. Grandparents and parents often remember these models from years gone by," Gary says. "People might not recognise the make at first, but seeing a classic Armstrong Siddeley causes them to stop and take notice."

This family business continues to create unforgettable moments across Norfolk, where the elegant presence of these meticulously maintained classics adds a touch of timeless sophistication to couples' most treasured memories.

"It's a rewarding job because everyone's in such good spirits," Gary reflects. "Whether it's making the couple's day special or chatting with a grandfather who fondly remembers these cars from their youth, there's joy all around."

