1924

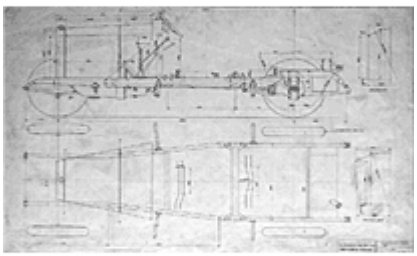
DECISION OVER CRAYFISH

The decision to found Volvo was taken by accountant Assar Gabrielsson and engineer Gustaf Larson over a meal of crayfish at the Sturehof Restaurant in Stockholm on 25 July 1924. The two had worked together at SKF and had both been considering the manufacture of a Swedish car for several years. A car built from Swedish steel – then the best in the world – would be of higher quality, enabling it to compete successfully with the leading American cars on the market.

1925

UNUSUAL DRAWING OFFICE

The drawings for the first car were produced in the children's bedroom in Larson's house by young engineers, such as Jan G. Smith. In autumn 1925, Henry Westerberg was engaged to finish the drawings. In the process, he became Volvo's first employee – and the first to be laid off temporarily in 1926. However, he was rehired later and went on to become Volvo's longest-serving employee, spending 55 years with the company.



1926

ADVENTUROUS DRIVE

Ten prototypes, nine open-top and one covered, were built at Galco AB in Stockholm, where Larson was chief engineer. These were finished in spring 1926. Some acquired nicknames, such as the light-green ‘Mermaid’, the attractive, red ‘Little Troll’ and the ‘Jakob’, commemorating the day that Volvo was ‘conceived’ by Gabrielsson and Larson in 1924. The covered car was nicknamed the ‘Grouse Hide’ because of its resemblance to the type of hide used in bird shoots. Three of the cars were driven to Gothenburg on what was to prove an adventurous journey, which included a collision with a Ford, a skid into a ditch and an electrical system breakdown in the middle of the night.

SKF decided to assign the car manufacturing operation to its AB Volvo subsidiary, and appointed Gabrielsson and Larson to the board, the former as MD. In addition to its share capital of 200,000 kronor, the company was allocated a credit of one million kronor by SKF.

1927

BIRTH OF VOLVO ON 14 APRIL

Volvo was born, after a long night of painful labour, just after 10 a.m. on Maundy Thursday, 14 April 1927. Since the gearbox of the new car had been fitted the wrong way round, the vehicle could only be driven in reverse at first. However, the gathering appeared to be undismayed and, according to a contemporary report, Gustaf Larson jokingly told the works manager that he had “put the bridle on the horse’s rear end”. The car was an open-top model bearing the designation ÖV4, although it was to become known popularly as the ‘Jakob’.

The covered PV4 appeared on 4 July. This was nicknamed the ‘Grouse Hide’ because of its resemblance to the type of hide used by Swedish bird hunters.

1928

EXPORTS TOOK OFF

The first car exported, a PV4, was shipped to Denmark as early as 1927. However, the volume of exports increased in 1928 and a subsidiary, Volvo Auto OY AB, was established in Finland.

The first truck was built the same year and the first bus, built on a slightly reinforced car chassis, followed.

1929

FROM FOUR TO SIX

The first six-cylinder car, the PV651, was introduced in 1929.

Volvo made a profit for the first time in August 1929, although it came perilously close to being sold to the Nash Corporation in the USA before Gabrielsson succeeded in convincing SKF head Björn Prytz that the company was about to turn the corner. Prytz consulted the board by telephone the morning that Charles Nash was to arrive by liner from the USA and the decision not to sell was taken only then. From October 1929 on, Volvo operated at a profit every year until the early 1990s!

1930

VOLVO ACQUIRES PENTAVERKEN

Volvo acquired a majority shareholding in Pentaverken of Skövde, the company which supplied its engines.

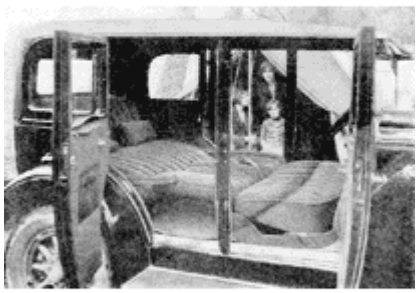
Although sales of cars were not achieving the desired figures, Volvos became popular as taxis in Sweden following the introduction of the first taxi model, the TR671, in 1930. In fact, taxis accounted for the higher proportion of car sales throughout the 1930s.

Edited by Export Manager Rolf Hanson, the company’s customer magazine, Ratten (The Steering Wheel) was published for the first time. Today, it is the oldest magazine of its type in Sweden and also one of the biggest, with a circulation of about one million.

1931

STERN REBUTTAL

The economy was weak in 1931 and sales declined after four years of sustained growth. New features were few. Volvo – which usually declined to comment on criticism by its competitors – now chose to rebut the claim by General Motors that the Chevrolet was a Swedish car – and even more Swedish than Volvo itself. Published in the company's customer magazine Ratten, Volvo's response noted that the Chevrolet's only claim to 'Swedishness' was that it was assembled in the country – from components imported exclusively from America. Reminding its readers that a Volvo was over 90% Swedish, it added that the only Swedish 'parts' in its competitor's model were "the water in the radiator and the air in the tyres".



1932

EXPORTS TO MANY COUNTRIES

Exports went to Denmark, Finland, Norway and the Netherlands, while cars were also shipped to Cuba, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine and Syria.

1933

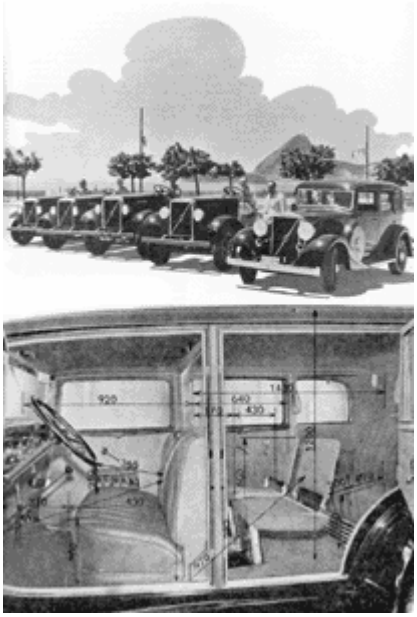
STREAMLINED SHAPE TESTED

Created by Gustav L-M Ericsson, Volvo's first concept car – the Venus Bilo – made its appearance. With its rounded, streamlined styling, the car served as a 'test vehicle' for the coming PV36. The model attracted considerable attention, although opinions on its appearance differed.

1934

SPACIOUS NEW MODELS

Introduced in 1934, the Volvo 678 and 679 were seven-seater cars powered by a super-modern, six-cylinder, side-valve engine with a displacement of 3.27 litres and an output of 70 hp. The models were particularly roomy.



1935

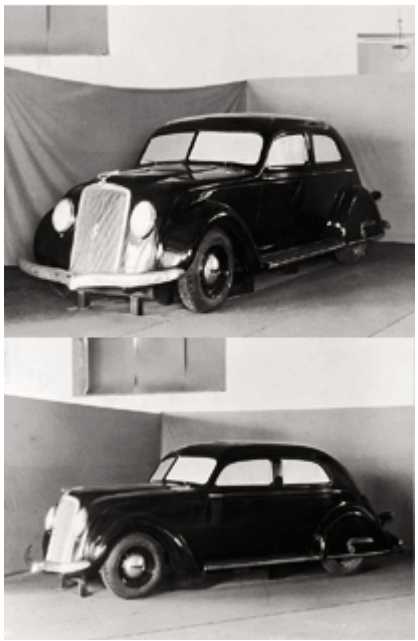
SECURE PROFIT AND PUBLIC QUOTATION

In the 1930s, the car was still a luxury owned by the fortunate few. Despite exports to many parts of the world, Volvo was living mainly on its trucks and buses, as well as its sales of taxis.

The attractive and much discussed – although hard-to-sell – PV36 ‘Carioca’ was unveiled in 1935.

The Volvo PV658/659, TR701 and 704 taxis were other new products introduced in 1935.

Volvo had now made a profit five years in a row and the company was quoted on the Stockholm Stock Exchange with a share capital of SEK13 million.

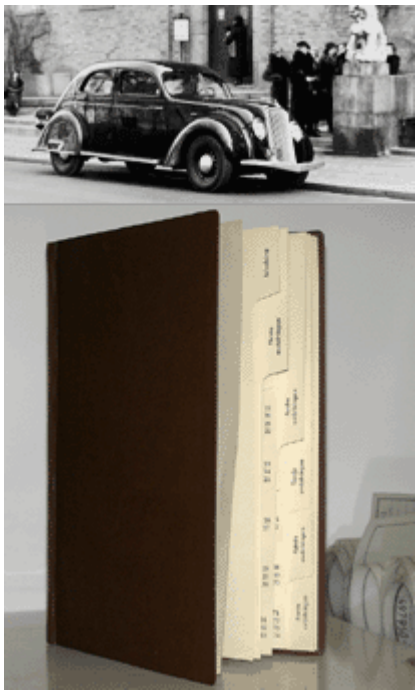


1936

SAFETY BECAME A CORE VALUE

Assar Gabrielsson issued a personally authored sales manual which is still of relevance today. In a chapter dealing with technical matters, Gustaf Larson formulated the core value of safety for the first time: “A car is designed primarily to carry and to be driven by people,” he wrote. “Safety is – and must always be – the guiding principle of our design work ... and prudence must continue to be our watchword in future”.

The Volvo PV51 was introduced in 1936 as an inexpensive car for ‘ordinary people’.



1937

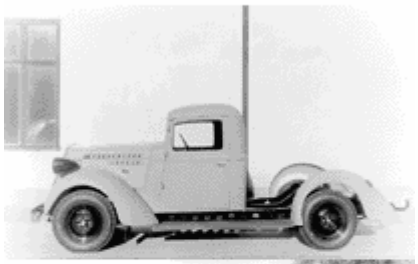
ANOTHER NEW MODEL

The Volvo PV52 was the year’s new model.

1938

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The Volvo PV51 Special and PV57 were new variants of the same basic model. The PV801/802 taxi and PV810 chassis were also introduced.



1939

WAR CREATED NEW CONDITIONS

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Volvo was no longer in a position to produce cars for private use. However, the company did manufacture tens of thousands of producer gas units for the existing car population. During the war, Volvo also built vehicles of all kinds – including tanks – for the Swedish Defence Forces.

1940

IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

The PV40 design model showed how the postwar PV444 might have looked. Even in the shadow of war, Volvo’s designers were experimenting with new ideas.

1941

AIRCRAFT ENGINES A NEW PRODUCT

Volvo took over Svenska Flygmotor of Trollhättan at the request of the Swedish government, which was anxious to prevent the emergence of a monopoly in the aircraft and aero engine sector.

Vehicle No. 50,000 left the Gothenburg plant. With the war still in progress, the vehicle in question was a truck.

1942

A SMALL CAR WAS CONCEIVED

Köpings Mekaniska Werkstad, the supplier of gearboxes to the company since its inception, was taken over by Volvo.

During the lull in car production, Volvo’s designers built a number of prototypes of the car which was to have been introduced as the Volvo PV60 in 1941. That year, a working group of 40 people was formed to design a new, small Volvo.

1943

VOLVO'S FIRST 'SUV'

Volvo introduced its M/43 personnel carrier – a military precursor of the Volvo XC90.

1944

SUCCESSFUL EXHIBITION IN STOCKHOLM

In September 1944, Volvo hired the Royal Tennis Hall in Stockholm to display its entire model range. Over a period of ten days, 148,437 people visited the exhibition to view the PV444, which was destined to become Volvo's first genuine 'people's car', as well as the new PV60. The PV444 was priced at 4,800 kronor, exactly the same as the ÖV4 in 1927! In other words, it was extremely cheap and, within a few years, purchase contracts for the car were changing hands at up to twice the price. The laminated windscreen was a world first and – like the safety body – was a definite sales advantage.

1945

STRIKE DASHED HOPES

Volvo was hoping to resume car production without delay after World War II. However, its plans were seriously delayed by a prolonged strike of Swedish industrial workers.

1946

MATERIALS AT LAST

Carl Lindblom, who became Volvo’s new chief design engineer in 1945, had lived in the USA during the war and had good contacts there. In 1946, he used his influence to persuade an American steelworks to supply Volvo with material for car bodies. Although four trips to the USA by air at the beginning of the year failed to yield results, he stubbornly shipped some PV444 prototypes across the Atlantic and toured them around the country. The campaign was successful and supplies of body materials were soon on the way to Sweden. However, Lindblom himself got another job and remained in the States.

The Volvo PV60, which had been shown in Stockholm in 1944, entered production in 1946.

1947

PV444 ENTERS PRODUCTION

Supplies of raw materials remained extremely limited for several years after the war. As a small company in competition with foreign giants, Volvo had problems in obtaining supplies of materials such as body metal and tyre rubber. As a result, it was not until 1947 that production – and deliveries – of the Volvo PV444 got under way.

Volvo celebrated its 20th birthday. The company now had a capital of SEK112 million and a workforce of over 3,000.

1948

SALES INTERRUPTION

Volvo broke its production record by manufacturing almost 3,000 cars – which was nevertheless too little! Sales were suspended for a time to prevent the delivery time for the PV444 from becoming too long.

1949

CAR NO. 100,000

For the first time in its history, Volvo produced more cars than trucks and buses, due mainly to the success of the Volvo PV444.

Buoyed by its success, Volvo introduced the Volvo PV445 chassis, which featured the front end and instrumentation of the PV444, but was otherwise sold as a bare chassis for finishing by small, independent bodybuilders.

Car No. 100,000 – a black PV444 – appeared in August 1949. About 20,000 of this number had been exported and the workforce had doubled in size to 6,000 in just two years.

1950

THE 'PEOPLE'S TAXI'

The Volvo PV830 series was introduced. Although the front resembled the PV444, the car was much bigger and was to become the Swedish 'people's taxi' for decades to come. Some of these were still in service in Swedish towns and cities in the 1980s.

1951

MARKING TIME

So few changes were made to the Volvo car range in 1951 that the company had to produce somewhat unusual variants and concentrate on its proven models.

1952

WILLIE VOLVO

All Swedish children who had been born in 1945 received a present from Volvo in the form of a storybook entitled Willie Volvo and the princess. Illustrated by attractive colour drawings signed ‘NA’, this told the story of a gallant little PV which overcame all odds.

1953

THE DUETT: TWO CARS IN ONE

The popularity of the PV445 chassis prompted Volvo to make life simpler for its customers by producing a finished (i.e. bodied) van-cum-car known as the Duett. This gave the company better control over the quality of the finished product.

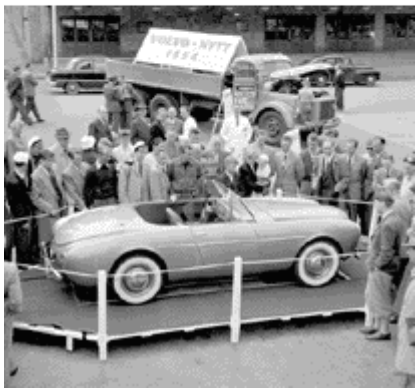
The same year, the company unveiled a design sketch of an American-inspired model known as the Philip – the first Volvo designed by the legendary Jan Wilsgaard.

The four-wheel drive TP21 military staff car produced in 1953 bore a strong resemblance to the PV830 taxi and quickly became known as ‘The Sow’ – a reference to its rear end!

1954

THE PV WARRANTY

Volvo’s unique five-year PV warranty was introduced. In one sense, this event paved the way for Volvo’s position of leadership in the area of safety. Under its terms, Volvo undertook to cover all repairs over SEK200 necessitated by third-party accident or damage. Initially, the National Insurance Inspectorate attempted to sue Volvo, but without success. However, claiming that the new warranty was a form of illegal competition, the Swedish insurance companies initiated a prolonged legal action, which Volvo finally won in 1959. This enabled AB Volvia to commence business as an insurance company, bringing with it access to valuable accident research data (see 1959, 1967 and 1969 for further information).



1955

US PIONEERS

Exports to the USA started with an adventurous trip made by Nils Sefeldt and his family from New York to Fort Worth, Texas in a dove-grey Volvo PV444 – in the middle of hurricane Diane. Another Volvo pioneer in USA was Leo Hirsh from California, who fell in love with Sweden on a business trip to buy nails – and rode in a Volvo taxi. The two men became, respectively, Volvo's representatives in seven of the southern states and eleven of the western states of the USA.

Volvo opened a test track at Stora Holm on the island of Hisingen, north of Gothenburg.

1956

NEW HEAD AND NEW MODELS

The P1200 Amazon, later renamed the P120, took the world by surprise with its beauty and female lines. Powered by a new engine known as the B16, the model had four doors and was available in a two-tone finish.

The Volvo Sport – a convertible with a ‘plastic’ body – entered production (the first prototype had been unveiled two years earlier). Although only 67, or perhaps 68 examples were built, most have been lovingly preserved by enthusiasts.

Gunnar Engellau moved from Volvo Flygmotor to become head of Volvo, remarking: “I take my hat off to salute the past and my coat to face the future”. Although full of respect for Volvo’s founders, he himself became a legend as head of Volvo for 15 years. From the outset, he was strongly committed to exports to the USA, which was destined to become a fortunate venture for Volvo.

1957

SAFETY ENHANCEMENT

Since the Amazon had appeared the year before, 1957 was not a remarkable year for Volvo cars. Nevertheless, a new, faster and more attractive PV444 was introduced at the beginning of the year. In the area of safety, the company was once again to the fore with its introduction of seat belt attachments.

1958

'VOLVO GUNNAR' EUROPEAN CHAMPION

The Volvo PV444 was so sporty that it was used extensively in competition – an activity disliked from the start by Assar Gabrielsson, who considered that it might harm Volvo's image of safety. However, the car's success could not be halted and Volvo drivers were to drive it to victory in both track and rally events all over the world. Gunnar Andersson became European rally champion in his PV444 in 1958 and again in 1963.

Although everybody expected the PV444 to be discontinued and superseded by the Amazon, its replacement was actually the more modern Volvo PV544. The PV concept lived on!

1959

WORLD'S FIRST THREE-POINT SEAT BELT

In 1959, Volvo became the first carmaker in the world to fit three-point seat belts in a mass-produced model – and the company's cars have been in the front rank of safety ever since. Nils Bohlin, the belt's inventor, had worked on safety development for the Royal Swedish Air Force and was recruited by Volvo in the mid-1960s to head the company's work in the field. In collaboration with leading researchers, he successfully demonstrated that seat belts could be as effective in cars as in aircraft. It is impossible today to estimate how many million human lives have been saved by his brainchild.

Ewy Rosqvist won the ladies' class in the European Rally Championship and repeated the feat in 1961.

The Volvia insurance company was founded by Volvo to cover owners whose five-year PV warranties were now beginning to expire. This provided the company with valuable accident data, which it used in new car development (read more under 1954, 1967 and 1969).

1960

SPORTS CAR WITH ITALIAN STYLING

The P1800 sports car was shown to the public for the first time at the Brussels Motor Show. The styling was by the Italian bodybuilder Frua, although it is frequently claimed that it was the work of a Swede, Pelle Pettersson, who was more renowned as a boat designer and yachtsman. Pettersson was the son of Helmer Pettersson, who was manager of the P1800 project and had also designed the Volvo PV444. He had arranged for his son to work at Frua at the exact time that the new model was being developed. Pelle himself maintains that Volvo selected his design from three submitted anonymously by Frua. However, Volvo has never acknowledged this account, probably to maintain the belief that the styling was genuinely Italian. Powered by a new engine (B18), the Volvo P1800 was built initially by Jensen in Britain. Later, sales of the model received a boost when it was driven by actor Roger Moore as ‘The Saint’ in the TV series of the same name.

1961

DEBUT OF B18

The 1962 model of the Volvo Amazon was unveiled in 1961. Among other features, the car was powered by a brand-new engine (B18) developing 75 or 90 hp. The 100-hp version of the unit was used in the new P1800 sports car. The Amazon Sport was equipped with disc brakes and was available with the option of overdrive.

The long-awaited two-door version of the Amazon was launched during the year.

1962

FIRST ESTATE MODEL

The Volvo Amazon appeared in an estate version known as the P220 Amazon Estate, offering a more modern alternative to the P210 Duett (the PV445 upgrade introduced in 1960). The horizontally split tailgate was a novel feature of the Amazon Estate.

Volvo established a competition department – Volvo Competition Service – with a reluctant Gunnar Andersson as head. Andersson would have much preferred to continue as a full-time rally driver.

1963

CAR PRODUCTION IN NORTH AMERICA

Volvo started car production in North America at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada – the first European carmaker to take this step. The plant was officially opened by HRH Prince Bertil of Sweden.

The company’s success on the world’s rally circuits continued and competition head Gunnar Andersson was able to drive sufficiently often to become European champion for the second time, this time in a PV544. Sylvia Österberg took the ladies’ class, while Tom Trana drove another PV544 to victory in the British RAC Rally.

The Volvo Group now employed over 20,000 people.

P1800 production was transferred from Britain to Sweden and the model was rebadged the Volvo P1800 S (the ‘P’ was dropped about a year later).

1964

NEW PLANTS IN TORSLANDA AND BELGIUM

Volvo’s rapid expansion meant that the company was now the biggest in Sweden and it opened a huge new production plant at Torslanda, near Gothenburg, on 24 April 1964, when HM Gustaf VI Adolf of Sweden cut the ribbon amid great pomp and circumstance. Assar Gabrielsson had passed away in 1962, but Gustaf Larson survived to witness the event. He died in 1968.

Volvo took another major step in 1964, when it commenced the production of trucks at its importer’s premises at Alsemberg in Belgium, giving it a foothold in the increasingly ‘impregnable’ European Economic Community (EEC).

Volvo built its millionth car, which was equipped with the millionth gearbox produced at its plant in Köping.

Rally successes continued as Tom Trana took the European Championship.

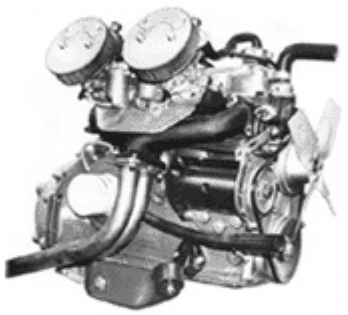
1965

CAR PRODUCTION IN BELGIUM

Volvo continued its drive to penetrate the EEC by opening a car plant in Belgium. Volvo Director Lars Malmros personally visited a large number of potential locations for a suitable site before the choice fell on Ghent, which has since become Volvo's second 'home town'. Malmros himself became head of the joint operation and, later, of Volvo's Truck Division. Among other distinctions, he is an honorary citizen of the city of Ghent.

The company's active involvement in rallying was brought to a close following a number of serious accidents, but not before Volvo had won the World Constructors' Championship – thanks in no small measure to the notable victory of Kenyan Joginder Singh in the Safari Rally in a Volvo PV544 and the two World Championship event victories achieved by reigning European champion Tom Trana.

Production of the PV544 was discontinued. Of the 440,000 examples produced since 1944, 160,000 had been exported. The PV had done its bit after more than 20 years and the Amazon was now the highest-selling car in Sweden.



1966

'SAFEST CAR IN THE WORLD'

Hailed as ‘the safest car in the world’, the Volvo 144 was introduced and was voted ‘Car of the Year’ in Scandinavia. Bigger than the Amazon, the Volvo 144 was a milestone in terms of both active and passive safety. Disc brakes all round – a feature normally found only on exclusive sports cars – were standard, while the dual-circuit braking system was a major advance. The body was provided with energy-absorbent crumple zones and the steering wheel was of the collapsible type. The model was showered with awards, including the Swedish Automobile Association’s Gold Medal for the braking system.

1967

WORLD'S FIRST REAR-FACING CHILD SEAT

Now that Volvo had built 'the world's safest car', it was time to consider the safety of its smallest occupants. The result was the introduction of the world's first rear-facing child seat in 1967. Ever since then, Volvo has done more than any other carmaker to develop its own in-car safety systems for children and has prompted the entire industry to adopt similar measures.

"Dramatic support for traffic safety bodies" announced a Swedish newspaper in 1967, reporting on Volvo's study of no less than 28,700 accidents involving 42,318 people. Based on the statistics provided by Volvia, the company's own insurance subsidiary, the study provided safety head Nils Bohlin with proof positive of the lifesaving benefits of the seat belt.

Volvo also introduced rear-seat belts the same year.

In Canada, car production was transferred from Dartmouth to a new plant in Halifax, also in Nova Scotia.

1968

SIX CYLINDERS IN A DELUXE PACKAGE

The Volvo 164 – a genuinely luxurious model based on the Volvo 144 – was unveiled. Volvo's first six-cylinder model for many years, the car was equipped initially with a carburettor and developed 145 hp. Later, it was equipped with fuel injection and the engine was uprated to 175 hp.

Volvo focused on southeast Asia and opened a car assembly plant at Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.

The B18 engine was replaced in some cars by the more modern B20, which was equipped with an exhaust gas purification system of a type developed for the US market the year before.

1969

ACCIDENT RESEARCH TEAM ESTABLISHED

Armed with the major accident study completed two years earlier based on data supplied by Volvia, Volvo established an Accident Research Team for trucks and buses in late autumn 1969. A similar group for cars was formed a year later.

In 1969, Volvo introduced inertia-reel seat belts in the front seats of its cars, making belt use simpler and safer. Other safety features introduced in 1969 included front head restraints and a waist belt in the rear.

Founded in 1735, Svenska Stålpressnings AB of Olofström had supplied bodies and body components to Volvo since the earliest days. In 1969, the company was acquired from Alfa-Laval and renamed Volvo Olofströmsverken.

Volvo discontinued the P210 Duett twenty years after the first PV445 chassis had been introduced. As a successor, the company launched the Volvo 145 Express, an estate model with a raised roof, which made it extremely suitable, for example, for tradesmen.

The Volvo 1800 E was the sports car news of the year.

1970

VOLVO'S FIRST SPONSORSHIP

The Volvo Accident Research Team for cars was established. In addition to monitoring crash testing of complete cars and components in the laboratory, Volvo researchers were now able to gather valuable information on real-life accidents. Field investigations were complemented by statistics. Since the team's foundation, all accident information is supplied to Volvo's design engineers for use in new car development.

Volvo car No. 2,000,000 was produced.

Volvo undertook its first major sports sponsorship – the Volvo Open in golf.

Fourteen years and 667,323 cars later, the Amazon was discontinued.

1971

NEW ARRIVALS: P.G. GYLLENHAMMAR AND THE 1800 ES

The 1800 ES was the big event of the year in cars. Although the front half was identical to its predecessor, the P1800, the rear half was new and resembled an estate to some extent. With a maximum output of 135 hp, the 1800 ES more than fulfilled buyers' expectations of sportiness. Although the model did become popular, it was discontinued only two years later. It is now a cult model which attracts prices many times higher than the original.

In 1971, the Volvo Group acquired its third president and CEO when Pehr Gustaf Gyllenhammar, then just 36 years old, succeeded his father-in-law, Gunnar Engellau. His first act was to offer seats on the board to company employees.

The same year, the Volvo Group joined Renault and Peugeot in a far-reaching engine development venture, forming a joint company known as PRV for the purpose. The aim was to produce six-cylinder engines at a plant in Douvrin in the north of France. Production at the facility, which was owned jointly by Renault and Peugeot, continued until 1990.

Volvo commenced car production in Melbourne, Australia in 1971.

1972

BELT-DRIVEN VOLVO

The Volvo Group has acquired a large number of other companies throughout its history. However, this includes only one carmaker – DAF. To meet the wishes of dealers anxious to complement their ranges with a small car, Volvo agreed to acquire a 30% shareholding in the Dutch company's car operation and its plant at Born in the southern Netherlands, as of 1 January 1973. In 1975, Volvo increased its shareholding to 75% and the company was renamed Volvo Car B.V.

Although not an attractive model, the Volvo Experimental Safety Car (VESC) provided a powerful answer to existing and future traffic safety problems, not only in Europe, but especially in the USA.

Volvo's first environmental policy was articulated by P.G. Gyllenhammar at the UN Environmental Conference in Stockholm.

A seat belt reminder was the biggest safety innovation introduced in production models.

Inertia reel belts also made their appearance in the rear seats.

The company's biggest investment in 1972 was the new Volvo Technical Centre (VTC), which was built to house all new car development activities.

1973

FANTASTIC TEST TRACK

The original test track at Stora Holm had become far too small and too difficult to shield from the prying eyes and lenses of a press anxious to uncover secret projects. As a result, the company decided to build an enormous test facility at Hällered, deep in the forest between Göteborg and Borås. The principal feature was the main track, a six-kilometre oval with four lanes and banked bends, which enabled a driver to drive at 200 km/h without touching the wheel.

Volvo was to start car production in Chesapeake, Virginia in 1973. However, economic conditions, combined with the first oil crisis, dictated otherwise and it was decided to build buses instead. In the event, this was not a success and the plant was finally used to produce Volvo Penta engines and drives. Volvo Penta's American headquarters are still located in Chesapeake today.

The USA became Volvo's biggest car market.

1974

'HUMAN' PLANT OPENED IN KALMAR

Volvo inaugurated what was to become known as the 'human car plant' in Kalmar. In the new facility, the conventional production line was replaced by a system of manually controlled carriers, with automatic loop-controlled carriers supplying the assembly materials. The workforce was organised in autonomous groups, each with a high degree of responsibility for its own work. In its 20 years of operation, the plant attracted international attention as a model working environment.

The biggest car news of the year was the appearance of the successor to the 140/160 series, the Volvo 240/260, which bore a strong resemblance to the 1972 VESC, not only in terms of appearance but also as regards safety features. The Volvo 240 was subsequently designated as the standard for car safety in the USA. The Volvo 260 was powered by a newly developed V6 engine produced at the PRV plant in Douvrin.

1975

THE SMALLEST VOLVO EVER

DAF cars continued to be sold under their original name for some years following the Volvo takeover. By 1975, however, the DAF 66 had improved to the extent that it was renamed the Volvo 66.

Volvo was already working in collaboration with Yngve Nilsson, a bodybuilding firm located in Laholm, south of Gothenburg. In 1975, the company introduced no less than three specially built, ‘stretched’ models bodied by Nilsson – the Volvo 245 T (a ‘stretched’ 245 intended as a taxi), the 265 Ambulance and the 245 Hearse.

1976

A RUGGED NEW ARRIVAL

The most important reason for Volvo's acquisition of DAF – the Volvo 343 – was introduced in February 1976. A medium-class car with rugged styling, the model was equipped with DAF's unique Variomatic continuously variable transmission. Extremely easy to drive, the car boasted exceptional handling thanks to its advanced design of rear axle, combined with the ideal weight distribution afforded by the rear-mounted transmission. Although the 343 suffered from a number of teething troubles, these were soon corrected and the car became extremely popular, especially in Britain, Sweden and the Netherlands.

In Britain, Volvo was awarded the prestigious Don Safety Trophy for its achievements in automotive safety.

The NHTSA, the US traffic safety administration, bought a number of Volvo 240s, which it used to specify the safety standards against which all new cars on the American market were tested.

The three-way catalytic converter and oxygen sensor (Lambdasond) was a world first from Volvo in 1976. Introduced primarily to meet the strict emission control standards in force in California, the system reduced hazardous emissions by about 90%.

Volvo had now produced three million cars.

1977

SAAB MERGER ABANDONED

On 6 May 1977, the boards of Volvo and Saab-Scania agreed to merge their two companies. However, in the wake of internal debate within Saab-Scania, Volvo decided to withdraw from the deal on 29 August.

Volvo celebrated its 50th anniversary on 14 April by presenting every employee with a Swiss watch.

Jubilee models were produced. These included the Volvo 262 Coupé, an attractive model designed and produced by Bertone of Italy mainly for the US market. A silver-coloured Volvo 240 was also produced. Adorned with gold stripes, this also boasted a silver plate on the dashboard signed by P.G. Gyllenhammar and a special jubilee badge.

Volvo received the prestigious National Environment Industry Award in the USA for its catalytic converter and oxygen sensor.

1978

NO DEAL WITH NORWAY

On 22 May 1978, it was announced that Volvo and the Norwegian government were to form a Swedish-Norwegian Volvo Group – a major deal in which oil was a key element. However, the proposal aroused a storm of controversy and Volvo's shareholders voted down the deal.

Håkan Frisinger became first president of the newly-formed Volvo Car Corporation.

Rally and racing driver Carl-Magnus Skogh broke the speed record for diesel cars when he reached 209 km/h on the main runway at Gothenburg airport. Designated the XD-1, the car is now in the Volvo Museum in Arendal.

The VSCC (Volvo Safety Concept Car) was produced for the US market.

1979

FIRST CAR DIESEL

Volvo built its four millionth car only three years after the previous million.

Volkswagen supplied the engine – a six-cylinder unit – for Volvo's first diesel car, the Volvo 240 D6. Volvo continued to buy its car diesels from VW until the first diesel engine of VCC's own was introduced in 2001.

The Volvo 345 was a sought-after model.

Renault became a minority shareholder in Volvo Cars for a number of years, initially with 10% and later 15%. This holding was ultimately relinquished in 1984.

The wide-angle mirror was a small but important innovation in 1979. The curve in the mirror enabled the driver to see an overtaking car until it appeared alongside. The mirror increased the field of vision from 22 to 45 degrees.

Powered by a 140-hp injection engine, the Volvo 240 GLT was Volvo's answer to Saab's introduction of turbos in its cars.

1980

'PI' BECAME EUROPEAN RALLYCROSS CHAMPION

The Volvo GLT was replaced by the Volvo 240 Turbo, the company's first turbocharged car, whose 155 hp delivered sports car performance.

In the competition area, Volvo's commitment to the 343 as a rallycross car culminated in 1980, when Per-Inge 'Pi' Walfridson became European champion. Walfridsson had been Swedish champion in 1977, and Volvo drivers had also won several Swedish and Nordic titles.

The Volvo Concept Car (VCC) was an elegant estate which was built to test market reaction to Volvo's next model.

1981

A MILLION CARS FOR THE USA

Volvo Cars shipped its millionth car since 1955 to North America.

The Dutch government increased its shareholding in Volvo Car B.V. to 70%, with Volvo holding the remaining 30%.

1982

VOLVO 760 PROVIDED FRESH BOOST

Like Volvo Cars, the car industry as a whole had experienced a number of tough years. In Volvo's case, the introduction of its first completely new model for many years was the turning point. Unveiled on 2 February 1982, the car in question was the luxury, six-cylinder Volvo 760 GLE. The petrol engine used in the first year was the existing 156-hp V6, with the option of a turbocharged, six-cylinder diesel developing 109 hp. The Volvo 760 became a worldwide success and was followed, in 1984, by simpler four-cylinder models. The Volvo 740 soon took over the mantle of Sweden's most popular car from the Volvo 240.

Profit-related bonuses for all employees were introduced in 1982, enhancing the Volvo Group's image as a progressive employer.

1983

EXCITING PROJECT

The Volvo LCP (Light Component Project) – was a much noted concept vehicle for testing new materials and power trains, and for studying the use of the car in the future. Two examples of the LCP – each powered by a three-cylinder diesel engine – were built. However, other fuels, such as rapeseed oil, were also tested. The project was led by the legendary Rolf Mellde.

The introduction of the Volvo 360 GLT – a leading-edge model in the popular 300 series – was also an important event in 1983. The model developed all of 115 hp.

The Volvo 760 Turbo was powered by a 173-hp four-cylinder turbo.

Drivers of Volvo company cars were now offered the option of using LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas), a much ‘greener’ fuel. However, the Swedish authorities did not provide the necessary support for the venture and the trial was short-lived.

“No elephants in the back, thank you!” was the slogan of the year as Volvo conducted a sustained campaign to encourage seat belt use in cooperation with the Swedish Road Safety Association (NTF).

1984

VOLVO 740 BECAME NEW 'PEOPLE'S CAR'

Roger Holtback became president of Volvo Car Corporation.

Volvo inaugurated a new test track in the Arizona desert.

The Volvo 740 was introduced and was soon to become the new Swedish 'people's car'.

1985

FIRST FRONT-WHEEL DRIVE VOLVO

Volvo’s first-ever front-wheel drive car – the elegant Volvo 480 ES sports coupé – emerged from the Volvo Car B.V. plant in Born. Although it had been intended to launch the model in the USA – where there was a demand for its type – exchange rate problems made this impossible.

More important models, which were genuinely sought-after, were the 700 series estates, including both the Volvo 740 and 760 versions.

The Volvo 780 was yet another new model to appear. Based on the Volvo 760, this was a luxurious coupé styled by Bertone in Italy and was the most luxurious car built by Volvo to date.

Volvo had already achieved success on the 1984 European production car circuit with a particularly powerful version of the Volvo 240. In 1985, however, the partnership of Thomas Lindström and Gianfranco Brancatelli drove to victory in the European Championship.

In January, Volvo decided to built a model plant in Uddevalla. This was duly inaugurated in May 1989, but was closed exactly five years later.

The invention by Nils Bohlin and Volvo of the three-point seat belt received its finest recognition to date in 1985, when the German Patent Office named it as one of the eight inventions of most benefit to mankind to appear during its 100 years of existence.

1986

NO DEAL WITH FERMENTA

In the area of safety, a three-point belt in the centre rear seat was yet another world first from Volvo Car Corporation.

Worth SEK500,000, the Volvo Traffic Safety Award was presented for the first time.

A proposed major deal between the Volvo Group and biotechnology company Fermenta fell through when certain irregularities were attributed to Fermenta MD Refaat el-Sayed.

1987

MANY NEW FEATURES IN VOLVO 760

Boasting many new features, a new version of the Volvo 760 was introduced. These included an advanced rear suspension known as multilink and electronic climate control (ECC), with a sunroof, automatic levelling, electric window winders, electric door mirrors and central locking as standard equipment. The simpler models also underwent significant improvement in 1987, especially in the area of exhaust gas purification.

As on the occasion of the company’s 50th anniversary, a jubilee model – a silver Volvo 240 – was produced for its 60th birthday in 1987.

1988

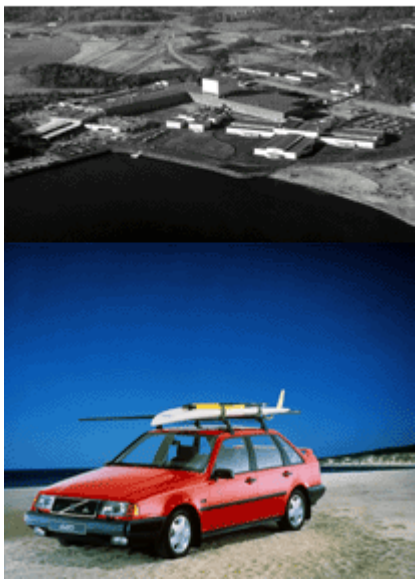
ANOTHER NEW MEDIUM-CLASS MODEL

The medium-class Volvo 440 was unveiled by NedCar in Born. Although intended to replace both the 300 and 240 series, the latter was to remain in production for a couple of years more. The Volvo 440 was a modern car which met all of the requirements of a car in its class and became popular in many countries.

Volvo’s first 16-valve engine was introduced in the Volvo 740 GLT 16V.

The AGM approved the allocation of SEK20 million by the Group to fund an annual environment prize of SEK1.5 million. Instituted to support environmental research and development in a global context, the Volvo Environment Prize has steadily grown in status over the years.

The Uddevalla plant was completed, ending the curiosity of those who had long been wondering how the exciting new facility would look.



1989

DISTINCTIONS FOR SAFETY

First came the Volvo 480 ES sports coupé in 1985, followed by the Volvo 440 hatchback in 1988 and the elegant Volvo 460 in 1989 – all from the Dutch plant. Although the 440 had a sportier image, the 460 was more luxuriously endowed.

Safety received a great deal of attention in 1989. Nils Bohlin, inventor of the three-point seat belt, was elected to the American Safety and Health Hall of Fame, while the mechanical seat belt pretensioner won the Prince Michael Road Safety Award in Britain.

1990

VOLVO 960 WITH ALUMINIUM ENGINE

The engine used in the new Volvo 960, which superseded the Volvo 760, was produced in a brand-new plant at Skövde. This was an in-line, six-cylinder unit featuring four-valve technology and made of aluminium. Developing 204 hp, the engine was also the most powerful produced by Volvo to date. The car boasted a standard of luxury and features which made it more than a match for its competitors in the executive class. Its handling was excellent, thanks particularly to the advanced multilink rear axle. Another new feature was the world's first inertia reel seat belt in the centre rear seat, which was also combined with a child booster cushion integrated in the centre armrest. This was one of the features for which Volvo received the Prince Michael Road Safety Award for the second year in a row.

At this time, Volvo also introduced the Volvo 940, which was a further development of the Volvo 740.

One of the most attractive Volvo cars ever – a convertible version of the Volvo 480 ES – was unveiled in Geneva. However, the model never reached the production stage.

Renault became Volvo's partner in a surprising alliance which was intended to culminate in the merger of the two companies.

Lennart Jeansson was appointed president of Volvo Car Corporation, while Christer Zetterberg became president of the Volvo Group and CEO.

The company reported a loss for the first time since 1929.

1991

THE REVOLUTIONARY VOLVO 850

The Volvo 850 GLT, the company's best and safest car to date, appeared just as the world – and Volvo – was hit by an economic crisis. The model was something completely new – featuring a transverse, five-cylinder, aluminium engine, front-wheel drive, self-adjusting belt reels, side impact protection (SIPS) and an advanced delta-link real axle. Apart from its unsurpassed safety, the design, together with the lively 170-hp engine, meant that Volvo was now, more than ever, an enjoyable make of car to drive. The model was a major success and distinctions literally rained down on it. In the USA, Volvo emerged as the 'safest car' in two comprehensive crash studies.

In the Netherlands, Mitsubishi became an equal partner in Volvo Car B.V., together with the Dutch government. The new company was named NedCar. Both Volvo Car Corporation and Mitsubishi Motors were to produce medium-class cars on parallel lines in the same plant.

1992

'GREEN' AND ATTRACTIVE

The Volvo ECC (Environmental Concept Car) offered a solution to the world's environmental problems. The car was not only attractive, but also boasted a recyclable body, an electric motor for urban service and a gas turbine for highway driving.

Sören Gyll became president of the Volvo Group and CEO.

1993

VOLVO 240 BROKE ALL RECORDS

Per-Erik Mohlin was appointed president of Volvo Car Corporation.

The proposed merger between Volvo and Renault fell through in December in the face of growing opposition within Volvo.

The Volvo 850 Estate was a long-awaited arrival. With its distinctive rear-lamp cluster, the model stood apart from the crowd. Developing 225 hp, the Volvo 850 Turbo was the most powerful car yet produced by the company.

1993 was the last year of the Volvo 240. In the years immediately before, the model had been produced by a separate company headed by Anna Nilsson-Ehle, under the slogan “The last 240 will be the best”. After 19 years and 2.8 million examples, the model finally came to the end of the road on 5 May 1993, following which the 500 employees ‘took a break’ until production of the Volvo 850 commenced the following summer.

1994

LUXURY FOR THE MANY

‘The world’s cleanest paint shop’ was inaugurated at the Torslanda plant following a long and difficult construction period.

A completely new version of the Volvo 960 – the most luxurious Volvo ever – was introduced. A ‘budget’ alternative was powered by a 2.5-litre, 170-hp engine and was available with a manual gearbox. The ‘ordinary’ version was equipped with a 3-litre, 204-hp unit driving an automatic transmission.

With its 250 hp, the Volvo 850 T5-R was the most powerful Volvo ever built.

The Winter Olympics were held in Lillehammer, Norway. As one of the main sponsors, Volvo supplied the organisers with a fleet of 1,500 vehicles finished in a special livery.

The SIPSbag – a side-impact airbag which protects the occupant’s chest cage effectively in a lateral collision – was the safety news of the year (SIPS stands for Side Impact Protection System) and received a number of prestigious awards. In its first three years, the Volvo 850 won no less than about 40 international awards for its design, safety and environmental characteristics.

The British Touring Car Championship (BTCC) is one of Europe’s toughest competitions for production cars. Volvo’s competitors no doubt sniggered quietly when the company entered the Volvo 850 Estate in the event. However, they quickly changed their tune – and their opinions of Volvo – as star Swedish driver Rickard Rydell swept to a series of victories in the competition.

1995

SAFE MEDIUM-CLASS DUTCH CARS

The first car to emerge from the NedCar plant in Born was a Mitsubishi. However, Volvo introduced its S40 and V40 in 1995. These were rugged, yet attractive medium-class models which quickly achieved success in several countries. Following a dispute with Audi over designations, Volvo introduced a new system of naming its cars, the Dutch products being the first examples. In the new system, ‘S’ stands for ‘Saloon’ (or ‘Sedan’), while ‘V’ stands for ‘Versatility’ and ‘C’ for ‘Coupé’ and ‘Convertible’. The figures represent the model size.

BTCC activities continued in 1995, now with the Volvo 850 saloon, and with significant success.

After many years of work devoted to the collection of Volvo’s many rarities under one roof, the Volvo Museum opened at Arendal, near Gothenburg.

TWR (Tom Walkinshaw Racing), the British engineering company, which had been Volvo’s partner in its competition activities, also became its partner when Volvo decided to reopen the Uddevalla plant for the joint production of coupés and convertibles. A jointly owned company known as AutoNova was formed (with Volvo Car Corporation holding 51% and TWR 49%).

Tuve Johannesson was appointed president of Volvo Car Corporation.

1996

ELEGANT C70 COUPÉ

The Volvo C70 Coupé was unveiled to a highly enthusiastic public. Many observers considered the car to be the most attractive ever built by Volvo.

However, competition for this distinction appeared towards the end of the year when another beauty, the Volvo C70 Convertible, was launched.

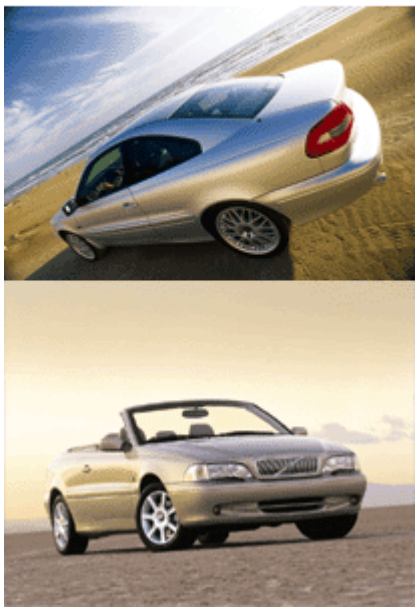
Production of the Volvo 440/460 was discontinued after 700,000 examples had been built. The Volvo 480 had been phased out the year before after 80,000 cars had been produced.

The BiFuel – a car designed to run on both biogas/natural gas and petrol – was a new variant of the 850. The model already complied with the emission control limits due to come into force in California in the year 2000.

Another new product was the Volvo 850 AWD (All Wheel Drive), the company’s first four-wheel drive car.

The Volvo 850 was renamed – and also underwent a total renewal with 1,800 new parts – in conjunction with the new system of designations. The model was now known as the Volvo S70 and the estate version as the V70. The 960 models also became known as the Volvo S90 and Volvo V90 during the last two years of their existence.

The 10 millionth Volvo car – a dark-green Volvo 960 Royal – left the assembly line at the Malaysian plant in September 1996.",1,"Övre: Volvo C70 coupé – ansedd som den vackraste Volvon någonsin\nedre: Volvo C70 cabriolet – utmanade snart coupén om skönhetspriset","Top: The Volvo C70 was regarded as the most beautiful model in the company’s history\nBottom: The Volvo C70 Convertible was soon challenging the Coupé in the beauty stakes



1997

CROSS COUNTRY A NEW VOLVO CONCEPT

The Cross Country quickly became a new concept, especially in the USA, with the launch of the Volvo V70 XC. Volvo now offered an extremely wide range of cars – from the S40/V40, with a number of engine options up to 200 hp, to the S70/V70, with even more variants and engines rated up to an impressive 250 hp in the R version. The range was completed by the four-wheel drive Cross Country and the top-of-the-range C70.

Leif Johansson became president of the Volvo Group and CEO.

‘Soul of the brand’ was the slogan used by Volvo Cars to describe its philosophy and its vision of the future.",0,"Cross Country blev ett nytt begrepp i bilvärlden när Volvo V70 XC introducerades 1997","The Cross Country introduced a new concept to the motoring world when the Volvo V70 XC appeared in 1997

1998

VOLVO S80 – 'WORLD'S SAFEST CAR'

Introduced in May 1998, the Volvo S80 was a miracle of safety, comfort and innovative engineering. The T6 was powered by the six-in-line engine from Skövde, equipped with twin turbos and developing an awesome 272 hp. The Volvo S80 was the first car to be supplied with an environmental product declaration (EPD) certified by Lloyd's. Nevertheless, the standard of safety was the most important attribute of the Volvo S80. World firsts included the inflatable curtain (IC), essentially an airbag to protect the occupants, both front and rear, in a lateral collision, and WHIPS, an anti-whiplash system used in the front seats to significantly reduce the risk of whiplash injury from rear-end impacts. The electrical and electronics system was among the most advanced in automotive history. In its very first year, the Volvo S80 received several awards for its attractiveness and safety.

The last rear-wheel drive Volvo left the assembly line at the beginning of 1998, when the Volvo S90/V90 and Volvo 940 were discontinued. All Volvos since then have been equipped with front-wheel or all-wheel drive. This also signalled the end of production of the 'red' cast-iron engine in Skövde.

In 1998, Volvo and Mitsubishi bought the Dutch government's one-third share of the NedCar plant.

The model range was now wider than ever, with a generous range of engine options in all model series, as well as saloons and V-line models with numerous versions of four-wheel drive. The range was topped by the Volvo V 70 in a Cross Country version.

The assembly plant in Halifax, Canada was closed.

1999

SWEDISH 'CROWN JEWEL' SOLD TO FORD

At 4:06 p.m on 8 March 1999, Chairman Ingvar Gullnäs brought his gavel down at the Group's AGM at the Liseberg Hall in Gothenburg. This was the moment when Volvo Car Corporation passed into the ownership of the Ford Motor Company for a price of SEK50 billion. Although there was tangible dismay among the 1,200 shareholders, all understood the necessity of selling what was regarded as a Swedish 'crown jewel'. Since then, Ford has managed Volvo Cars in a responsible manner.

Volvo's medium-class cars were finally introduced in the USA when the Volvo S40 and V40 were shown at the Detroit Motor Show.

The PremAir® 'ozone eater' was introduced in the Volvo S80. This consists of a catalytic coating on the radiator which converts ground-level ozone in the incoming air into oxygen.

2000

THE NEW VOLVO V70 AND VOLVO V70XC ARE INTRODUCED

The year got under way with first deliveries of the new Volvo V70. This all-new estate car quickly became a huge success. From the nimble 140 bhp petrol version, via the economical D5 diesel version with its 149 bhp turbodiesel to the massively powerful and fast T5 powered by its 250 bhp turbo petrol engine – they all became firm favourites among car owners on many markets.

The new Volvo V70XC (later renamed the Volvo XC70) also took the market by storm. The new version had a far tougher and sportier appeal than the previous Cross Country model it replaced. The important US market, in particular, appreciated this more agile type of estate car with its excellent off-tarmac abilities. The sporty Volvo S60 saloon was unveiled the same year. Both cars were soon available with a series of engine options, including petrol engines from 140 to 250 hp and a 149-hp turbo diesel.

Hans-Olov Olsson, a Volvo veteran with 34 years of service, was appointed president of Volvo Cars.

HM Carl XVI Gustaf inaugurated the Volvo Car Safety Centre – the most outstanding facility of its type in the automotive industry – at Torslanda.

The Accident Research Team at Volvo Cars celebrated 30 years of existence The dedicated work of its personnel has saved many human lives and alleviated the severity of accident injuries.

Volvo Cars bought TWR’s holding in AutoNova, Uddevalla, becoming the exclusive owner of both the development and production of the Volvo C70.

The Volvo Performance Concept Car (PCC) was shown in Paris. A variant of the Volvo S60, this was a veritable ‘bomb’ developing 300 hp, and endowed with sportier and more dynamic characteristics than any Volvo ever before.

2001

FIRST VOLVO-DEVELOPED DIESEL

Developed and produced in Skövde, the D5, the first diesel engine of VCC's own design, received excellent reviews. The unit employs state-of-the-art technology to achieve high performance and low fuel consumption. Developing 163 hp, the engine is light, powerful and fuel-efficient at one and the same time!

The Volvo S60 AWD was introduced. In the new model, the viscous coupling used earlier was replaced by a refined, electronic Haldex coupling, which affords faster and more precise four-wheel drive.

Volvo sold its Volvia insurance subsidiary to the if insurance company.

Volvo showed two extremely interesting concept cars at the Detroit Motor Show in January. The first of these – the Adventure Concept Car (ACC) – was a safety car of the SUV type, and was packed with new features in terms of electronics, materials and mechanics. Known as the Safety Concept Car (SCC), the second was a relatively small car with new safety features in three areas – good visibility (through the A-post!), personal security and a safety system which is deployed in the event of an accident.

A third concept vehicle known as the Performance Concept Car 2 (PCC2), was shown in Paris later in the year. This was a V-line model based on the V70, with the performance of the previous year's PCC.

In September, the starting gun went in Southampton for the Volvo Ocean Race. Sponsored jointly by Volvo Cars and the Volvo Group, this was the biggest sponsored event in Volvo's entire history.

2002

VOLVO ENTERS SUV SEGMENT

The long-awaited Volvo XC90 – Volvo's first true SUV (Sport Utility Vehicle) – was unveiled in Detroit. The Volvo XC90 accommodates seven people, all with the same high standard of protection. A unique stabilisation system known as RSC (Roll Stability Control), which interacts with the car's ordinary stability system (DSTC), contributes to this by providing protection against rollover. Should the car nevertheless overturn, an efficient safety system known as ROPS (Rollover Protection System) intervenes to prevent the occupants from impact with the roof and sides of the car. The Volvo XC90 is obviously equipped with four-wheel drive and is available with the option of a 200 or 272 hp petrol turbo, or a 163-hp turbo diesel.

2002 saw the Volvo V70XC change name to Volvo XC70, making it part of the same family of cars as the Volvo XC90.

The Volvo Cars Adventure Concept Car 2 (ACC2) was shown in Geneva. Based on the Volvo V70, this is a sporty activity car which is intended mainly for winter use and which demonstrates the extremely high potential of the Cross Country concept for the future. The ACC2 concept also provides a pointer to the technology of the future, particularly in terms of the use of smart and advanced on-board IT solutions for communications and information exchange.

Two jubilee models, a V40 and a V70 – both in a silver finish and decorated with special jubilee badges – were introduced for the company's75th anniversary."

2003

NEW VOLVO S40 AND VOLVO V50 ARE INTRODUCED

The year started with the Volvo XC90 receiving the most prestigious award on the American market. A jury consisting of leading motoring journalists chose the Volvo XC90 as the “North American Truck of the Year 2003”.

The Volvo S80 was fitted with a version of the R-concept’s advanced FOUR-C chassis and for the first time, the Volvo S80 was offered with AWD.

The new Volvo S40 was introduced and it is somewhat shorter, wider and taller than its predecessor. The exterior puts the emphasis on sporty, dynamic appeal and the interior has an entirely new design language, but it is all clearly anchored in Scandinavian heritage. The Volvo S40 is available with a very wide range of engines, with 5-cylinder units featuring power outputs from 140 bhp all the way to 220 bhp. The new engines are significantly improved, even as regards environmental compatibility. The Volvo S40 caters very well for safety, with an entirely new patented frontal structure featuring several crumple zones. The body is almost 68% more torsionally rigid than before and side-impact protection is of the same type as found on Volvo’s larger models. As regards the environment, materials and processes have been chosen to reduce risks to a minimum. 85% of the car’s weight is recyclable, and recycled material is used in the manufacture of some of the car’s interior components. The new Volvo S40 is fitted as standard with a pollen filter.

The Volvo V50, which was unveiled at the end of 2003, is a new sports wagon that replaces the Volvo V40. Both the new S40 and the V50 are manufactured in Volvo’s factory in Ghent, Belgium.

In 2003, Volvo presented a concept model called the VCC, Versatility Concept Car – an estate car in the premium class. The exterior echoes clear Volvo tradition but at the same time points the way ahead to possible developments in the future. The VCC has a strong Volvo identity both in the pronounced waistline and in the stance of the front with its grille and the V-shaped bonnet. The VCC features a number of radical new solutions, not least as regards comfort and environmental suitability. The headlamps, for instance, are of the “Static Bending Light” type with three lamp units that swing to follow the car’s movements. The roof is equipped with solar cells that produce energy for the VAAC (Volvo Ambient Air Cleaner) system. This is a system that continuously cleans the interior cabin air, even when the engine is switched off. There is an aluminium centre console that runs the entire length of the interior, and all the controls are fitted here. The front part of this console links visually with the console fitted in the new Volvo S40. The luggage compartment features a load floor that slides in and out on electric motors at the touch of a button.