



THE CAPITAL LETTER

Quarterly journal of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia ACT Branch Incorporated
Serving the Australian Capital Region



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DEDICATED TO ROLLS-ROYCE & BENTLEY ENTHUSIASTS

Autumn 2025



ASF13836

1985 Silver Spirit

David & Linda Neely



From the Branch President

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Fifteen members were able to enjoy participating in our recent Sunday lunch run to the Loaded Dog Hotel in Tarago on 4th May (see page 4) but unfortunately, the planned mid-week “cars ’n’ coffee” run to Bungendore on 21st May had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers. Both Sunday and mid-week runs have proven popular in the past because they have been organised as a result of member surveys – those who couldn’t make the Sunday runs, were usually able to make the mid-week runs instead.

We had ten members for the Sunday lunch run to the Berkelouw Book Barn restaurant in Berrima on 15th June (see page 8).

I believe there were six A.C.T. members present at the recent Federal Rally in Newcastle and that despite the heavens opening up, the Rally was a great success. I’m pleased to say that our A.C.T. member Graham Lawrence’s 1965 Bentley S3 Continental Flying Spur BC96XE won the Bentley Trophy in the Federal Concours. It is also very gratifying to announce the awarding of Honorary Life Membership to Ian Irwin OAM. Ian was an instigator and founding member of this A.C.T. Branch back in the early 1980s and he and his late wife Ida have been active Branch stalwarts ever since. Both members deserve our congratulations on their respective awards – adding to my regular claim that “the A.C.T. Branch always punches above its weight”.

A substantial majority of members expressed their preference regarding receiving a hard copy of *The Capital Letter* vs an electronic version and a resultant reduction in your membership fees. This is your first electronic-only edition.

Courtesy of Ian & Tina Oliver within Ollie’s Garage, we trialled “video conferencing” of the April meeting which proved that it is easily achievable. So, you are all encouraged to participate in future Branch meetings which will likewise be available “by Zoom”.

On a slightly personal note, I have now completed the necessary recce for the 2025 SMARTing to the SILOs rally from 7th-10th October. Details will be published in PRAECLARUM, or you can contact me directly.

Until next issue, happily proceeding!
Peter Hyland



Left: Pioneer member Ian Irwin OAM (left) is presented with his Honorary Life Membership certificate by the President during the June General Meeting. Photograph by the Editor.

Front Cover: David & Linda Neely brought their 1985 Silver Spirit ASF13836 to the Book Barn event in Berrima. See also pages 9 to 11. Photograph by the Editor.

From the Editor

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The most momentous news for this edition of *The Capital Letter*, that may not yet have percolated through to all members by other means, is that our pioneer member Ian Irwin has been elected Honorary Life Member. This is an Australia-wide honour, awarded in this instance for reasons set out on the previous page by our President and to which it would be superfluous for me to attempt to add, other than to offer my congratulations and to express my pride in our Club which has been so enhanced.

On 15th June we had a Sunday lunch run to Berkelouw Book Barn near Berrima, organised by Peter Hyland whose ancestry is connected to this place and the surrounding Bendooley Estate. See Peter's write-up on page 8.

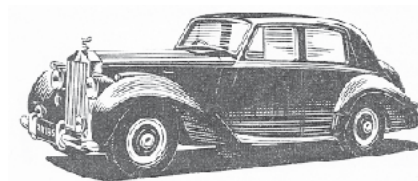
Unfortunately I must report two losses from the Club. We bid a fond farewell to Norman Lee who notified us that he does not intend renewing his membership, citing the sale of his car and other factors, at the same time sending his regards to the Club. Also, our condolences to the family of Matthew Swift who passed away some weeks before this edition went to "press".

In the above paragraph the word "press" appears in quotation marks to express the fact that *The Capital Letter* will no longer actually go to press as such but will be sent to members electronically, as well as published on our website:

rrocact.org.au

A substantial majority of our members expressed approval of this change, which has had the benefit of significantly reducing our annual membership subscription. A number of years' archived editions of *The Capital Letter* are also on the website.

Martin Bennett



Branch Events Calendar

Members should please note that dates and details of events listed here are in some cases indicative only and are subject to change. Timely notice of each forthcoming event is provided by group email and/or text message but in the event of any doubt please contact the Secretary or President to confirm – contact details on the back cover of each edition of *The Capital Letter*.

AUGUST

Wednesday 6th August: Extraordinary General Meeting to amend the Constitution followed by the **Annual General Meeting**, 7.00 p.m., 72 Gladstone Street, Fyshwick

Sunday 10th August: Lunch run to a venue to be announced by group email.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 14th September: Lunch run to a venue to be announced by group email.

Wednesday 24th September: Mid-week 'Cars & Coffee' morning, venue to be announced by group email.

OCTOBER

Tuesday 7th to Friday 10th October: SMARTing to the SILOs, the annual rally of the Spirit, Mulsanne and Related Types Register. All members and all car models welcome. See the next PRAECLARUM and/or contact the President.

Sunday 19th October: Lunch run to a venue to be announced by group email.



Above: Bryce & Marcia Ronning's 1949 Silver Wraith Hooper touring limousine WFC67.

Lunch Run to the Loaded Dog, Tarago

Sunday 4th May

Below: Sonny Pirotta chose his fine 1981 Bentley Mulsanne BSB03714 to attend this event.





Above: Left to right: Chris O'Rourke, and Peter Hyland accompanied by a family member.

Right: Accomplished artist Bryce Ronning found one of his watercolours hanging in the pub.





Above: Clockwise from left: Sonny Pirotta, Ian Oliver, Tina Oliver, Garry Scorgie.

Below: Martin & Manuela Bennett's 1960 Bentley S2 B25CT.





Above: Ian & Tina Oliver's 1987 Silver Spirit ASH20330.

Below: Chris & Narelle's 1957 Silver Cloud SED51.





Above: Graham Lawrence's 1997 Bentley Continental R BBW63021 at the Berkelouw Book Barn.

Lunch Run to Berkelouw Book Barn, Berrima N.S.W.

Sunday 15th June

By Peter Hyland

After some unfortunate withdrawals, ten of us enjoyed an early winter lunch run to Berrima in the renowned Southern Highlands. This area in general, depicts a tapestry of English-style colonial estates incorporating mansions secluded behind imposing hedges, gardens, orchards, stud farms and laneways, but in an Australian setting.

More than two centuries ago, one of these English style estates – the Bendooley Estate – was part of a large tract of land granted to Sir William Henry Moore by Governor Lachlan Macquarie. William Cordeaux had been appointed the Deputy Assistant Commissioner General for the Colony of New South Wales in 1817 and he arrived here the following year to take up his appointment. Cordeaux then married Moore's sister Anne the following year in 1818, and upon their marriage, Moore passed the Bendooley Estate onto Anne (a nice wedding present!). Anne and William Cordeaux are my maternal Great Great Great Grandparents

and their Bendooley Estate remained in the Cordeaux family until 1919, when it was sold to Sir James Murdoch.

Parts of the original estate can still be seen today, with the historic Stone Cottage, which was built in 1860. A short stroll from the Book Barn lies the Estate's Georgian homestead built from convict-hewn stone, and the stately European trees and the cool-climate gardens lie across the grounds.

Almost sixty years would pass, before a fifth-generation antiquarian book dealer in Sydney, Leo Berkelouw, enters the story. With a thriving book business that had started as a humble proposition in Holland in the early 1800s, and then in need of much larger premises, Leo purchased the property and relocated his family and books to the Bendooley Estate, and so began the inception of today's Berkelouw Book Barn.



***Above:** Bryce & Marcia Ronning arriving in their 1949 Silver Wraith WFC67. As is very often the case, this was the earliest car on the event.*

***Below:** Mike Mulvihill in his 1961 Silver Cloud II SZD313.*





Above: Our front cover car, the 1985 Silver Spirit ASF13836 of David & Linda Neely.

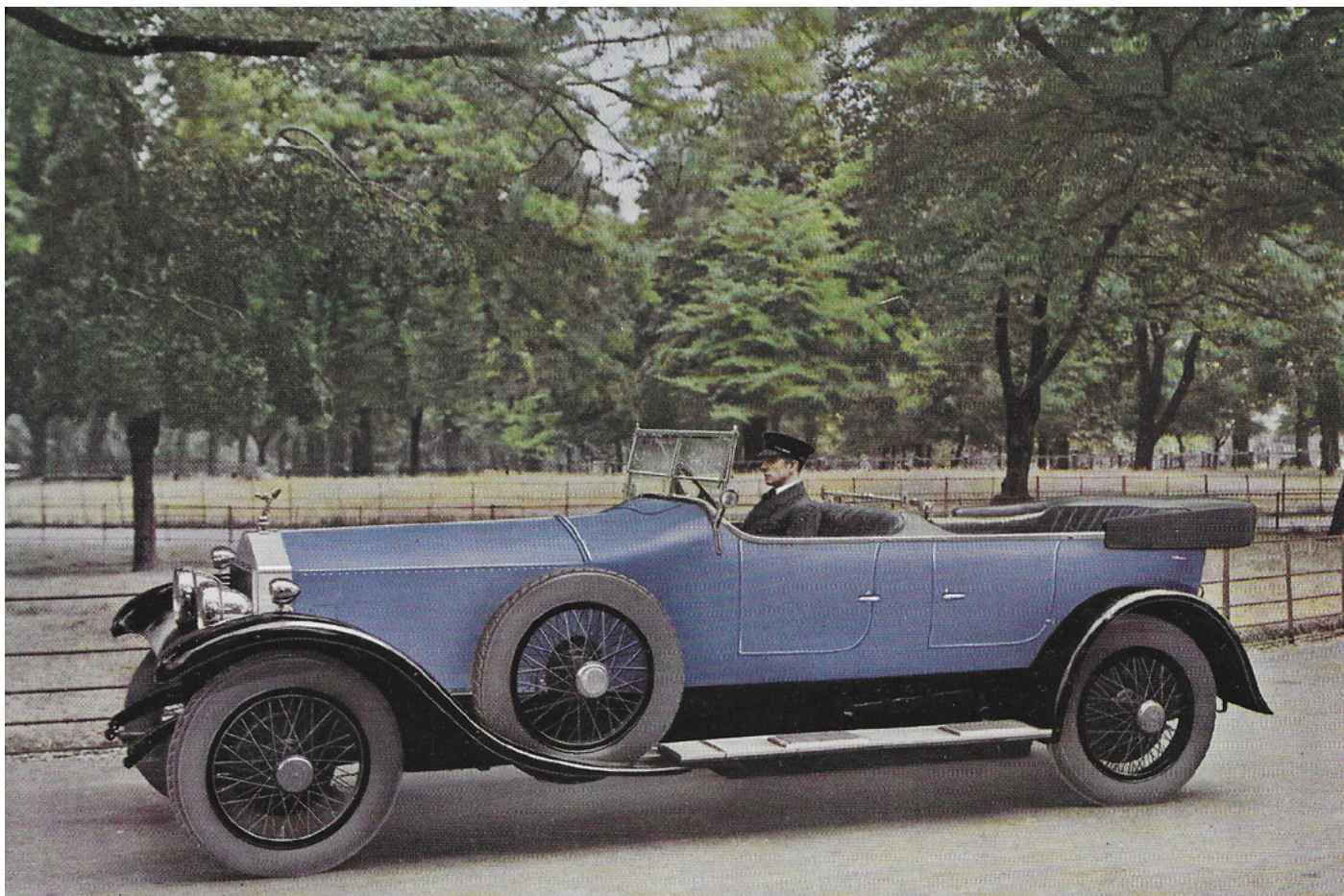
Below: From left to right: Peter Hyland, Graham Lawrence and David Neely.





Above: The Editorial Bentley S2 B25CT.





Above: The superb proportions of the New Phantom were emphasised when really good tourer coachwork was fitted as in this case. This one is almost certainly by Barker. From a contemporary Rolls-Royce Ltd catalogue photograph.

Rolls-Royce Phantom Centenary

By Martin Bennett

A century ago, in 1925, the Rolls-Royce 40/50 h.p. model caught up with its smaller stablemate, the Twenty Horsepower, in respect of its all-overhead valve engine. At the time of its introduction the new 40/50 model was named the 'New Phantom', though after its subsequent replacement by the Phantom II the designation Phantom I gained currency for the original Phantom model. In effect it was really a new engine in an existing chassis, as the Phantom's chassis differed only in some details from that of the Silver Ghost, which remained in production for a short time alongside the new model.

Returning to the Phantom's 7.7 litre six-cylinder engine, the bore was reduced from $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches of the Silver Ghost to $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The fact that the stroke was lengthened from $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches to $5\frac{1}{2}$ emphasised the underlying absurdity of the 'horsepower tax', given that the new model's significant power output increase had the effect of reducing the annual road tax! That was because the tax took into account the bore dimension but was not concerned with the stroke. The Phantom engine in fact

produced 33% more power than that of the Silver Ghost at the same rpm (2,250).

In addition to providing such a substantial power increase, there was a conspicuously handsome under-bonnet appearance, with every component beautifully finished including the most obvious new feature, the polished black enamelled valve rocker cover.

Like on the Silver Ghost, the four-speed gearbox was separate from the engine, with a new disc clutch replacing the Silver Ghost's cone clutch and with a right-hand gear lever as before.

Such a powerful car needed very powerful brakes, and the Phantom provided that with Rolls-Royce's much-vaunted "Six Brakes" system powered by the famous friction-disc servo that had first appeared on the Silver Ghost at the end of 1923.

As was the case with the Phantom's predecessor,

it was more remarkable for the manner of its performance than for the performance itself. *The Autocar* reported in its May 22nd 1925 edition that the Phantom “will run quite comfortably at 70 m.p.h. without giving the slightest suggestion that any part of the chassis is working hard”, and “at a speed of 40 or 50 m.p.h. gives a suggestion that it is not moving by mechanical means at all”.

From 1926 the Rolls-Royce of America factory in Springfield, Massachusetts also commenced manufacture of the New Phantom, and that continued for two years after the New Phantom had been replaced by the Phantom II in England, after which Rolls-Royce of America production ceased.

Rolls-Royce New Phantom abridged technical specification

Engine

Six cylinders in-line, bore 4¼ inches, stroke 5½ inches, cubic capacity 7,668 c.c.

Overhead valves, single gear-driven camshaft.

Seven-bearing crankshaft.

Royce two-jet carburettor plus starting carburettor for positive cold starting.

Cast iron cylinder head (1928: introduction of aluminium cylinder head).

Dual ignition systems with two spark plugs per cylinder; one

system by battery, coil and distributor, the other by magneto.

Chassis

Channel-section side-members with tubular cross-members. Wheelbase 12ft 0in. (standard) or 12ft 6½ in (long wheelbase chassis). 21-inch well-base wire wheels with positive locking device in the hubs. Steel artillery wheels available at extra cost.

Clutch

Single-plate clutch built into the engine flywheel and enclosed in a casing bolted to the rear of the crankcase.

Gearbox

Four-speed gearbox with right-hand change lever.

‘Springfield’ Phantom I cars built in Springfield, Massachusetts: left-hand drive with centre gear-change.

Brakes

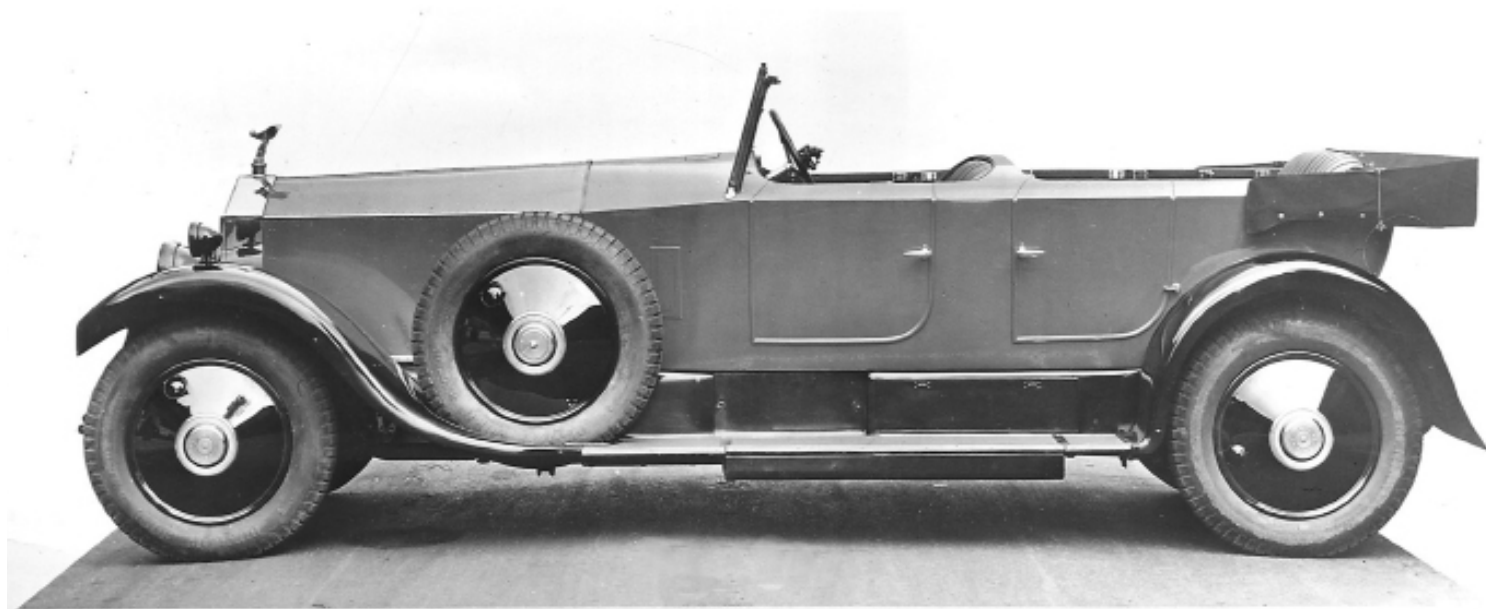
Four-wheel brakes of Rolls-Royce patent design powered by a gearbox-driven friction-disc servo, with an additional pair of drums at the rear for the hand brake.

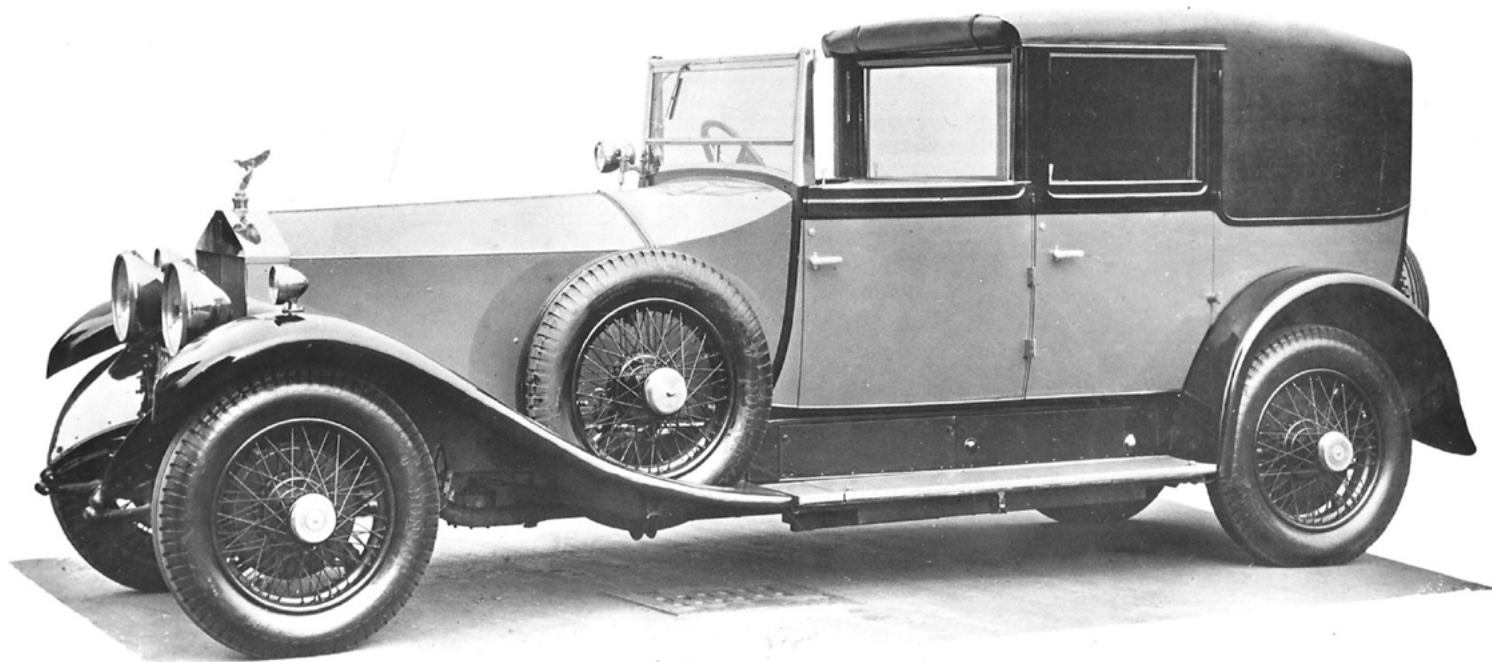
Suspension

Front: semi-elliptic leaf springs and hydraulic shock absorbers of Rolls-Royce design and manufacture; rear: cantilever leaf springs with friction dampers.



Below: *Tourer coachwork was generally the lowest-priced of the body types offered at the time, though nowadays tourers fetch the highest prices in the collector car market.*



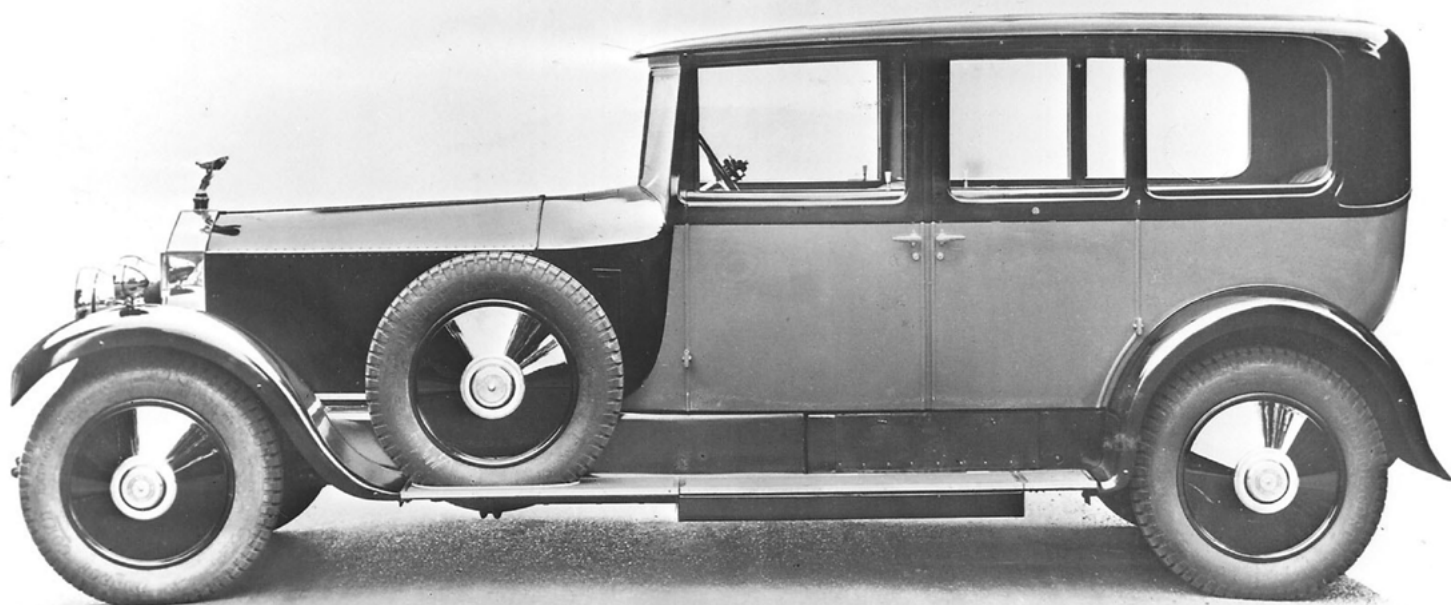


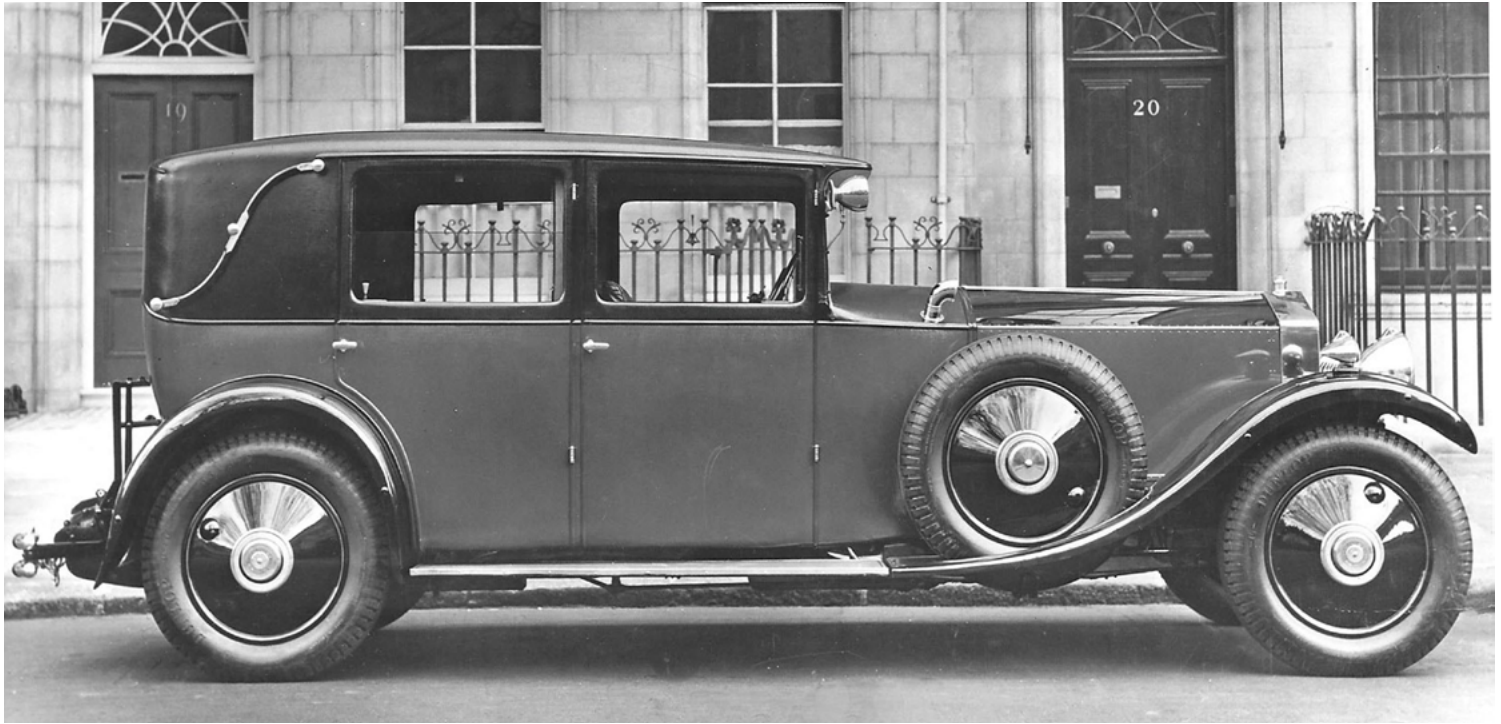
Above: This handsome cabriolet is of a design earlier fitted to Silver Ghost chassis, continuing in popularity for the Phantom, with most built by coachbuilders Barker and Hooper.



Left: A considerable number of Phantom Is came to Australia, both with coachwork and in chassis-only form for local coachbuilders to build and fit bodies, which represented a saving in import duty. This is 109MC, which arrived as a chassis a hundred years ago and was fitted with saloon coachwork by Sydney coachbuilder Jackson, Jones & Collins.

Below: This enclosed limousine by Park Ward shows the 'Ace' discs that were often fitted to protect the wire wheels.





Above: Lighter fully-closed saloon coachwork was offered by several coachbuilders, in this instance H.J. Mulliner.

Below: The landaulette, with an opening hood over the rear seat, was one of the formal body styles offered by several coachbuilders – in this instance Hooper. This example, on chassis 50OR, was the subject of a superb, epic restoration by the late Jim Kelso (N.S.W.).





***Above:** Luke Drady's 1981 Silver Spirit ASB02236. It was obviously a very frosty morning!*

***Below:** There were three Bentley Arnages, two of which are seen here but none of which could be identified with certainty, as well as the Silver Shadow seen here, also unidentified.*

Battle of Waterloo

Sunday 22nd June

Photographs from Tina Oliver and Luke Drady





Above: Seen here alongside Luke's Silver Spirit is the third Bentley Arnage which your Editor believes to be member John Sheehy's car, though I cannot be certain.

Below: No mistaking this one! It is of course Ian & Tina Oliver's 1935 Bentley 3½-Litre Park Ward drophead coupé, B179CW.



Pictorial Feature

Photographs from the Editor's collection



*These photographs were chosen more or less at random, though each has something of particular interest. **Above** is the only photo I have ever seen of a Silver Dawn on the Crewe build line actually under construction. It also proves that the Silver Dawn was constructed on the same build line as the Bentley Mk VI. The photo **below** that I took at last year's R.R.E.C. Rally in England shows SZB27, a 1957 Silver Cloud with Hooper coachwork. Needless to say, very unlike the standard saloon.*





Above: This Silver Wraith, WGC56, has saloon coachwork by Park Ward. Its claim to fame is that it was entered in the 1950 Monte Carlo Rally by Mike Couper and his team, winning the Prix d'Honneur in the Concours d'Elegance held in Monte Carlo at the end of the Rally. The Bentley Mk VI **below** is believed to be B84HR, with two-door saloon coachwork by James Young, a Paris Salon (motor show) exhibit in 1950, which both dates and sets the location of the photograph.



Tailpiece . . .



Elegant tails at the Loaded Dog, Tarago, Sunday 4th May.



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