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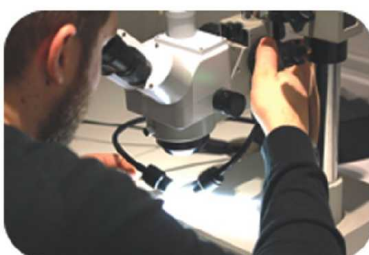
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## Making a special... special

I'll be the first to admit that the whole subject of Bentley specials is a controversial one. Usually employing the chassis and running gear of a MkVI or R-Type, there's been no shortage of such creations built over the last fifty years, though not every Bentley enthusiast appreciates using the chassis of an all-time classic and equipping it with non-standard bodywork.

I can't help feeling, however, that when it's done right – with handsome styling and an exceptionally high standard of finish – a Bentley-based special can be a delight. This was certainly the case with the Bentley Royale featured in this issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, a car with a very pleasing design and the kind of finish that justifies its six-figure price tag. Driving the John Barlow-built Bentley around some of the finest rural roads in North Wales was certainly a highlight for me. It also reinforced my view that when a special build is as well-designed and beautifully constructed as this, it surely deserves a place in the magazine. I hope you enjoy the feature – and, of course, I'd love to hear your views on the car itself.

This being the first issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* with a 2019 cover date, it's inevitable that thoughts are now turning to this year's centenary of Bentley. Needless to say, we'll have lots of Bentley coverage throughout the year, as well as a special one-off Bentley bookazine that we're launching during the summer. We'll bring you more details of that very exciting project in a future issue. Meanwhile, for details of the Bentley Drivers Club's activities for 2019 (including its biggest ever Concours d'Elegance), check out the report on page 60.

As usual, this issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* has plenty of variety on offer – from the pre-war splendour of a 1934 Rolls-Royce 20/25 Sports Saloon by Freestone & Webb, through to the 2003 high-speed dash from Malaga to Monte Carlo in the then new Bentley Continental GT. Bridging that seven-decade age gap is advice on buying a classic Corniche, an in-depth look at the Bentley Eight, an analysis of W.A. Robotham's fascinating career and much, much more. I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we've enjoyed putting it together.

## Paul Guinness

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# CONTENTS



36



43



64



90

## COVER STORY



### 12 CONTINENTAL ROAD TRIP

What was it like driving the new-for-2003 Bentley Continental GT for the first time? To find out, Ian Adcock took one from Malaga to Monte Carlo in just two days

## 22 NEW PRODUCTS

Check out this special Bentley sculpture, plus a high-quality flying jacket

## 50 YOUR SHOUT

It's your chance to have a say about all things Rolls-Royce and Bentley

## 60 THE CLUBHOUSE

All the latest event round-ups from the Bentley Drivers Club and Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club

## 80 NEXT ISSUE

Details of what's planned for the March/April issue of your favourite magazine

## 82 SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

The easy way to ensure *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* magazine is delivered to your door

## 86 PERSONAL CHOICE

Fancy seeing your classic Rolls-Royce or Bentley in the magazine? Here's how!

## 94 THE BIG PICTURE

We travel back six decades to Crewe, where Silver Cloud and S-series bodies are being checked

## REGULARS

### 6 UP FRONT

All the latest news and views from the world of Rolls-Royce and Bentley

### 18 MARKET WATCH

We bring you some of the most interesting auction results of recent times



# ROLLS-ROYCE & BENTLEY *driver*

"It's now easily capable of cruising comfortably all day... and will pull happily beyond 60mph to get past slower traffic"



24

## 96 CLASSIFIEDS

Advertise your cars and parts – free of charge!

## 98 THE FINAL PAGE

Our editor revisits a press release from 1999 – and some interesting sales figures

## FEATURES

### 24 ROLLS-ROYCE 20/25

For value and reliability, what's the best pre-war choice of today? The owner of this 20/25 by Freestone & Webb puts forward a convincing argument

### 32 SPECIALIST VISIT: MWS

We pay a visit to Motor Wheel Service to find out more about wire wheel care and restoration

### 36 BESPOKE BENTLEY

We get to experience a recently built MkVI-based Bentley special – complete with V8 power

### 43 THE CORNICHE COLLECTION

Help and guidance for anyone thinking of investing in a classic Corniche fixed-head or convertible

### 52 THE MEN BEHIND THE MARQUE

We take a look at W.A. Robotham's contribution to Rolls-Royce development in the 1930s and '40s

### 64 ENTRY-LEVEL NEWCOMER

The fascinating story of the Bentley Eight, the entry-level model aimed at younger buyers of the '80s

### 70 FROM THE ARCHIVES

Paul Guinness shows us more of his classic archives, revisiting favourite models via ads and brochures

### 75 AMERICAN GATHERING

We pay a visit to the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club's annual week-long American extravaganza

### 84 IT'S SHOWTIME!

If you missed the recent NEC Classic Motor Show, check out this full report

### 88 WE WERE THERE

Tony Spillane explains his involvement in reducing air intake noise levels on the Camargue

### 90 OUT OF AFRICA

The restoration tale of a very special Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith with royal connections



# CONTINENTAL GT RANGE EXPANDS

**B**entley has unveiled the 2019-model Continental GT Convertible in time for the marque's centenary year – and is already predicting major success for the all-new soft-top model. The roof itself is an impressive design, with Bentley quoting just 19 seconds for it to be deployed and stowed at speeds of up to 30mph. And with seven different fabric colours available,

including an authentic tweed finish for the first time, there's plenty of hood choice for prospective buyers.

The latest GT Convertible inevitably features Bentley's 626bhp 6.0-litre W12 engine, delivering a top speed of 207mph and a 0-60mph time of 3.7 seconds – effectively the same as the coupe version, despite the new Z-fold roof mechanism contributing to the newcomer's

significant overall weight of 2414kg.

Although the front end of the GT Convertible is the same as its hard-top cousin, the rear of the car receives numerous design tweaks. The absence of the coupé's retracting spoiler on the convertible means a restyled bootlid and modified corners above the rear lights, for example, with a combination of a wider lip and more concave surfaces all contributing to the car's downforce.

The GT Convertible gets broadly the same interior as the coupé, including a digital instrument panel and rotating display, plus a 12.3-inch touchscreen. The car has heated seats and steering wheel as before, plus wider neck-warmers and new heated armrests. Rear leg room is identical to that of the coupé, though boot space falls from 358 to 235 litres as part of its need to accommodate the hood when lowered.

According to Bentley, the latest Continental GT Convertible features a body-in-white structure that is stiffer and lighter than its predecessor, with a 5% improvement in torsional

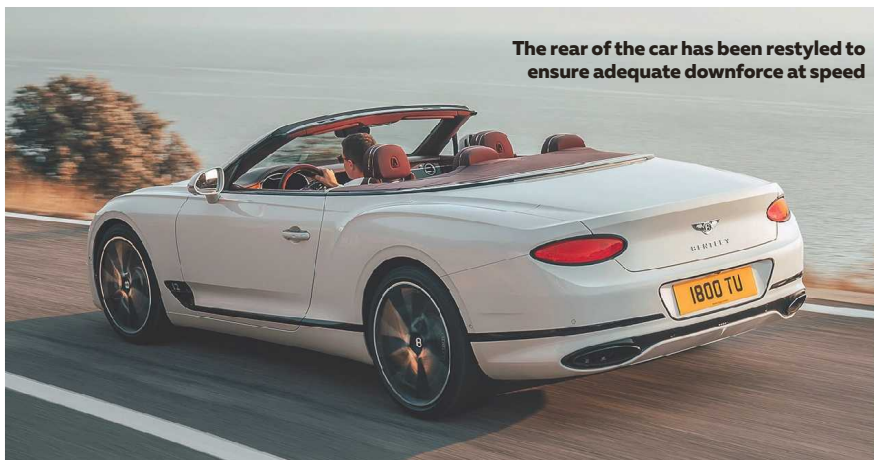


The high-spec folding hood is available in a choice of seven different colours

The latest GT Convertible offers the same 207mph top speed as the coupé







The rear of the car has been restyled to ensure adequate downforce at speed

rigidity despite a 20% reduction in structural weight. As with the coupé, the newcomer comes with a 48V electric active roll control system, active all-wheel-drive and a torque-vectoring-by-brake set-up.

Four driving modes are available, comprising Sport, Comfort, Bentley and Custom settings. Buyers also have the option of two different technology packs, with the City Specification featuring a traffic sign recognition and city braking system, while the Touring Specification includes adaptive cruise control, a head-up display and pre-sense braking.

Although V8 versions of both the coupé and soft-top are due to be released later in 2019, only the 6.0-litre Continental GT Convertible has been announced so far. Bentley has yet to confirm pricing, although a list

price roughly 10% higher than that of the £156,000 coupé seems likely.

At the time of the Continental GT Convertible's announcement, Adrian Hallmark – chairman and chief executive of Bentley Motors – commented: "We have been building luxury Grand Tourers since the company was founded in 1919 and, as we approach our centenary year, the Continental GT Convertible joins a highly acclaimed range – arguably the strongest and most technologically advanced portfolio of products the world has ever seen in one luxury brand." ■

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?** Are you a fan of the latest Continental GT Convertible? What do you think of Bentley's latest line-up and its direction of design? Whatever your thoughts, let us know via [rrb.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:rrb.ed@kelsey.co.uk).



The GT Convertible boasts wider neck-warmers as well as new heated armrests

## UNIQUE COLLABORATION

Two of the most famous names in luxury lifestyle – Rolls-Royce and Fabergé – have joined forces to create the Spirit of Ecstasy Fabergé Egg. It is the first time in history that an iteration of the Spirit of Ecstasy has ended up within a contemporary Fabergé Egg, with the design being conceived by Rolls-Royce designer Alex Innes and brought to life by Fabergé artisan Paul Jones.

The end result is what Rolls-Royce Motor Cars describes as a 'contemporary interpretation of one of the world's most fabled and prized possessions'. A team of seven craftspeople from Fabergé undertook the challenge of fabricating the design using the finest materials married with their extraordinary skill as artist jewellers. Design cues from Fabergé's heritage are woven into the intricate design, which stands at 160mm and weighs just 400g. The Egg rests on an engine-turned, hand-engraved, purple enamel guilloché base of 18 carat white gold.

The Spirit of Ecstasy Fabergé Egg recently premiered at the Goodwood headquarters of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, and will be on public display in Fabergé's London window until the end of December 2018.





## LATE-MODEL CORNICHE FROM P&A WOOD

One of the very last Rolls-Royce Corniche Fixed-Head Coupés by Mulliner Park Ward has come to market, coinciding with the buyer's guide in this issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*. First registered in October 1981, this superb looking example is currently being offered by P&A Wood at a tempting-sounding asking price of £43,500.

This Seychelles Blue survivor features a black Everflex roof and beige leather upholstery, and to date has covered just 71,000 miles. It comes with a comprehensive history and looks to be extremely well-preserved. Such a late-model hardtop Corniche is an unusual sight, and this example is likely to find an enthusiastic new custodian very soon. For more details, go online to [www.pa-wood.co.uk](http://www.pa-wood.co.uk) or call 01371 870848.



## NEW RECRUITS AT GOODWOOD

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars has announced that it is recruiting for 200 new positions, all based at the company's head office in West Sussex. The new roles will bring the number of employees to over 2000 for the first time, a six-fold increase on the original total when the company first opened at Goodwood in 2003.

The new roles are available across all skilled production areas – including Wood, Leather, Assembly, Test & Finish, Paint and Logistics – and the successful applicants will each undergo extensive training. Torsten Müller-Ötvös, CEO of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, commented on the company's latest recruitment drive: "This reflects not only the success of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars to date, but also our confidence in the future of our business. Rolls-Royce continues to strive for long-term sustainable growth and we remain fully committed to luxury manufacturing at our home here in Great Britain."

Rolls-Royce continues to experience increased demand across its model range in most of its global markets. In addition to strong sales of the latest Phantom, demand for Black Badge variants of the Dawn, Ghost and Wraith



surpassed expectations in 2018, while the Cullinan boasts an order book stretching well into 2019 – with the new model's first customer deliveries due in the first quarter of the year.

## CULLINAN IN THE CITY



H.R. Owen's famous London-based Rolls-Royce showroom recently hosted an exclusive drive day for its Cullinan deposit holders, gathering six examples of the new SUV at its Mayfair base. During the exclusive test drive experience, customers were invited to experience the Cullinan's 'Magic Carpet Ride' among the bustling streets of the capital.

Passengers were able to enjoy the

Cullinan's state-of-the-art infotainment system, as well as the vast array of controls for all the interior comforts – a list that includes massaging, cooling and heated seats, automated rear-passenger picnic tables, 'cinema' lighting features (including automatic rear curtains) and a central drinks console containing Rolls-Royce whisky glasses, a decanter, refrigerator and two champagne flutes.



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# CANADIAN CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE

Based in Kemble, about three hours' drive north of Toronto, is the annual Cobble Beach Concours d'Elegance, with the most recent event seeing ex-Mulliner Park Ward drawing office stalwart Ron Mitchell attending on behalf of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* – hailing it afterwards as 'one of top ten events of its type anywhere in the world'.

More than a hundred special cars were competing in 19 different classes, ranging in age from pre-1916 horseless carriages under 35hp through to European classics from the 1970s. The Cobble Beach catalogue described the judging process as follows: 'Learning how to judge a car is a life-long journey. It takes a keen eye and many hours of judging experience to acquire the necessary skills to become a good judge. Judges will have attended many judging seminars and judging schools. Diplomacy is also a key ingredient.'

Among the entrants in the Concours d'Elegance was a truly spectacular 1937 Bentley 4½ Litre Open Two-Seater Tourer, a unique example by the Carlton Carriage Company. Chassis number B55KU's first owner was Mr Gordon C. Wood of Weybridge, Surrey, who we can assume was an early motoring enthusiast thanks to him specifying the car 'for use in town and touring'. The Bentley went through two further owners in Britain before being shipped to the USA in 1966.

Dale Powers of Florida, the well-known and highly respected Bentley owner, restorer and driver, eventually acquired the 4½ Litre in 1993, carrying out a meticulous restoration of the car before selling it to Bill Jacobs six



**This unique Bentley 4½ Litre Open Two-Seater Tourer was built by the Carlton Carriage Company**



**Cobble Beach has become one of the most important Concours d'Elegance in Canada**

years later. The Bentley has since been refinished in Midnight Blue with a Saddle Tan hide interior, and these days it's owned by the Audrain Museum of Newport, Rhode Island.

Also on display at Cobble Beach was a 1931 Rolls-Royce 20/25 with coachwork by Park Ward, a car that was shipped to Canada by its original owner in 1974. After the owner died, the car was stored in a barn near Orillia (a two-hour drive from Toronto) before finally being sold to Bob Thompson.

The 20/25's full-blown restoration eventually began in 1998 and took ten years to complete. The end result is a beautifully finished example of a highly sought after Rolls-Royce.

Many thanks to the organisers of the Cobble Beach Concours d'Elegance for inviting us along. For more details of this must-see annual event, go to [www.cobblebeachconcours.com](http://www.cobblebeachconcours.com) where you'll find full details of the 2019 contest, set to take place over the weekend of September 14th and 15th. ■



**This wonderfully restored 1931 Rolls-Royce 20/25 features coachwork by Park Ward**



**It took ten years to complete the 20/25's high-quality restoration**



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# CONTINENTAL ROAD TRIP

What was it like driving the new-for-2003 Bentley Continental GT for the first time? Our contributor recalls an epic two-day drive from Malaga to Monte Carlo, in hot pursuit of racing legend Derek Bell

WORDS: IAN ADCOCK PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK DIMBLEBY FOR BENTLEY MOTORS

It was mid-morning and Malaga airport was thronging with tourists arriving for last-minute holidays on Spain's Mediterranean coast, a final opportunity before northern Europe succumbed to winter's cold, clammy clasp. Taxi drivers jockeyed their diesel SEATs for position, horns blaring, though nobody took any notice; it was like watching the aimless darting of a flock of noisy chicks. Then suddenly, out of the shadows, its sleek silver coachwork

caught by a stray shaft of sunlight, the Continental GT came in to view, silencing the horns with its presence. It drew up in front of me, its engine ticking over with a burbling menace.

This first drive of the Bentley Continental GT had been a long time coming. There had been nearly two years of teases in what was one of the most protracted launch campaigns for a new car, with the hype increasing following Bentley's one-two victory

at Le Mans earlier in 2003. Now though, the moment had come: by Sunday night, when I'd reach Monte Carlo with 1100 miles of motoring under my belt, I'd know whether what I saw before me was truly worthy of the Bentley heritage and badge.

I had already seen the new car at numerous motor shows around the world, but I was still surprised by how relatively low it appeared, measuring just 55 inches in height.





It was an impression accentuated as I slipped behind the steering wheel for the first time, realising just how close the Continental GT's occupants sit to road. (Not that the Continental was as low slung as some other high-performance cars of the time, of course; but the Bentley driving stance had traditionally been more imperious, with driver and passengers surveying other road users from loftier chairs.)

This being my first experience of the Continental GT, the plan was to drive from Malaga to Monte Carlo in just two days, including the necessary stops for photography. Back in 2003, there weren't many cars I would relish doing that in, but it was a worthy test to see if the latest Bentley lived up to its Gran Turismo moniker. And, I have to say, it's a test that it failed in one vital aspect: packaging.

With my 74-inch frame behind the steering wheel, there was scant room for a medium-sized adult behind me, unless they practised yoga and could put their feet somewhere other than beneath my seat (where there was no space). Essentially then, the Continental GT was a three-seater for long hauls; around-town commuting with friends would be achievable, but not without some discomfort and compromise by all four occupants.

Up front, however, things were dramatically better. With a fully adjustable seat and steering column, you'd have to be Quasimodo not to find an ideal driving position. From where I was sitting, gripping the thick-rimmed



**The high-speed dash to Monte Carlo proved to be a memorable experience**

steering wheel (which allegedly took six trimmers 18 hours to stitch by hand), I noted that the interior was swathed in leathers, veneers and carpeting. Sadly, the foot-tingling luxury of sheepskin matting wasn't included in the test car I was about to experience, but it would have been churlish of me to complain.

The Continental GT's fascia architecture was faintly reminiscent of the Winged B's upper form, which combined with the full-length centre console that divided the cabin into individual quarters for its occupants. The traditional Bentley styling cues (like the bulls-eye air vents with their organ stops to control airflow) were still there, even if more for show than go. And

then, of course, there was the Breitling analogue clock in the upper fascia.

The chromed controls had knurled edges to them, providing an extra sensory delight to their coldness. With such attention to detail, it was therefore a shame that the starter button was such a cheap, black plastic affair that, even on right-hand drive models, was located for left-hand drive. It should be handed. Oh, and another minor moan: why didn't the fuel filler cap have either a retainer on the lid or a rubber flap to protect the paintwork?

Amidst all the wood 'n' leather 'n' carpeting, there was nary a VAG component in view, although the gearshift surround looked uncannily like that found in Audis and VW Phaetons of the time, while the key fob was pure Audi. If I had just spent around £110,000 (the approximate list price of the Continental GT at launch) on a Bentley, I wouldn't want to explain to polo club rivals that though the key fob *looked* like an Audi A3's, I *really* owned a Bentley. As they say, the devil is in the detail.

## HIT THE ROAD

With its 9x19-inch wheels and steamroller-sized (well, almost) 275/40 tyres, the first impression you might have expected from the GT was a ride that picked up every crack in the road, every nuance in surfacing, and resonate that back into the cabin or through the steering – but not so. As I headed the Bentley out of Malaga towards the Spanish hinterland, it »



## FEATURE CAR

### BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT



swiftly became apparent that the car had massive reserves of comfort. The first and enduring impression, however, was the weight of the steering; don't misunderstand me, the steering didn't require Californian Governor-sized muscles, but I was conscious that I was steering a 2.3-tonne car.

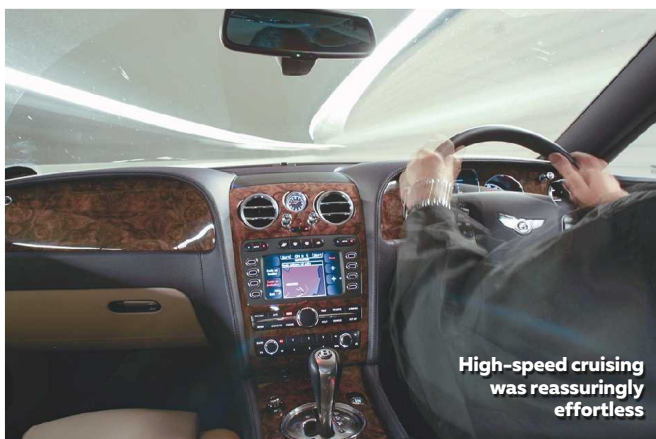
The Continental GT's self-levelling air-system suspension was inherited from the Audi A8, albeit tuned specifically for and by Bentley. Whichever setting was opted for, the ride was on the firm side, increasingly so once 'Sport' was selected; and although this enabled swifter motoring through twisty sections, it was at the expense of ride comfort, with the occasional 'kerrump' as surface joints were encountered. For most of the highway dash to Monte Carlo, I left the car in 'Comfort' mode, but through the high-speed swoops of Spain's E15 I switched back to 'Sport' to minimise body movement – which was always well damped and controlled – and to sharpen turn-in on sweeping bends, which were regularly attacked at 150mph or more thanks to the pace set by Derek Bell up ahead in an identical car.



Le Mans legend Derek Bell led the epic road trip



The 6.0-litre engine produced 551bhp at 6100rpm



High-speed cruising was reassuringly effortless



The heavy rain proved challenging at times





Like all Bentleys, the GT felt out of place on tight, winding country lanes, almost bursting them at the seams; and so it wasn't until more open roads appeared, where we could see through the sweeps and apexes, that the confidence was there to put the hammer down. For anyone doing this for the first time, I'd say savour the moment – because it does come as something of a surprise.

The enduring appeal of previous Bentleys was always their prodigious amounts of torque, which appeared as if from tick-over and carried on locomotive-like until the red line. This time, however, there was a modern 6.0-litre double-vee 12 engine (not a true W12 as in old aero engines) with twin turbos crammed under the bonnet, producing 551bhp at 6100rpm and 480lb.ft. of torque at 1600rpm. This was connected to a six-speed auto 'box with lock-up on each ratio, so that each change was as satisfyingly crisp as a manual without the auto's usual 'slush' affect. There were, in fact, three options for gear changing: fully automatic or Tiptronic-style via either the steering-mounted paddles or the stick shift. I preferred the latter, as I found that the left-hand paddle could at times be confused with the headlight flasher on the indicator stalk.

## SWIFT PROGRESS

Though the roads I'd experienced initially were spectacular, they were

also just a bit too switchback for any heroics. Eventually, however, they opened out into a mirror-smooth, three-lane black top that disappeared across burnt-brown countryside and into the distance. As I heaved down on the throttle, the engine's note deepened into a more urgent rumble, billowing and echoing around

## "The plan was to drive from Malaga to Monte Carlo in just two days, including stops for photography"

the hills like thunder. At the same time its edge hardened, something I didn't quite appreciate until we were carrying out night-time photography through Monte Carlo's famous F1 tunnel with the windows open.

The road unfurled beneath the front wheels, plunging and sweeping its way across the hills, and all the time the speed just piled on. When the red line was eventually reached in second or third, there was a momentary drop in revs, a hesitation in engine note like an athlete taking another breath, but no let-up in acceleration which was unhesitatingly swift and merciless. Bentley quoted a 198mph top speed and a 4.7-second 0-62mph time at the Continental's launch, but it was the car's mid-range performance that I found particularly inspiring: 30-50mph in 1.8 seconds and 50-75mph in 3.2 seconds would have been impressive figures for a car that hailed from Maranello

or Weissach, never mind Crewe.

As my speed and confidence grew on that first afternoon, so did my appreciation of the Bentley's dynamics. It catapulted between apexes so swiftly, yet by lifting off or feathering the throttle lightly as I turned in to a bend, the line tightened accordingly – with just a nudge of understeer reminding

me that I was piloting a four-wheel drive car. By keeping the throttle balanced through the corners, accelerating as the exit was sighted, the big Continental stayed remarkably neutral. It

was easy to find a natural rhythm, with the bends flowing seamlessly into an automotive waltz across the landscape.

But then came a change of plan. Granada was off the shopping list, replaced by a photo shoot at the Dali Museum in Figueras, organised by Bentley Motors for the Sunday morning. That meant I had to cover the best part of 600 miles in one day – a tough drive at the best of times, never mind with autumn's thunderous clouds billowing on the horizon. Such a lengthy trip in heavy rain was not what I wanted, especially when the man leading the drive was Derek Bell, Bentley brand ambassador and five times Le Mans winner.

I've known Derek since my time covering Le Mans and the Brands Hatch long-distance races, but this is the first time I had driven in his company – and I wasn't quite prepared for the baptism of fire that it turned out to be. Some ten hours after leaving Malaga, the fly- »

## FEATURE CAR

### BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT

spattered GT pulled up outside the hotel close to Figueras, its ping-pong exhaust accompanied by the acrid smell of hard-used brakes. The speed computer told the day's story: average speed, 105mph; average fuel consumption, 12.7mpg. Keeping D. Bell MBE in view had been seriously hard work, pushing my driving skills to the limit, yet hugely aided by the Continental's capabilities.

For most of the day I had been cruising at 140-155mph, such was Derek Bell's pace a few hundred yards up the motorway. It's not that I intended to maintain such averages; it's just that the Bentley seemed to set its own gait. In many big saloons and sports cars, anywhere between 100 and 125mph seems a natural pace at which to settle. But at that kind of speed the Bentley seemed as if it

**"One thing I did discover was that high-speed stability was one of the GT's strongest virtues"**

was only just getting into its stride, which meant that adding those extra miles-per-hour just made it feel right.

### HIGH-SPEED ANTICS

At those speeds, of course, mental concentration is high. Other road users can't always compute your closing rate as you bear down on them at 155mph, even with the Xenon headlamps on full beam and Derek having already startled them. Thankfully, the GT came equipped with some of the biggest brakes fitted

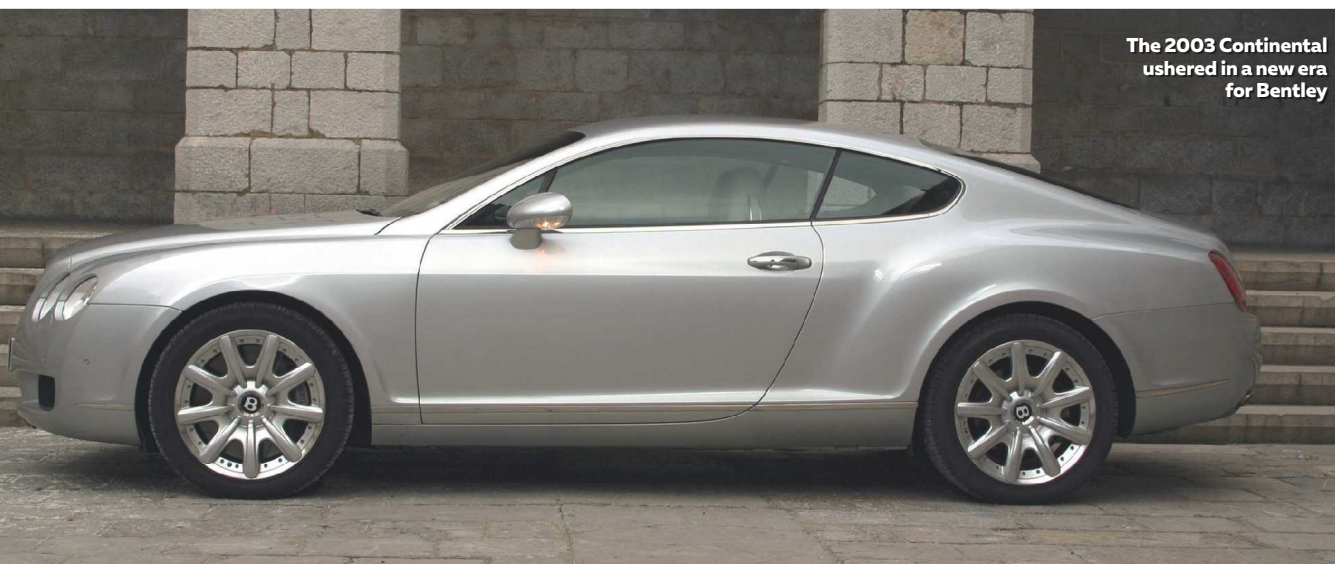
to a production car at that point: 16-inch at the front and 13-inch at the rear, all ventilated (of course) and equipped with both ABS and ESP. Maybe it was because the car had been used for track demos by Derek, but the brakes felt a bit sudden in their grip at times, and rumbled under heavy application. Since they were capable of producing over 2600kW of retardation, however, I wasn't really in a position to complain.

One thing I did discover was that high-speed stability was one of the GT's strongest virtues. Draughts caused by trucks and bridges went unheeded by and large, with only the occasional mountain-pass gust causing the car to shimmy slightly. Likewise, the only time the Bentley felt nervous (and my hands sweaty) was in a long right-hand bend, when an expansion joint in the road surface caused the back end to slightly corkscrew on its suspension as I turned in. At those velocities the understeer started to increase, with the mass within the steering also making its presence more apparent. For all that, however, the Continental remained a mightily impressive performer, although the need to refuel every two to three hours was frustrating.

Unfortunately, wet weather had an effect on the trip, swamping the road surface with driving rain. I am not happy driving at high speed in such conditions;



Onlookers were fascinated by the latest model from Crewe



The 2003 Continental ushered in a new era for Bentley



road spray can hide too many slower cars, with drivers concentrating on what's ahead rather than coming up behind. Even so, the GT felt confident at 100-125mph, its all-wheel drive system providing terrific assurance and stability.

The photo shoot at the Dali Museum took place amidst bewildered locals, excited school parties and curious onlookers, after which it was onward to Monte Carlo – albeit at a less frenetic pace. The French police had recently become more conscientious about

speeding motorists, and the thought of fines running into thousands of euros tempered our haste. But by Sunday evening we were in Monte Carlo, taking photographs by the harbour – and taking time to reflect on our epic trip.

Did the new Continental GT of 2003 live up to its heritage? It was, for sure, a finely engineered car, with an engine that had all the power and torque that a driver could ask for, even if it did lack that mellifluous, relaxed, almost arrogant delivery of Bentley's

own turbocharged V8. I may have had personal issues with the GT's styling and the aesthetic proportions dictated by its underpinnings (especially the long front overhang and horizontal radiator grille), but it still impressed.

This car wasn't just good; in fact, the new Continental GT verged on the brilliant. In some quarters it was stupendous. So, a decade and a half ago, did I consider it to be a true Bentley? Well, yes... but not in the traditional sense. ■





# MARKET WATCH

Each issue, we take a look at some of the most tempting cars for sale and report on others that have sold – covering everything from affordable modern classics through to the most premium-priced gems



## SOLD AT AUCTION

**H**&H Classics' most recent auction – which took place in late November – saw a 77% sales rate, achieving a gross total of over £1.3m on the day. And for the Rolls-Royce and Bentley enthusiast there was no shortage of interesting lots, most of which managed to achieve their pre-sale estimates.

One of the most intriguing cars sold was a 1983 Mulsanne Turbo Shooting Brake, converted by Coway Ltd of West Horton, Lancashire, around twenty years ago. The car spent its first fifteen years on the island of Jersey, during which time it covered 33,000 miles. Now with only another 3000 miles added, the Bentley certainly looks distinctive in its two-

tone scheme of Mustard and Claret with colour-coded bumpers front and rear. It might not be everyone's idea of the perfect Bentley, but this unique Mulsanne Turbo managed to change hands for an impressive £34,875.

Another Bentley member of the SZ family that found a new owner was a 1990 Turbo R, an armoured version that was originally supplied by Rolls-Royce Palm Beach to the Qatari royal family. This fascinating Turbo R has covered just 5000 miles from new and looks superb in its original Ravens Black. The auctioneers described this armoured Bentley as 'the cheapest life cover you could purchase', with the winning bidder paying just over £11,800 on the day.

Also offering excellent value was a 1980 Bentley T2, smartly finished in its original Blue Mink and with just 91,000 miles under its wheels. Much rarer than its Silver Shadow cousin, this handsome survivor was surely a good buy at its final sale price of just over £12,900?

Meanwhile, anyone looking for a pre-war restoration project might have been tempted by the 1927 Rolls-Royce 20hp, a partially dismantled example featuring Park Ward Light Saloon coachwork (body number 3017). There's no doubt that a great deal of work lies ahead, yet we can't help thinking that this 20hp's latest custodian had an excellent buy at £7875. If you're the proud new owner of any of the cars shown here, we'd love to hear from you.





# LATE-MODEL ARNAGE

**W**e're partial to a late-model Arnage here at *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, with its front-end redesign of 2005 successfully giving it an aesthetic link to the all-new Continental GT. It was a clever way of updating this long-running design for the final four years of its career. But which version is the best to go for?

This 2006 Arnage T Mulliner Level 2 looks particularly tempting, with this special-order model having covered just 57,000 miles to date. It has recently been treated to a major service (including a brake overhaul and suspension work), and the car comes complete with a comprehensive main dealer and specialist history. The Diamond Black metallic paintwork looks superb (as

does the Beluga Diamond quilted hide interior), and all four of the 19-inch split-rim alloys have recently been refurbished and fitted with new tyres.

Stewart Walker Ltd describes this

unusual variation on the Arnage theme as a 'stunning, rare example' and is asking £31,995 for it. To find out more, call 01635 866833 or go online to [www.stewartwalkerltd.co.uk](http://www.stewartwalkerltd.co.uk).



## OUT OF THE SHADOWS

**Y**ou can, of course, pick up a first-generation Silver Shadow for a lot less than this one's £18,500 asking price; but with values of excellent, original cars on the increase, there are plenty of enthusiasts happy to pay this sort of sum for a quality

example. First registered in 1970 and with just 89,000 miles recorded, this impressive looking car is finished in its original hue of Seychelles Blue, with a blue/grey hide interior that's also extremely well-preserved.

This particular Silver Shadow comes complete with its original factory

build sheets and an extensive service history. It has had just one owner for the last nine years, during which time it has been maintained by the specialist that's now selling it. For more details, give Colbrook Specialists a call on 01733 243737 or check out the website: [www.colbrookspecialists.co.uk](http://www.colbrookspecialists.co.uk).





# UNDER THE HAMMER

**A**mong the recent auctions held in the UK was this one from Historics at Brooklands, with a number of Rolls-Royce and Bentley classics finding new owners. Most of the cars achieved their pre-sale estimates, although one particularly good buy was a Corniche coupé of 1972 vintage – a 95,000-mile car with numerous invoices showing specialist work carried out in recent years. The auction house estimated the car at £23,000–27,000, but in

the end it found a new owner for a very reasonable sounding £14,500.

On the Bentley front there was plenty of activity, with a 1990 Turbo R (a handsome car finished in Midnight Blue and with a mileage of 98,000) achieving mid-estimate at £11,200. Among the more modern classics, however, was a 1998 Arnage Green Label, a 69,000-mile example that had been serviced by P&A Wood for most of that mileage. With its ex-BMW V8 twin-turbo providing the power, the Green Label is arguably the

most controversial of all the Arnage models – but with a final sale price of just £10,640, there was no mistaking the value for money on offer here.

Finally, a 28,000-mile Bentley Azure from 2006 just beat its low-end estimate when it changed hands for £81,760. Benefitting from a recent service by P&A Wood, this particular example was a real head-turner – and with such a low mileage, it's probably a sound long-term investment. To find out more of the auction results, go to [www.historics.co.uk](http://www.historics.co.uk).



## SPECIAL SILVER GHOST

On the same day that this issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* went to print, the auction house of Barons was hosting its latest sale at Sandown Park – and among the lots was a rather special Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. Built at the American Springfield factory, this 1921 right-hand drive model is one of just two that emanated from there equipped with artillery wooden wheels.

The wonderfully original Willoughby-bodied Pickwick Town Car has covered fewer than 26,000 miles in its 97-year history. Indeed, it spent the last 45 years in a museum in the USA, which explains why it's been driven a mere 5000 miles since 1989. The Silver Ghost had a pre-auction guide price of between £125,000 and £150,000 at the time of writing. For more information on the auction result, log on to [www.barons-auctions.com](http://www.barons-auctions.com).





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# PRODUCT NEWS

We catch up with the latest must-haves aimed at today's classic Rolls-Royce and Bentley owner



## SPECIAL SCULPTURE

Motoring artist Robin Bark has added to his range of high-quality automotive sculptures with this homage to the Bentley R-Type Continental, expertly cast in solid marine-grade aluminium before being hand-fettled, polished and finished in a choice of nickel or sterling silver.

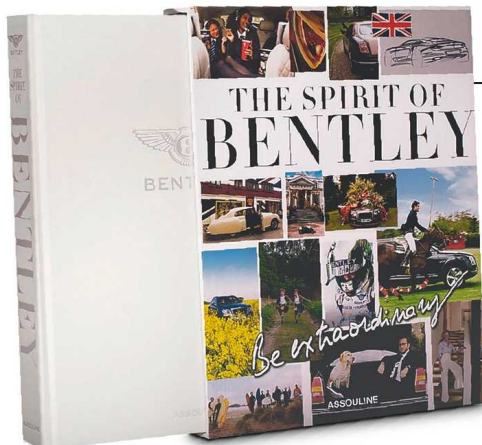
The sculpture measures 25cm in length (around 10 inches), and each one is presented in a bespoke wooden box – although a hand-made walnut presentation case is available at extra cost. An identification plate signed by the artist is attached to the underside of each sculpture, complete with a unique identification number. Prices start at £1500 for the R-Type Continental, with full details available via Robin's website: [www.robinbark-motorart.com](http://www.robinbark-motorart.com).



## QUALITY FIRST

Inspired by the famous Lesley Irvin-designed RAF sheepskin flying jacket of the 1930s, this faithful reproduction is claimed to offer 'unparalleled quality', making it ideal for the vintage Bentley owner (or any classic enthusiast) wanting to look the part on their next adventure. The jacket is made from top-grade North American sheepskin that's specially selected and tanned for Greycar to give an authentic finish.

The jacket features seams that are overlock-stitched and bound with supple, durable cowhide, with heavy-duty cotton-taped brass zips to the front and sleeves, plus a cast brass belt buckle. This high-quality jacket is priced at £834 including VAT. Full details can be found on line ([www.greycar.com](http://www.greycar.com)) or by calling 01420 520452.



## SPIRIT OF BENTLEY

A high-quality book celebrating Bentley's extraordinary owners and the values they share has been released by luxury publisher Assouline. *The Spirit of Bentley: Be Extraordinary* examines just what defines the Bentley spirit and those who share it, all via a grand tour of Britain.

The book is accompanied by stunning photography by Aline Coquelle and is an ideal gift for any Bentley aficionado celebrating the marque's centenary in 2019. With 300 pages (each measuring 28 x 35cm), this is a hefty hardback tome that comes complete with its own slipcase in order to keep the book in perfect condition. It is available direct from Bentley Motors ([www.shop.bentleymotors.com](http://www.shop.bentleymotors.com)) and is also stocked by independent specialists like Flying Spares ([www.flyingspares.com](http://www.flyingspares.com)), priced at £150.

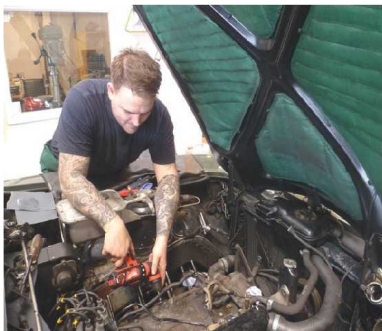


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# COACHBUILT CREATION

With a healthy budget and plans for long-distance adventures, what's the best pre-war choice of today? The owner of this 20/25 by Freestone & Webb puts forward a convincing argument in its favour

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: FRANK WESTWORTH

As Chris Spaett relaxed in a stylish wickerwork chair in his garden, chatting to me as we gazed over the hills of Herefordshire, he began to explain the reasoning behind his ownership of the car you see here: "We had this daft notion that it might be quite fun to tour Europe in a proper pre-war car. We decided that it should be a saloon and not an open-top model, but it needed to have a sun roof. I set an absolute maximum budget of £150,000 and very quickly homed in on a Rolls-Royce, as they're far better value than the equivalent Bentley and probably better built than anything else available for similar money."

It might have been possible to argue with the comment about values

had we not just returned from a truly excellent afternoon of motoring around the delicious country roads that can be found on the slopes of the Welsh Marches. The Rolls-Royce in question was perfectly at home in such an environment, which shouldn't be too surprising as many of the roads have hardly changed since the car was built – exactly for roads like these. So what was it that I found myself being a willing passenger in?

"It's a 1934 Rolls-Royce 20/25 Sports Saloon by Freestone & Webb, chassis number GKC18," explained Chris, helpfully. "It has the longer chassis to give it scaled-down Phantom proportions." Phantom proportions? But surely, if a chap wants a Phantom... he acquires a Phantom?

"Initially, we looked at an apparently rather nice Phantom II – which is still for sale, by the way – but were warned away from Phantoms due to the massive repair costs if anything should go wrong. I was advised that it could cost £40,000 for an engine rebuild, for example, and I was also put off by the sheer bulk of them. They are around half as big again as our car, which as I understand it makes them trickier to sell because not everyone has a garage large enough to house them." Chris paused and smiled: "Although I could have done that, ironically."

There were further cost advantages of not opting for a Phantom: "The added benefit of the 20/25 is that they seem to be around half as much money to buy. The downside is that it only has a





three-and-three-quarter-litre engine – as well as being very low geared – so it's really only suitable for cruising at 45-50mph, whereas the Phantom with its 7.7-litre engine and taller gearing would happily cruise at 60mph-plus."

We agreed that this could indeed be a problem, as although a 45mph cruise is relaxed for the Rolls-Royce and its occupants, it is apparently less so for more modern motorists – of whom there are quite a few. Happily for Chris, however, there was an answer:

"As the 20/25 engine develops a lot of torque, it is easily capable of pulling much higher gearing than standard. Therefore, the options were to either raise the rear axle ratio or to fit an overdrive," he explained. "I decided on the latter, and overdrive has now

been installed – which has completely transformed the car. It's now easily capable of cruising comfortably all day long at 50-55mph and will pull happily beyond 60mph to get past slower traffic. Much above this speed, things start to get very scary and so it's best avoided anyway. The overdrive cost me around £4500 to have fitted but it was worth every penny. It also significantly improves fuel economy, and adds some value to the car because most people seem to appreciate the benefits that it brings."

## BUYING THE CAR

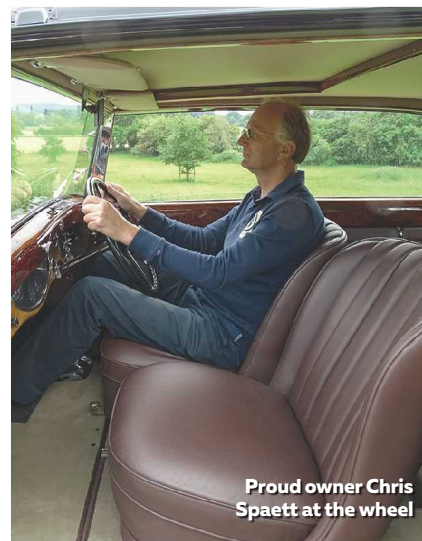
Chris spotted his 20/25 advertised for sale via a Somerset-based classic car specialist, offered with a genuine

130,000 miles under its wheels (just 13,000 of which had been covered in the previous four decades) and an asking price of £79,500: "The price

was rather high but the 20/25 appeared to be in excellent condition. A big bonus was that the dealer seemed happy to do a deal with two of our existing cars, so saving me the bother of moving them on. We viewed the car in January when the weather was vile so we didn't drive it, but the cosmetic condition was as good as the photographs suggested. The history file is very comprehensive and substantial, which was important to »







me. A deal was therefore struck and the Rolls-Royce was delivered a week later."

All fine and dandy, then. Straight out onto the road for a spring and summer of super-stylish motoring? Apparently not...

"I quickly realised that the car had some issues and wasn't suitable for road use as it was, and so I had it delivered to a company that is allegedly one of the premier early Rolls-Royce and Bentley specialists – although I'd personally call them something less kind. They claimed to have spent 106 hours on the service alone, despite initially suggesting to me that it was approximately three days' work. It really was just for the service as well, because all the other jobs were charged separately, including changing the coolant.

"They then quoted £15,000-25,000 to rectify a number of other relatively

minor jobs, at which point I'd had enough and recovered the car to deal with the issues myself – and I have pretty much waded through most of them now. On a slightly better note, the supplying dealer, to be fair to him, did chip in towards some of the repairs because he'd assured me that the car needed nothing when we bought it. He told me that he was unaware of the issues and, quite frankly, I believed him and was very grateful for his contribution."

So how is the car now? Chris is evidently pleased with it: "The Rolls-Royce does drive very well indeed... once you get used to its quirks, as well as making allowances for its age and so on. The overdrive has made it so much more useable, although I did drive it to our son's wedding in Somerset before the overdrive was fitted. To be entirely honest, I was too nervous to take it on

the motorway because I thought that cruising at 45mph was dangerous, so I took it on the A-roads, going through Bath and the country towns along the alternative route. It managed the 250-mile round trip up hill and down dale without missing a beat and was extremely comfortable. Now that the overdrive's fitted, however, I'd be happy to take it on a motorway, mainly because I feel it would keep up with lorries, caravans and so on, which means that a continental tour is now a real possibility."

## **DRIVING EXPERIENCE**

Driving a 1930s Rolls-Royce is, of course, a challenging experience for someone more familiar with modern Aston Martin and Porsche products, as is the case here: "The gear lever is on the floor on the right hand side of





**"It managed the 250-mile round trip up hill and down dale without missing a beat and was extremely comfortable"**

the driver, pretty much in the door aperture – as are the handbrake and the bulb horn, making access to the driver's seat interesting. I understand that most drivers enter from the front passenger door – which is also the only door to have an outside lock, so I guess that makes sense. The engine always starts very easily on the electric starter, so I have never tried to hand-start the car. It has individual levers on the steering boss that control the mixture, idle speed and advance and retard."

The best way to enjoy a 20/25 is, it seems to take your time with everything: "The engine has so much low-down torque and clearly an extremely heavy flywheel, so you really don't need to rev it up when releasing the clutch. It just pulls away cleanly almost from tickover, and you can then build the revs once on the move with the lever released.

In fact, I normally pull away in second because first is very low indeed and in most cases unnecessary. It has a four-speed gearbox with synchromesh on third and fourth, which works well if not rushed. In fact, if you don't hurry and you relax, the car is an absolute joy to drive. You can literally feel the quality in terms of materials, design and workmanship. The engineering is a work of art. The attention to detail is obvious wherever you look, and for me that's a large part of the pleasure of owning such a wonderful vehicle."

As Chris pointed out, the 20/25's clever lubrication system is the perfect example of Rolls-Royce's attention to detail: "It is a 'one shot' system operated by a lever on the bulkhead. You depress it when you set off from cold and then again every hundred miles or so. The system sends oil to all

of the vital parts of the car's chassis, such as the king pins, joints, springs, levers and so on. When the car is parked up you usually get a few drips of oil just inside of each wheel where the excess oil drips off it. Other than that, it appears to be remarkably fluid tight.

"The temperature is controlled not by a conventional thermostat but by a Calorstat in the radiator itself. As the coolant warms up, a lever pushes out. This controls the radiator grille vents, gradually opening them until at full operating temperature they are fully opened. They close completely when cold to ensure that the engine warms as quickly as possible."

## **TRACKING ISSUES**

Although the 20/25's steering can wander a little at speed, it's no worse »



**“The attention to detail is obvious, and for me that’s a large part of the pleasure of owning such a wonderful vehicle”**



than any other car of its age – and is far superior to most: “It wasn’t like this when we got the car. Back then, it was quite scary and actually difficult to keep on the correct side of the road at times. I felt sure that the tracking was way out – which indeed it was. There is a crossbeam that links both hubs, but it is a fixed tube and has no adjustment.

If it got damaged back in the day, it would usually get replaced. The one on my car had three significant kinks in it, however, which clearly shortened it quite a bit, so causing severe toe-out. I removed the beam and took it to a pal with a big press. We made three wooden bucks to avoid crushing the tube and set about straightening all the kinks and

bends – with significant success, as it actually increased the tube’s length by 8mm. I was advised by one specialist that the answer is to bend the arm on one of the hubs to correct the tracking, but I didn’t like that idea and opted for trying to straighten the tube instead. It seems to have worked well and I’m more than happy with the result.”

**The original supplying dealer was Car Mart of London**





Chris is particularly impressed with the 20/25's ability to stop in a hurry: "The brakes are remarkable, especially when you consider that they're cable-operated drums. They pull the car up very squarely and it is not at all difficult to make the cross-ply tyres chirp. The drums are large – I'm not sure of the exact size – but I suspect that the servo, which is driven off the gearbox, is largely responsible for their efficiency."

The brake servo is driven off the gearbox? My look of surprise raised just a smile...

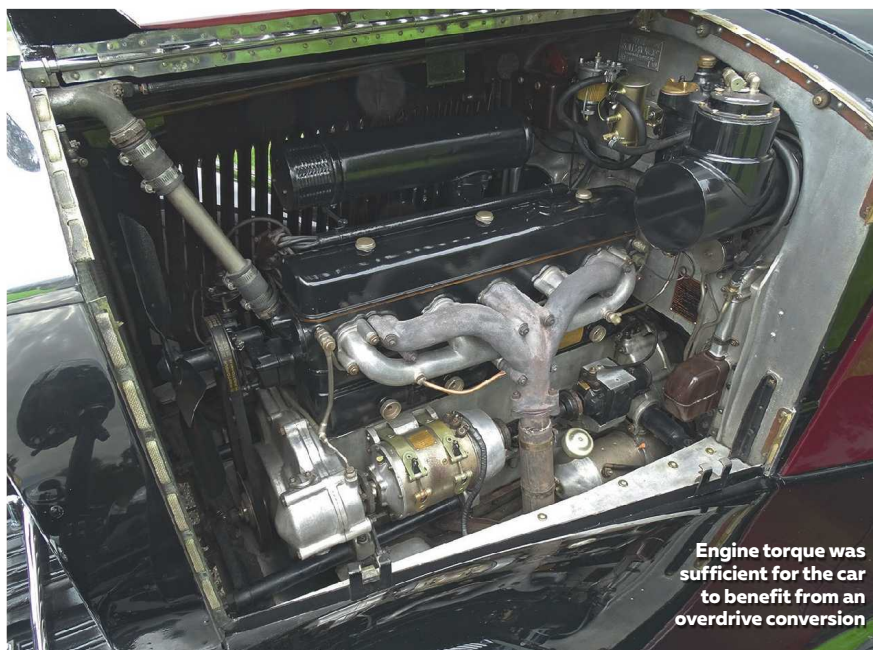
"Don't ask me how it all works because I haven't looked into that as yet. I had a Silver Cloud II a few years ago and that also had a gearbox servo. I don't know if it worked in a similar way or not, but that was excellent as well – although totally useless to the point of being scary when going backwards."

"Clearly this car was designed before the engineers realised the importance of reducing sprung weight to improve the ride, because each corner was fitted with its own jack, just under the centre of each road spring. As one of the rear jacks was unserviceable and both of the two front ones had previously been removed, I decided to remove the rear ones as well – but have kept all four in case someone wishes to refit them in the future. The car has its original and pretty comprehensive tool kit neatly stored in its own compartment at the top of the boot."

## HISTORY LESSON

This is all fascinating stuff, of course. But how much does Chris Spaett know about his 20/25's earlier life? "The history file that came with it is substantial. It contains copies of the original factory build records, confirming that all of the major components fitted when new are still on the car. It confirms that the spec is largely unaltered from new and also that the rolling chassis was delivered to Freestone & Webb for the Sports Saloon body – design number 1275C – to be fitted."

This Rolls-Royce was supplied new to Car Mart of Park Lane, London, who in turn sold it to its first owner – a Mr R J Bolling from Ellesmere House, Newmarket. Little is known of the car's early life other than that it lived for some time in Monaco, returning to the UK in the late '60s or early '70s. It then moved around, from Bognor Regis to the Carlton Hotel in Great Yarmouth, and then to Onslow Square



in West London, when it was owned by avid collector Bryan Campbell Jones. He took the car with him to the United States in 1978, where it lived until its return to the UK in 2011, albeit with a brief interlude in Canada.

"I think throughout its time in the USA the car was owned by Bryan Jones,"

confirmed Chris, "with the history file showing that a huge amount of work was carried out over the years by KS Motor Works of Connecticut – including an engine and gearbox overhaul, which cost £30,000 back in 1988. As I understand it, the proprietor of KS Motor Works was English and »



## FEATURE CAR

### ROLLS-ROYCE 20/25

Rolls-Royce trained, and so the jobs were clearly done very well. This is evidenced by the fact that they still operate faultlessly all these years later."

Also in Chris' possession is a bill from Charles Crail Automobiles of California, the company that sold the car in 2011, at which point it came back to the UK. The 20/25 didn't spend long 'back home', however, as after some rectification work it was then shipped to its next owner in Denmark, where it lived until 2017 – when it was again repatriated to the UK and bought by Chris.

"The history file doesn't just contain a huge stack of invoices but also the original log book from the UK, the US title documents and US tax receipts, Danish registration documents, all of the shipping documentation from its journeys around the world – as well as the original handbook and so forth," explained a delighted Chris. "I also have a lovely newspaper article picturing the car in *The Hartford Courant* alongside its owner Bryan Jones, published in November 1978



shortly after its arrival in the US."

This is clearly a very well-travelled but wonderfully presented example of a 20/25, sporting one of the most practical and stylish bodywork options

offered by Freestone & Webb. Chris and I smiled together, appreciating the old car's classic lines and gentle grandeur in the late afternoon sunshine. "Fancy a drive?" wondered Chris... ■





Older Rolls and Bentley cars can be challenging to drive in modern traffic conditions. The main issue is one of visibility and the failure of other road users to understand outmoded methods of signalling. Modern cars have brighter lights and sharper indicator systems and motorists see what they expect to see, or in this case, don't.

Better Car Lighting of Warwickshire have been busy developing neat and invisible solutions to make these cars safe and convenient to use in modern traffic. At the front, special replacement LED bulbs have been developed to give white sidelights but change to



# Bright news for older cars

orange for indicating. These are a straight swap for the originals. If the current bulbs are single circuit, alternative bulbholders can be fitted to make use of these new bulbs.



The bulbs in semaphore arms can be upgraded to bright orange flashing ones, to make them useful instead of decorative. At the rear of early cars, the tail and brake lights are often very dim and again, the lack of orange flashing indicators can be a safety issue. Better Car Lighting can help here too. Most of the usual suspects



have conversions available which not only give brighter tail and brake lights, but also have orange flashing indicators which shine through the red lens.

All models are catered for, and as these upgrades are designed in-house, tech support is always available.

All of the other lights, including dashboards, interior, etc. can be upgraded and a great deal of equipment designed to make these cars safer and more comfortable is available.

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• SPECIALIST VISIT •

# WIRE WHEEL EXPERTISE

We pay a visit to MWS International, a UK-based company that not only supplies brand new wire wheels but also has its own team of restoration experts

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: IAN SEABROOK & PAUL GUINNESS

**A**fter more than ninety years in business, MWS International is deservedly one of the best-known wire wheel specialists in the world, with a history dating back to when wire wheels were simply normal wheels rather than the stuff of classics. These days, the classic and vintage Rolls-Royce and Bentley market is an important one for MWS, which is why we recently headed to Slough to meet Oliver Smith, whose grandfather – George Smith – was one

of the founders of what was then known as Motor Wheel Service & Repairs.

Formed in 1927, the company was initially a general wheel and service garage before it began to specialise in wire wheels. As an approved repair agent for Dunlop, MWS witnessed it moving its wheel production to India in the late 1970s; but when Dunlop decided to get out of the wheel market altogether a few years later, MWS stepped in and negotiated exclusive rights to the Indian factory's wire wheel production. It's a

relationship that is still in place today, with the wheels being made on the original Dunlop equipment by Wheels India, which manufacturers over ten million wheels of various types annually.

MWS takes 16,000-18,000 wire wheels per year, which it then sells globally. Oliver explains more: "It has been interesting to see tastes change over the years as alloy wheels became fashionable. Wire wheels really seem to have come back into fashion though, especially now that stainless





Wire wheel restoration is a traditional, labour-intensive process



Up to 18,000 brand new wire wheels are sold by MWS each year



Shelves full of countless new hubs make an impressive sight

steel options are much easier to look after. We also still have a contract with Morgan, and for many years have been supplying the wire wheels that brand new Morgans come with."

This leaves the company's headquarters in Slough acting mostly as a distribution centre, with countless boxes of brand new wheels waiting to be shipped around the world. The quality of the wheels is very impressive, as Oliver points out: "The new wheels being built in India now are the best ever, thanks to very high levels of quality control at the factory."

MWS currently has 15 employees, with eight office-based, four in the workshop and three in the warehouse.

The company has recently seen a huge increase in the number of fitted units being sent out – where a tyre is fitted and a complete unit sent to the owner, fully balanced and ready to fit. "We have a good relationship with Blockley Tyres," says Oliver. "Owners like that they can order a complete package and simply fit the wheel themselves." Given that not many garage are set up for fitting wheels with a knock-off spinner, that can be a very good thing.

## REBUILD SERVICE

There's far more to MWS than simply supplying new wheels, however, as its Slough base is also home to

the workshops where wire wheel restoration takes place. "With many classics, it's often more cost effective to simply replace the wheel," admits Oliver. "But if the owner particularly wishes to keep the hub and rim – or even just the hub if the rim is badly damaged – then we can rebuild pretty much any wheel. This is particularly important for Rolls-Royce and Bentley owners, as the hubs are often complex in design and therefore expensive to replicate. Also, because they were engineered to such high standards when new, it's rare for a hub to be so damaged that it can't be reused."

Dan Cooksley is the workshop manager, and he took us through the »





Accuracy and attention to detail at the marking out stage is essential

different stages of rebuilding a wheel. It's pleasing to see some Dunlop tooling has survived here too, with different machines covering different tasks, from bending spokes to cutting them to length or punching the correct holes into a new rim. It quickly becomes apparent that Dan and his team of three have to work hard, with many tasks proving very labour intensive and repetitive.

Take drilling the rim, for instance. Every hole not only needs punching, but it also needs punching at the correct angle, so that the spoke will be aimed at the correct hole in the hub. This requires a lot of measuring, and the use of a jig to ensure correct alignment. It's one reason why the company has a container full of old wheels: "They're useful as patterns should we need to make such



More wheels arrive each week destined for the MWS restoration treatment



No matter how poor a state the wheel is in, it's almost always restorable



This set of Rolls-Royce hubs is ready to be shot-blasted



Some Rolls-Royce hub designs are complex and would be expensive to reproduce



The MWS workshops boast a team of four restoration specialists





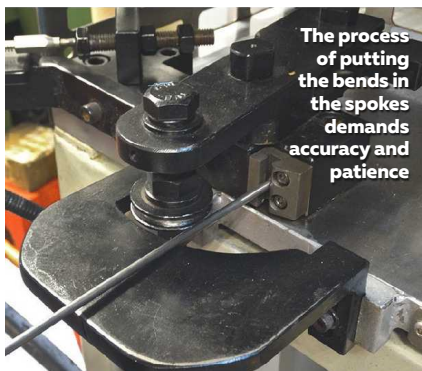
Workshop manager Dan demonstrates how the holes for the spokes are drilled



Each hole has to be at exactly the right angle for that particular spoke



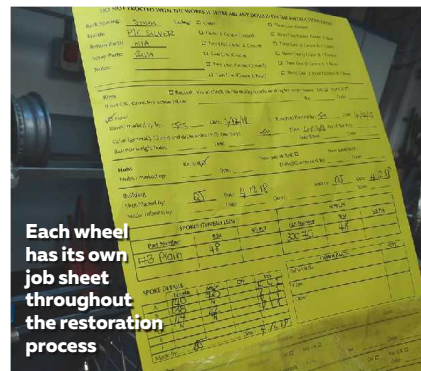
Working out the angle of each spoke can be done the old-fashioned way



The process of putting the bends in the spokes demands accuracy and patience



The ends of the completed spokes need threading before they're ready to fit



Each wheel has its own job sheet throughout the restoration process

a wheel in future," explains Oliver.

Dan's final task is to ensure that the wheel is running true, something he does with a couple of indicators to show any issue. But how does he know how much to tighten the spokes? "It's something you can only learn with experience," he says. "You have to check the backspacing as you go, to ensure you don't alter it."

Backspacing is what would more normally be called inset or offset today, though that measurement is taken from the centre of the wheel. "With wires," explains Dan, "it's much more difficult to gauge where the centre of the wheel is, so we use backspacing as a measurement instead – the distance between the back of the hub and the inside edge of the rim."

Once the wheel is true, it can be sent off-site for painting before either being returned to the owner or fitted with a tyre, balanced and then sent back. Wheels being rebuilt often date

## "It's a relationship that is still in place, with wheels being made on the original Dunlop equipment by Wheels India"

right back to the veteran era, though vintage Rolls-Royce and Bentley wheels make up a good proportion of the company's restoration services. "A lot of our work comes from independent specialists who are perhaps restoring a car for a client and will outsource the rebuilding of the wheels to us," explains Oliver. "We have wheels arrive here from all around the world, though America and Germany are our two biggest markets outside of the UK."

Interestingly, Oliver has noticed a few differences between owners of vintage Rolls-Royces and Bentleys: "Most of the wire wheels from Rolls-Royces get delivered here, usually via a marque specialist on behalf of the car's owner.

But when it comes to Bentleys, we often find that the owner will visit us in their car, because they want to be involved in the process and see what we can offer them. Many of the Bentley owners still take part in rallying and long-distance adventures, so obviously they need to know that their wheels are up to that kind of hard work." ■

### THANK YOU

Many thanks to Oliver Smith of MWS International for our recent guided tour. For more information on the company's brand new wire wheels or its restoration services, go to [www.mwsint.com](http://www.mwsint.com) or call 01753 549360.





# BESPOKE BENTLEY

We get to experience one of the most recently built MkVI-based Bentley specials – and learn why its creator opted for 6.75-litre V8 power for this hand-crafted creation

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL GUINNESS

**T**he idea of building a Bentley-based special around the chassis and running gear of a MkVI is, of course, nothing new. Indeed, countless such creations have been constructed by hands-on enthusiasts over the last half a century, and some of them have even ended up in production – albeit with varying degrees of success. In the 21st century, however, newly built MkVI-based specials are rather less numerous, despite the fact that Bentley's robust chassis of 1946-52 (also shared with the later R-Type) is the ideal candidate for such treatment.

Purists might bemoan the use of a MkVI chassis for the creation of a bespoke special, particularly if it means the loss of a standard model with restoration potential. But when the end result is as well-crafted and as pleasingly designed as the car you see





here, it's hard not to be impressed.

The man behind the project is Lancashire-based John Barlow, a motoring enthusiast and entrepreneur who has been involved with the specialist car scene for the last forty years, building various one-off models before finally launching a neatly styled kit car – the Royale Sabre – in 1990. That proved to be a success, leading to other launches in more recent years, including a range of vintage-style models aimed specifically at the wedding car market. John's real passion, however, is the creation of high-end specials such as this Bentley Royale, one of just four completed in recent years.

"The idea was to create a 1930s-inspired roadster based around

a MkVI chassis, but with the kind of power that would make it ideal for long-distance touring," explains John. "That's why I opted to install a six-and-three-quarter V8 and automatic transmission from a Mulsanne. It keeps the car Bentley in spec, but makes it much more usable as a grand tourer."

The car in the photographs is the most recent of the four Bentley-based Royales that John has built, and he admits he has the parts to do one more: "Whether I'll ever get round to it, I'm not sure. I build these cars because I enjoy doing it, so there may be another one at some point... who knows?" One of the cars completed by John featured

a bespoke chassis, but the other three were all MkVI-based – in this case built around chassis number B137KL, which he managed to acquire (minus its engine and gearbox) from a Bentley specialist.

## BESPOKE APPROACH

What makes this particular Bentley special all the more interesting is that the chassis is completely standard: "A lot of MkVI-based specials that have been built have featured a shortened chassis, but I didn't want to go down that route," »



**“What makes this particular Bentley special all the more interesting is that the chassis itself is standard”**



says John. “Using a regular chassis keeps everything simpler when it comes to legislation, which helps to future-proof the car. But I also felt that the standard-length chassis was ideal, enabling me to design a model with good proportions.”

Carried over from the MkVI is its suspension and rear axle, although the brakes have been converted to a disc set-up to ensure that the car’s ability to stop is as impressive as its performance. (Although the idea was to create a ‘grand touring’ roadster capable of long-distance cruising, its use of an ex-Mulsanne 6.75-litre V8 means there’s no shortage of acceleration and performance potential.) John

also wanted to improve the driving experience by equipping his special with power-assisted steering, and eventually opted for an early BMW 7-Series system (mainly due to its use of a traditional steering box rather than rack-and-pinion) linked to a standard Bentley power-steering pump.

But what about the appearance of the car? John is the first to admit that his approach when it comes to styling is unusual: “I always have a mental image of how I want the car to look, but I don’t commit anything to paper. I make a full-size styling buck in wood, enabling me to make minor changes as I go along, and once I’ve committed

to the look of the car I make the GRP moulds myself. I’ve been involved with GRP for many years now, and in terms of the car’s construction I still use a system that I developed in the 1980s in order to ensure a high-quality product.”

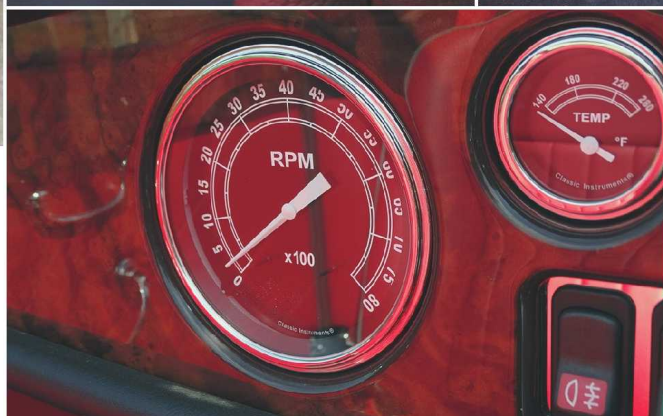
Although production of the Bentley Royale’s glassfibre bodyshell and individual panels was outsourced to a highly experienced GRP specialist, the way in which they’re made is very much John’s vision. To avoid the traditional problems of stress cracks, he incorporates specially designed beams within the panels. Each door, for example, features a stainless steel frame for added strength, as do the







The interior boasts a very high standard of finish, with exceptional attention to detail throughout



car's B-posts; indeed, a large proportion of the bodyshell is strengthened in this way, helping to ensure accuracy in terms of panel fit. It also means that longevity is assured, with the risk of cracking in high-stress areas all but negated.

## PERFECT FINISH

Photographed a few months ago, prior to it finding a new home, this fourth Bentley Royale certainly impressed with its impeccable standard of finish. We were given the opportunity to try the car for ourselves by Ian Johnstone of The Real Car Company, who had been tasked with selling it. At the time of our visit to the North Wales-based firm, the car was being advertised with an asking price of £125,000, a figure that hinted at the excellence of the conversion. The fact that the car was sold just a few weeks after we sampled it is confirmation of its overall appeal.

For starters, there's the styling of

the Royale. I'll be the first to accept that aesthetics are very subjective; what one person likes in the look of a car, another will loathe. To my eyes, however, this Bentley special looks handsome, well balanced and neatly proportioned. From the generous length of its bonnet to the sweeping lines of its front and rear wings, from its gradually widening swage line to its gently curvaceous boot lid, the overall look offers plenty of appeal. Unashamedly influenced by the glamour of upmarket car design of the 1930s, this bespoke Bentley is, I feel, a resounding success in terms of its appearance.

If the devil is in the detail, however, then John Barlow's creation brings even more pleasure the closer you look. The imposing grille, for example, is taken from a standard Bentley MkVI but has four inches chopped from its height, giving it perfect proportions for a low-slung roadster. Combine that with the original upright slats being

replaced by mesh (to match the mesh inserts along the bonnet sides) and you have a very effective transformation.

To keep the Bentley theme, the car's front and rear bumpers are also of MkVI spec, although they're stainless steel replicas (produced by GroupHarrington.com) finished to a very high standard and sure to last well. Other details (such as door handles, lights and so on) follow the Bentley theme, while the wheels were specially commissioned from Midlands-based Image Wheels, incorporating the original (albeit modified) centres to help create a one-off set that suits the car well.

Trim-wise the high standards continue, with the all-important hood featuring a frame that was designed and built by John himself before being trimmed by an expert upholsterer. Even with the hood in the raised position, the car retains its elegant look and still manages to offer its occupants an abundance of headroom. The superbly reupholstered »



**"If the devil is in the detail, John Barlow's creation brings even more pleasure the closer you look"**



(in red leather) seats originally started their career in a Jaguar XJ-S but now look completely different thanks to John's clever restyling, while the elegant dashboard and door cappings were created in-house before being sent off for expert veneering in Birdseye Maple. The all-electronic instrumentation was a fairly major investment but was crucial to the period feel of the finished car, with ClassicInstruments.com (an American-based company) providing John with the traditional look but modern spec that he was after.

None of these important details would matter if the basic structure of the car weren't finished to a similarly high standard... but, of course, it is.

I'll be the first to admit that, having experienced a plethora of glassfibre-bodied cars during my driving career, their standard of finish can sometimes leave a lot to be desired. Ripples in the GRP, combined with large panel gaps, ill-fitting body sections and less than perfect paint finishes, have previously left an unfavourable impression. But John Barlow's most recent creation is in a different league altogether, with each and every panel finished to an extraordinarily high standard. Indeed, the casual observer might end up tapping the panels to ascertain whether they're steel, aluminium or glassfibre.

Combine those very well-crafted panels with an exemplary paint finish (in

two-tone grey, which contrasts well with the red hood) and you have a machine that's more than capable of holding its own in any classic car line-up. Naturally, however, there's more to creating a Bentley special with a six-figure price tag than making sure it looks the part. It also has to drive well, and I was looking forward to getting behind the wheel.

## **ON THE ROAD**

It helped that on the day of our visit to The Real Car Company, summer was still very much with us. It was the perfect day for sampling a car that's always going to be at its best in top-down guise, complemented by some fine roads (quiet, smooth and with seemingly endless bends) thanks to the firm's idyllic rural location.

First impressions behind the wheel were very favourable, with the ex-Jaguar driver's seat providing plenty of support and an ideal driving position. The split windscreen helps in terms of a period feel, while the beautifully veneered dashboard and high-spec instrumentation add a distinctively prestigious touch. The whole interior oozes quality, from the ex-Bentley steering wheel to the beautifully finished aluminium knob on the floor-mounted automatic gearshift.





Selecting 'Drive' and heading out on to the B-roads that surround The Real Car Company, we were immediately struck by just how refined the Royale is. Its quality of construction is evident in the complete lack of rattles and squeaks that are often associated with a home-built special, while its MkVI-spec suspension does a sterling job of soaking up any imperfections in the road. What is definitely not MkVI in character, however, is the way in which the car accelerates, with its ex-Mulsanne V8 effortlessly providing the power to ensure rapid progress.

A minor blip of the accelerator has the Royale building speed at an impressive rate, with the car's well-weighted power steering providing enough feel to inspire confidence through the corners. It's light, precise and ideally suited to a car that's likely to spend much of its time on the kind of roads we got to enjoy it on, something that's important for anyone planning a pan-European jaunt away from the continent's motorways.

Road noise remains well muted in the Royale, and the roar of the V8 is muffled enough not to intrude into the cabin too much. The three-speed auto provides smooth and efficient gear changes (as you'd expect), while the all-disc braking system developed by designer John does a superb job of bringing this Bentley special to a rapid halt. The overall impression is of a car that has been designed and built to an extremely high standard, making it not only a joy to drive but also a practical long-term proposition.

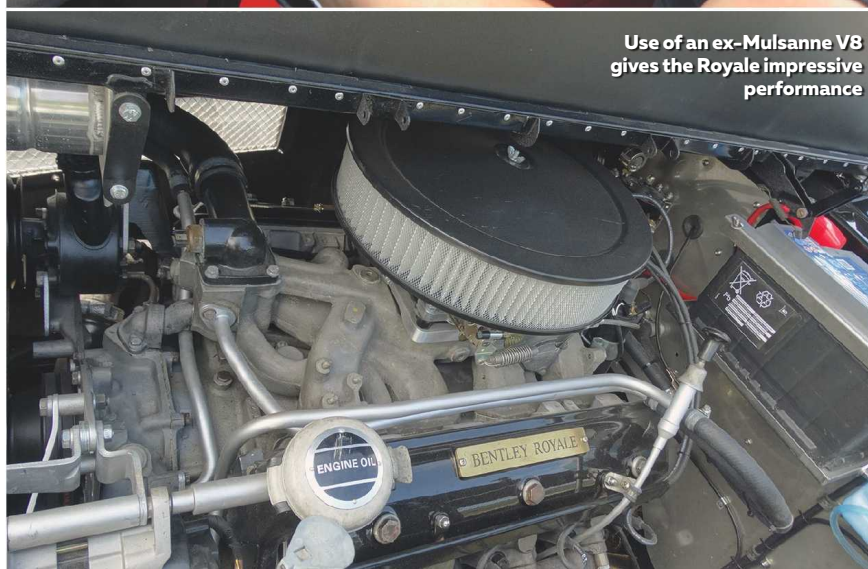
There will, of course, be readers who struggle to see the appeal of a machine like this, and we're not here to convince them otherwise. For many people, original will always be best – and for them, building any special based around a MkVI chassis is a controversial concept. In truth, however, MkVI-based specials have a history of their own dating back to the 1960s – and for us, this particular modern-day interpretation takes the concept to a whole new level in terms of build quality and attention to detail. ■

## THANK YOU

Many thanks to The Real Car Company ([www.realcar.co.uk](http://www.realcar.co.uk)) for allowing us behind the wheel of John Barlow's Bentley Royale. This particular car is now sold, but the company always has an interesting selection of classic Rolls-Royces and Bentleys in stock. Check out the website for the latest arrivals.



Editor Paul Guinness behind the wheel of this bespoke Bentley



Use of an ex-Mulsanne V8 gives the Royale impressive performance



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• THE TIME TO BUY •

# THE CORNICHE COLLECTION

For almost two and a half decades, the Rolls-Royce Corniche (and its Bentley variant) provided the ultimate in coachbuilt two-door style. We take a look at how to buy the best example of this all-time classic

WORDS: SAM SKELTON PHOTOGRAPHY: KELSEY ARCHIVE / THE REAL CAR COMPANY

**A**lthough there was little to differentiate the new Corniche from the extant Silver Shadow two-door saloon and drophead by Mulliner Park Ward, its launch in 1971 was to prove crucial to the future of Rolls-Royce. Under the control of receivers at the time of the Corniche's debut, following the collapse

of the firm in February '71, it was a bleak time for Rolls-Royce's newly separated car division. Within three years, however, the sales success of the profit-rich Corniche had helped to turn the bankrupt company into one reporting annual profits of over £6 million.

Exterior differences between the Corniche and its forebears were

minor; a slightly different radiator grille, rectangular reversing lamps, fog lamps, special wheel trims and a different dashboard formed the bulk of the cosmetic changes, while the engine was subtly reworked to produce 'adequate plus 10%' power. There was no need for major change thanks to the already handsome »





**“A total of 6250 Rolls-Royce Corniches were built... plus a further 602 cars with Bentley badging”**

looks of the MPW cars, with Coke-bottle hips and an angled rear giving them more panache than a standard Silver Shadow saloon. Styled by John Blatchley, the shape was clearly derived from that of the Silver Shadow but reintroduced elements of historic Rolls-Royce design.

Running gear was also carried across from the standard saloon, which in the case of the Corniche meant a 6.75-litre L-series V8, SU-fed and driving a GM400 three-speed automatic gearbox at launch. As the standard saloon of the era was upgraded, so too was the Corniche – gaining

improvements like fuel-injection and an extra gear over its 24-year life. And, of course, the Corniche also shared the suspension of the equivalent-era saloon, with independent coil springs with oleopneumatic self-levelling at the back, powered hydraulic brakes and power-assisted steering.

### **UPDATED RANGE**

The individual models of Corniche can't be tracked alongside the saloons, because upgrades and changes to nomenclature were made at different times. What doesn't help is that many

confuse the earlier Silver Shadow MPW cars with Corniches, as the differentiation is relatively minor.

The first change to the Corniche was made in 1973, when an extra quarter of an inch was added to the wheelbase. In 1977, however, came a more thorough revision in line with the Silver Shadow II, with the Corniche gaining rubber bumpers, a new lower spoiler, new dashboard, rack and pinion steering, an oil cooler and split-level air conditioning. The Corniche was not rebranded at this time, despite the amount of advertisements which today refer to these cars as Corniche II.





In 1979 the wheelbase was lengthened again (by an extra half inch) and the rear suspension was revised to take the mineral oil LHM (green) instead of the earlier synthetic LHS (red).

After the successful launch of the Silver Spirit in late 1980, Rolls-Royce ceased production of the Corniche saloon the following March, leaving the convertible as the only Corniche variant available. July 1984 saw the Bentley version being given a second facelift as part of the marque's diversification from Rolls-Royce; it gained colour-coded bumpers and grille vanes, new rear view mirrors and redesigned seats, and was now badged as the Bentley Continental.

Bosch K-Jetronic injection replaced the Solex 4A1 in 1987, while the following year the Rolls-Royce model was rebranded the Corniche II (a name used in the US since '86), with these latest cars bringing a revised dashboard and seats, ABS and a host of minor detail changes. The folding hood was also modified and the Spirit of Ecstasy upgraded to a retractable version. The Corniche II was short lived, however, replaced in 1989 by the Corniche III – a model that abandoned steel wheels in favour of alloys, as well as gaining colour coded bumpers and airbags.

The final facelift occurred in 1992 with the arrival of the Corniche IV, which featured Active Ride Technology. The hood was modified again, this time incorporating a glass rear window in place of the previous plastic item, eliminating the



The hardtop Bentley is one of the rarest members of the Corniche clan

previous issue of cracked screens. The last 25 Corniche IVs built were designated Corniche S, and were the only official Corniche models to be fitted with a turbocharger, making them mechanically identical to the limited edition Rolls-Royce Flying Spur. These cars are identified by numbered plaques on the dashboard, with the final one bearing number 21. Unlike the production Corniches (built at MPW in Willesden), the S was produced at Crewe and can be identified by unique red lettering to its badges. Unofficially there had been three Bentley Continental Turbos built in 1992 for the Sultan of Brunei, and five further examples built alongside the Corniche S.

A total of 6250 Rolls-Royce

Corniches were built, of which just 1090 were saloons. A further 602 were made with Bentley badging, comprising 69 Corniche saloons, 77 convertibles and 456 Continentals, taking the production figure of the whole Corniche family to a respectable 6852 cars.

The model that helped to save Rolls-Royce from bankruptcy endured for 24 years, making it the longest running car in the company's history. It's obviously not the cheapest entry point to the brand on today's market, but the Corniche is among the most affordable when it comes to coachbuilt Rolls-Royce and Bentley models, despite the fact that values are increasing. Now is definitely the time to buy, so what do you need to look for if you're tempted to make a purchase?



The Corniche employed an upgraded version of the familiar V8 engine

## BODYWORK CHECKS

Most issues will relate to corrosion – and while these cars have rarely suffered the indignity of life as cheap wedding hacks, they have all too often undergone the sort of restoration work that was unacceptable even in the 1980s. Be assiduous in your checking, as filler and hidden rot can lurk anywhere, and make sure you're on the look-out for signs of previous welding and less than perfect repairs.

The first area we'd want to inspect on any Corniche is the wheelarches (both the outer lip and the metal inside, as this is where mud can accumulate, trapping water and road salt) as well as the lower rear quarter panels. You should also be vigilant when inspecting the sills, as these are »



## THE TIME TO BUY THE CORNICHE COLLECTION

vital to the car's structural strength (especially the case with the Corniche convertible), with any evidence of bodes here sure to set the tone for the rest of the car. The bottom of the front wings can rot, and you also need to check the rear spring pans as failure here can cause the whole of the back of the car to drop.

The use of aluminium doors, bonnet and boot lid helped to keep the Corniche's weight sensible, but any sign of broken or rubbed-away paint can lead to electrolytic corrosion if the panel comes into contact with steel. This won't be cheap to have repaired professionally, and so you need to make sure you budget accordingly if buying a car with this issue.

You also need to check the condition of all the bright trim – there's a lot of it, and any chrome which needs re-plating won't be cheap to get right. And while you're looking so closely, pay attention to the car's paintwork. Is it deep and lustrous, or does it look like a lower-quality job? Many will have had cheap resprays to hide damage, and we'd walk away from these cars.

### TRIM AND INTERIOR

From the carpets to the seats, everything in the Corniche was hand-crafted. That's a boon when it comes to replacing worn items of trim, because what can be made by hand



Corniche convertibles command a hefty premium on today's classic market

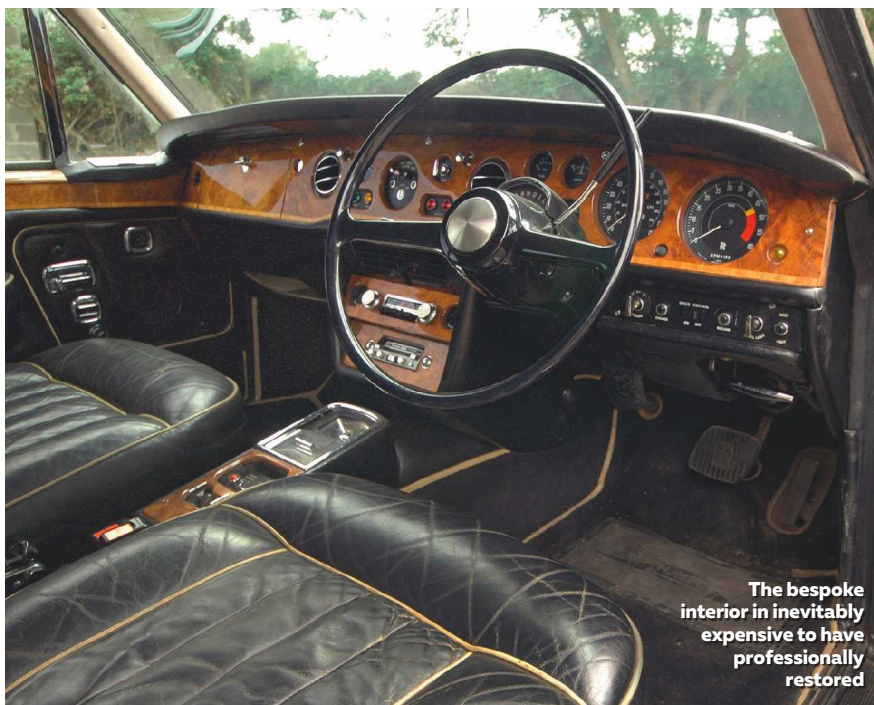
can be replicated almost infinitely, making parts availability a moot point. Specialist labour doesn't come cheap, however, and you certainly shouldn't embark on a budget restoration of a Rolls-Royce Corniche interior. Although very little was shared with the Silver Shadow saloons, it's still worth try specialist breakers such as Flying Spares. Cars built from 1977 shared much of their dashboard architecture with the Silver Shadow, which makes things a little easier as far as later Corniches are concerned.

Leather can scuff, crack and tear, while wood veneer can crack, lift or suffer lacquer damage – and all such issues are expensive to put right, especially given the bespoke nature of these cars. The most desirable Corniches have the fairly conventional walnut and muted leather and carpets, and these are the cars which will be most valuable on the open market. That said, it's important to note that some cars will have been specified with more unorthodox trim when new, and that kind of rarity value sometimes counts for a lot. From a buying perspective, the more conventional trim is going to be easier to replicate if in poor order.

Check that the folding seat mechanisms work and latch properly. For drophead models, it's also vital to check the condition of the hood cover and the roof mechanism. Until 1994, Corniches had plastic rear windows that can crack and split over time, as can the original Everflex roofs. Many cars have since been upgraded to mohair hoods, something that we'd regard as a plus point for regular use.

### RUNNING GEAR

Ball joints are prone to wear, so listen for any knocking from the front end on your test drive (we'd bank on around £300 per side to replace them). The test drive will also identify whether the rear suspension spheres need changing, with a hard and bouncy ride being the giveaway. If the car is low at the back, its self-



The bespoke interior in inevitably expensive to have professionally restored





## “After the launch of the Silver Spirit in 1980, Rolls-Royce ceased production of the Corniche saloon the following March”

levelling system will have failed – at which point we’d recommend walking away, because putting this right will involve major expenditure.

It’s also worth checking the tyres on any Corniche you’re inspecting, and not just their condition. Typically, an owner willing to shell out for the correct Avons is more likely to have maintained the car properly than the sort of owner who’d settle for a set of Goodride tyres. The history of a car at this price point is obviously crucial, and so you should ensure there’s plenty of paperwork and proof of maintenance via a reputable specialist. Some owners will have serviced their cars themselves, but they should still be able to provide you with evidence of work carried out.

The familiar Rolls-Royce pushrod engine isn’t especially difficult to stay on top of, although the blocks can corrode and a proper rebuild necessitates removal of the liners. Hydraulic tappets can also wear; there was a time when GM tappets were used as replacements, but it seems that the quality has dropped and the only option is a replacement set from Crewe, which you can expect to pay around £1500 for. If the engine’s making any untoward noises, it’s wise

to budget for a full rebuild just in case.

All Corniches built up until 1992 used the familiar GM400 three-speed gearbox (a ubiquitous unit that is relatively simple to rebuild), while later cars adopted the GM 4L80E four-speed transmission. Although problems are rare if a car has been maintained well, you should still check that changes up and down the ‘box are smooth and that there’s no jumping out of gear, especially under load.

A single Solex 4A1 carburettor was fitted from 1977, superceding the twin SUs. This is a delicate carburettor, prone to warping and expensive to replace. We’d not value any post-1977 car converted to run on SUs any lower than if it were standard, as it’s a sensible modification. Later cars also gained Active Ride technology and fuel-injection alongside the Silver Spirit II. We like the Bosch injection system fitted from 1987 as it offers better economy and more reliable starting, but it should be noted that cars fitted with Zytac injection (from 1993 onwards) are more prone to head gasket failure than early cars.

Active Ride dampers (fitted from 1989) can fail, and it’s often cheaper to de-convert the car to earlier struts than it is to replace the Active Ride

componentry. While this doesn’t drastically affect the way the car drives, you should take account of this deviation from standard spec in any offer you make.

The braking circuitry is closely linked to that of the saloons – a triple circuit system that really is better to leave to the professionals when it needs attention. If the brakes are in need of an overhaul, you should budget somewhere in the region of £3000. A knocking noise under braking suggests issues with the hydraulic pump, while any LHM leaks from the braking system would have us looking for another Corniche to buy. While it could be a simple fix, the high power aspect of this braking system means that even minor leaks shouldn’t go ignored.

### EXPERT ADVICE

We spoke to Colin Ayres of Colbrook Specialists ([www.colbrookspecialists.co.uk](http://www.colbrookspecialists.co.uk)), who advised that rust can form at the end of the sills owing to the design of the hood and trim, allowing water to collect in the hood wells. The trim strip above the rear window of dropheads can also come loose: “Wind noise can be a problem from door seals on all models, and the »





front header seal on dropheads. As a rule, the later the car the better it will be, though watch the glass windows on Corniche IV hoods for cracking. Rolls-Royce went back to plastic for the Azure to avoid the problem."

Window motors can prove difficult (later cars have motors that are shared with the saloons), as Colin explains: "Their replacement necessitates removing the door cards, which owing to their design can be damaged during replacement. It's always easy to see when they've been off."

TECH DATA	ROLLS-ROYCE CORNICHE
Engine	6750cc V8
Power	'Adequate'
Torque	'Adequate'
Transmission	GM400 3-spd auto (GM 4L80E 4-spd 1992-on)
Top Speed	118mph
0-60mph	10 secs
Suspension	Independent coil springs, self-levelling
Brakes	Power-hydraulic discs all-round
Weight	2288kg

Colin sees the Corniche saloons as a particularly wise investment. "These cars are cheaper than the dropheads but are considerably rarer. By rights they ought to be more valuable, so they make a clever investment if you're prepared to wait. The cars with LHM mineral fluid are nicer to drive, so I'd want to go for one of those if I could. The Solex isn't as fragile as on a Mulsanne Turbo because it isn't pressurised, but they're still prone to warping. You can refurbish a worn one but not a warped one – if it's warped, that's it. If you do get a Corniche with carburettor problems, it's possible to convert them over to twin SUs. You have to buy everything secondhand from a Shadow II, but it will run nicer and will be more economical."

## CHOICE OF MODELS

Whichever Corniche you buy, you'll have a hand-made car in the best possible taste, which sits a cut above the standard saloons. The combination of style and substance has captivated buyers since the early 1970s, and endures to this day. Obviously, the model you choose

will depend upon your budget and your taste as an individual.

If I may stray from the factual and into the bounds of opinion, my personal preference would be for one of the rarest models and one of the most attainable: a 1977-1980 Bentley Corniche saloon in a dark metallic with cream leather. Subtle, tasteful, yet sufficiently different from the saloons to draw the eye. A car of that type (if one can be found) should easily be bought for under £30,000 in a condition suitable for regular use.

The market evidently feels differently, however, with the nicest saloons commanding perhaps £50,000 and the best dropheads well into six figures. The Corniche II, III and IV are more valuable than the original model, in part owing to their dynamic superiority as well as their relative rarity. They aren't as colour-sensitive as the saloons; convertibles especially can look quite good in louder hues, so they shouldn't affect the value. Bentley Corniches and Continentals are worth no more than the equivalent Rolls-Royce, so unless you have a preference it makes sense to buy on condition. ■



1975

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### LEGROOM ISSUE SOLVED

In the September/October issue of your magazine, I was interested to read about Dieter Philippi's legroom problem in his Rolls-Royce Silver Seraph. I experienced the same issue when I had my Bentley Arnage Red Label a few years ago, and found that it was simply not comfortable when driving long distances.

Happily, however, my dealer – Bentley Glasgow – came to the rescue by having in stock a front driver's seat extended leg kit, which I then had fitted to my Arnage. It had apparently been ordered for a customer who subsequently passed away before it could be fitted to his car, and so I was able to buy

the kit at a discounted price.

After it was fitted by Bentley Glasgow, the difference was unbelievable. I'm 5ft 9ins tall, and having this kit made a real improvement to my comfort on long journeys. I hope this might help other people, as there could be another dealer somewhere that has the same kit sitting on their shelf in stock.

**Jim Miller**  
Dundee

***That's good advice, Jim. Have any other readers benefited from this same kit in their Silver Seraph or Arnage? – Ed.***

### INCREASING VALUES

I'm writing regarding your Final Page feature published in the November/December issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, in which you discussed the increasing values of automobiles. It was a great article about how the Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow increased in value over five years, from its initial purchase in 1975 to its trade-in in 1980. And you asked whether any readers had enjoyed similar experiences with automobiles bought brand new.

Well, two of my vehicles have increased in value beyond their original purchase price, one of which is my 1978 Chevrolet Camaro. She was my first car when I was 16, and she is still the queen of my collection – my sweetheart, right up there with my Silver Shadow. The Camaro was purchased new for \$6000 and a recent appraisal valued her at \$12,600 now.

The other vehicle is my 1989 Chevrolet Camaro IROC-Z, which was purchased new for \$12,000 after I graduated from college – and which has now been appraised at \$16,000. While my 1986 Corvette has not increased in value, she has at least held steady at \$18,000 – although I did not purchase her new. Still, at least the first two cars I mention have the same bragging rights as the Rolls-Royce relative to increased value.

All of them are largely show cars today, but the Rolls-Royce is the one that really attracts attention at the shows, especially in the USA. Thank you for your great articles and what is an outstanding publication. I look forward to the next issue.

**Jeff Kelley**  
Mustang, Oklahoma

***Great to hear from you, Jeff, and to learn that two of your bought-new cars have proved to be good investments. Many thanks for also providing us with details of your Bentley S1 project, which is featured on page 86 of this issue – Ed.***



## MAGAZINE IDEAS

Thank you for finally offering a magazine dedicated to Rolls-Royce and Bentley outside of club literature. Having missed the first, I've been a happy subscriber since the second issue. Being a never-satisfied German pedant, however, I have a few comments to share. Maybe some ideas could be implemented without provoking criticism from your more traditional readers?

The magazine grants significant space to the 'mass-produced' post-war models. What I would like to see for those more 'budget' choices are regular market price updates. Indeed, many classic car magazines in Germany and France have listings of prices and trends, although such lists unfortunately miss out on the finer details – often grouping all Bentley Turbo Rs in one single row, for example. As you are well aware, there are significant differences between a 1985 carburettor-fed Turbo R and a 1998 Turbo RT. Also, there are notable differences in prices for left- and right-hand drive cars. Would you be able to obtain intelligence for a more detailed listing of prices (by condition, from pristine to breaker) and include it in your magazine? Updating it once a year might be enough.

For the detailed features you run on individual models, it would be appreciated if you could add a table listing the main costs of running the car – including the typical cost of the various manufacturer-prescribed services and the main parts that will need exchanging. I know that it's not good manners to discuss such things in conjunction with a Rolls-Royce or Bentley – but let's face it, an SY or SZ model will tempt many a guy without the funds for regular upkeep, and it would be good for those cars if they didn't have to go through the hands of such owners.

While there is some anecdotal information on the internet and in books about the running cost of an SY or SZ car in general, I've not yet found any such comparison between all the 'mass-produced' models. Someone like me, who has still yet to take the plunge, would greatly benefit from such a comparison.

Let's assume that anything pre-VW is no longer subject to depreciation. In that case, someone with a budget

of between £35,000 and £50,000 has the choice between virtually any standard saloon in good condition, from the 20hp of yesteryear through to the Silver Seraph. Older cars are simpler, but parts and specialists are harder to come by and a coachbuilt body is quite something to maintain in good condition. On the other hand, newer cars tend to require some TLC when it comes to hydraulics and electronics. What financial commitment is needed to keep the cars in the same good condition over several years?

Last but not least, I would very much appreciate you including more of an international angle. The UK is in the enviable position of having an abundant supply of right-hand drive cars and qualified experts in every corner. This is a far cry from what we see in continental Europe, and likely the situation in the USA. Some mention of prices for left-hand drive vehicles, maybe even a comparison of geographical price differences (although this risks being hard, due to very different expectations in terms of condition in different markets) could bring a cosmopolitan air to the magazine.

Well, one day I'll end up with that mid-1990s Turbo R I've long been dreaming of, regardless of the market research I'm doing on other models. Maybe in the end it's all about emotions, but I believe

your magazine would win from including some more numbers.

**Sven Boeckmann**

Via email

***You raise some interesting points, Sven. We certainly try to provide an idea of vehicle values via our 'Time to Buy' and 'Market Watch' sections, particularly when it comes to auction results in the latter. I wouldn't want the magazine to dilute its current editorial balance by becoming primarily about buying and selling (as we also like to focus on owners' cars and historical features), but I take your point about running costs. Indeed, this is a subject we'll be looking at in the next issue, as we investigate the models that are currently available for around £20,000 – and the kind of costs needed to keep them on the road. When you say that maybe it's actually all about emotion, I suspect you're right. We all have our personal preferences; and although someone with a healthy budget theoretically has a wide array of models available to them, they're likely to already have a favourite on their shortlist. There will be many a 20hp owner who considers a Silver Shadow too modern, and many an Arnage fan who won't be tempted by a Bentley S1. As ever though, we'd love to hear other readers' views, so do please get in touch – Ed.***





• THE MEN BEHIND THE MARQUE •

# W.A. ROBOTHAM

Perhaps surprisingly, high-volume small cars came within the brief of W.A. Robotham, Ernest Hives' supportive and versatile chief engineer. We take a look at Robotham's contribution to Rolls-Royce and Bentley development in the 1930s and '40s

WORDS: JEREMY SATHERLEY PHOTOGRAPHY: SIR HENRY ROYCE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION / ROLLS-ROYCE



The name Robotham is thought to originate from the Lancashire town of Ashton-under-Lyne and means a depression in the ground inhabited by roe deer. There was, however, no lying-low in the character of W.A. Robotham, a man who instead reflected the bolder roe deer traits of speedy reaction (in his case, to grasp an engineering problem) and clashes over territory ("combative with his peers", to quote one corporate source). A colleague, Donald Bastow, reckoned Robotham couldn't read a drawing, and instead had to have the part in his hand in order to understand its function. But he could fight his corner with any engineer and would pursue every project with great vigour, while commanding absolute loyalty even as a hard taskmaster.

W.A. Robotham – known as 'Rumpty' or, in office-memo terms, 'Rm' – was born in 1899 and was educated at Repton. His family were Derby solicitors, but he broke the mould by joining Rolls-Royce as a premium apprentice in 1919. These were apprenticeships paid for by the candidate's family, and it was up to 'premiums' to apply the necessary dedication: "No-one took the slightest interest in us, nor indeed ever enquired if we were attending evening classes to improve our technical education", recalled 'Rm'.

Nevertheless, Robotham endured the rigours of the production machine shop (which he described as "unadulterated monotony"), the heat treatment shop ("as educational as breaking stones on Dartmoor") and the rear axle section (where "I left behind me a collection of crown wheels so buckled



**Robotham and 'Big Bertha', the prototype limousine that made up part of a proposed range of eight-cylinder models**



as to be beyond salvage"). But things looked up with car testing routines (so comprehensive that "the marvel to me was that the vehicle was not completely worn out before it had its body fitted") and finally the repair shop.

## TESTING, TESTING...

With his apprenticeship completed, 'Rm' joined the experimental department as technical assistant to Ernest Hives, who was destined to become Rolls-Royce's chairman in 1950. It began several happy years of a "splendid job" involving visits to Henry Royce at his West Wittering or French Riviera retreats, development work and prototype car testing at home and abroad.

Adventures in the 1920s were many. The first set of front-wheel brakes fitted to a Silver Ghost test chassis caused alarming axle tramp, in contrast to the contemporary Hispano-Suiza's system, where obtaining maximum stopping power was akin to merely "crushing the shell of a grit-deprived battery chicken's egg". However, halting two tons of Parisian chic in reverse took "thirteen times the effort" when 'Rm' stalled it on the 1-in-4 Porlock Hill in Somerset.

Over in France, the team covered 500 miles a day from a road-testing base at Châteauroux on a combination of long straight roads, atrocious surfaces and mountainous gradients. The cars took enormous punishment,

with coachbuilt bodies breaking up under the strain; both windscreen pillars on an open tourer fractured, for example, when the car hit a pothole.

Tyre life was poor and roaming farm animals were a major hazard. Once, after Robotham hit a large sow at 40mph, a Gallic village gathering conducted him to the pig owner's home, hoping to shame him with the sight of ten newly-orphaned piglets. Presented with a bill of 500 francs for the sow and 50 francs of compensation for each deprived piglet, 'Rm' managed to get the local gendarme on side during a bistro session and the matter was dropped. Massacres aside, however, such testing at least proved Robotham's reasoning that if the bearings of a car could survive 20,000 miles of continental testing, they would last 50,000 in the hands of the average British owner who motored abroad only occasionally.

## SILENT SPORTS CAR

By the early 1930s, 'Rm' was what he described as the "unofficial chief development engineer of the car section", at a time when Rolls-Royce had just acquired the Bentley marque.

Driving the original 'Rolls-Bentley' 2.4-litre Peregrine prototype revealed that it was too low-g geared for acceptable bearing life. Fortunately, Hives managed to get Royce's agreement to substitute the 3.7-litre 20/25 engine with a few modifications; but when

Robotham took the result for managing director A.F.

Sidgreaves to try at Brooklands, he was blasted for making it too quiet-running.

Fortunately, major retailers such as Jack Barclay and Pass & Joyce made a virtue of this, and so the

phrase 'The Silent Sports Car' was born for the new 3½ Litre. 'Rm' prepared a tuned version for Eddie Hall to race in the Tourist Trophy on the Ards circuit of Northern Ireland. Hall would have won first time out if he hadn't suffered a time-consuming wheel-change, although he achieved a best average of 78.4mph – 9mph more than the old 4½ Litre Bentley's top result on the same circuit. He went on to score highest averages twice more at Ards up to 1936, working wonders for Bentley sales.

This brief racing involvement prompted a stepping-up of prototype-testing to 25,000 miles per session of continental running, plus up to 3000 miles in London traffic to »

**"Over in France, the team covered 500 miles a day from a road-testing base at Châteauroux"**





Robotham (far left) was part of the team tasked with putting 10,000 miles under the wheels of chassis number EX25 (a Works Development car) in 1931

tease out clutch, misfiring or boiling problems. By 1937, however, there were increasing instances of Bentley owners experiencing bearing failure on the new German autobahns, although 'Rm' was unapologetic: "If customers take standard Bentley cars on to the autobahn, they must restrict their sustained maximum to about 80mph if they do not wish to reduce the life of the engine considerably". He blamed outdated British roads for the fact that the Bentley was under-gearred for more modern highways, although as a compromise an overdrive box was offered from 1938.

Some felt that 'Rm' was too pro-American in his methods, but he was concerned that "our car policy was not taking advantage of the immense technological progress in the automobile world". Biennial visits to Stateside factories and maintaining useful contacts was his way of keeping abreast of developments, fearing that the vast resources enjoyed by American manufacturers would enable them to surpass the so-called 'Best Car in the World' at some point. As it was, the London sales manager at Conduit Street, Major Cox, thought the 1936 Cadillac V8 was "alarmingly good", and even a mid-1930s Chevrolet rode better than a Rolls-Royce. Furthermore, the American all-steel bodies were proving to be more rigid than coachbuilt British equivalents, as well as offering better dust sealing. American influence was seen in the adoption of independent

front suspension for the Phantom III onwards, while Robotham was later to secure the licence from General Motors to manufacture the Hydramatic transmission back home.

## EARLY RATIONALISATION

Experiences in the mid-1930s with the complex and high-maintenance V12 Phantom III flagship – for which 'Rm' had to oversee a last-minute redesign of its induction system before production started – made him a full supporter of Hives' proposals to rationalise the car range. He may have wondered at that stage why the chief engineer position went to R.W. Harvey-Bailey instead of himself, yet the two strong characters never clashed in their joint efforts to turn matters around. Interchangeability became the name of the game, with Robotham commonising Rolls-Royce and Bentley cylinder heads, while the new Bentley MkV that appeared just before the war reflected many subtle improvements to ride, handling and cruising ability.

Keen on the idea of a straight-eight engine, 'Rm' added two more cylinders to the existing six-cylinder engine, giving rise to the B-series range of

## "With the future of the luxury car market in doubt, designs for small cars down to 6hp were begun"

fours, sixes and eights that saw such sterling service in military appliances post-war. And if World War II hadn't intervened, the plan was to create eight-cylinder Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars as range-toppers, with a promising Rolls-Royce limousine prototype – nicknamed 'Big Bertha' – and another shorter version without a division (used extensively by Hives) being evidence of these good intentions. Likewise, had the 1939 Earl's Court Motor Show taken place, it would have made a good showing for Derby thanks to the planned unveilings of the new Bentley MkV, the exotic and aerodynamic high-performance Bentley Corniche coachbuilt by Pourtout (the sole complete example of which was destroyed by a bomb on Dieppe quayside, having missed the boat home in September 1939 after successful trials) and the Rolls-Royce Wraith – all sharing the same 4257cc engine design.

## TANK DEVELOPMENT

With the outbreak of war, Harvey-Bailey was recalled to aero engines and Robotham became chief engineer of the Chassis Division. Aircraft work needed more factory space, so 'Rm' moved his department into the Clan

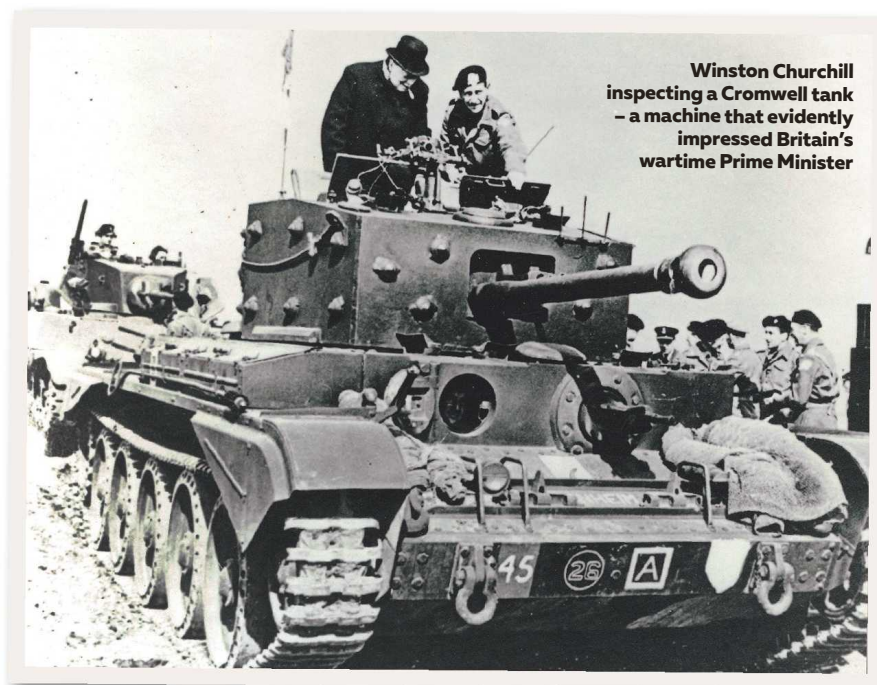




**The Cromwell tank was praised for its reliability and impressive speed, proving invaluable during World War II**

Foundry at Belper, a forbidding series of earth-floored tin shacks that were made minimally habitable. With the future of the luxury car market in doubt, designs for small cars down to 6hp were begun, although war-effort priorities soon intervened. After Robotham's team was diverted to stripping salvageable Merlin engines and creating a mounting for a 40mm anti-aircraft gun, its existence took on a new meaning when Leyland – struggling with production of the Centaur tank – approached 'Rm' for help.

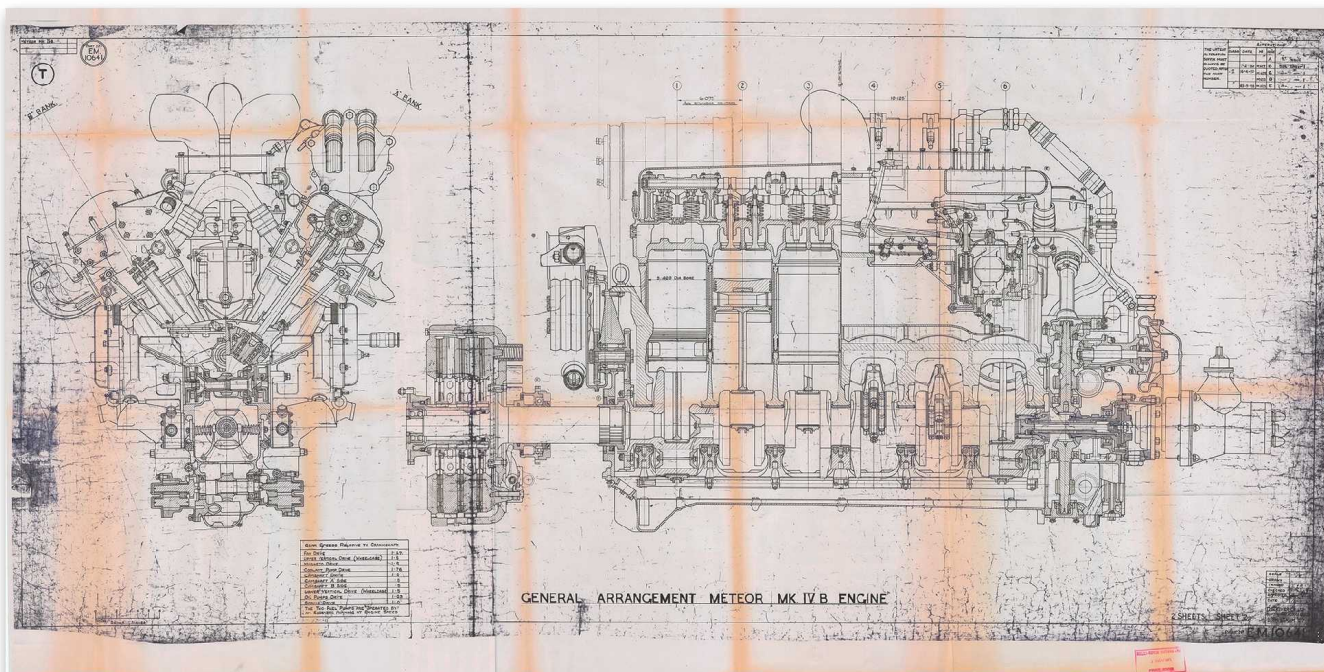
Ever since World War I, tanks and their deployment had been subjected to much military vacillation and indecision (even in 1925, Field Marshal Haig was stating the case for horses), leaving them to languish as underpowered and unreliable machines. But with another war suddenly bringing matters to a



head, a joint Rolls-Royce/Leyland team set up in a design office on Robotham's squash court, devoting efforts to adapting the Centaur to take an un-supercharged Merlin aircraft engine in place of the existing Liberty unit. Development work for this engine – known as Meteor – predominated at the Clan Foundry, and tanks became such a way of life at Belper that one of the test

staff wives was even taken shopping in one. 'Rm', meanwhile, was seconded to the Ministry of Supply as director of tank design and development, a two-year stint that both frustrated and enlightened him as to Government mentalities and methods.

Although this kept him away from the foundry most days (except weekends), Robotham and his team achieved a »



**The official plans for the Meteor engine, an un-supercharged version of the Merlin destined for use in the Centaur tank**



near miracle, especially with Leyland dropping out of the project after declaring defeat over cooling problems, which prompted 'Rm' to divert hull and armour-cladding assembly to the Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Company. He was justifiably proud of his team's achievements: "In the short space of eighteen months... a hopelessly unreliable 330bhp tank mounting a two-pounder gun had been transformed into a thoroughly reliable 600bhp machine which could carry a 17-pounder gun in a four-man turret".

Meteor-powered Cromwell tanks entered service in 1944 and were fulsomely praised by the Commander of the 7th Armoured Division, Major-General Verney, who said of the tanks' performance in their advance from south of the Seine into Belgium: "How superb the Cromwell tank has been... we have lost practically no tanks through mechanical failure. The tremendous speed when the going has been good has alone made this advance possible."

## "The MkVI's chassis and running gear, developed from the MkV, was already decided on by 1944"

In 1943, the Rover Car Company took over Meteor engine production – in exchange for Rolls-Royce taking on their gas-turbine jet engine project – and continued to manufacture successive generations of it until 1964.

### NEXT GENERATION

With the tide finally turning in the Allies' favour, work could resume on the proposals for post-war cars. The Bentley MkVI's chassis and running gear, developed from the MkV, was already decided on by 1944, but the problem of how to 'clothe' it remained. Money was limited to tooling one bodyshell; yet with the MkVI intended for production in thousands rather than pre-war-style hundreds, there was no hope of the

usual coachbuilders coping with such numbers (let alone at a reasonable unit cost), hampered by a dwindling workforce of ageing craftsmen.

Taking advice from Rover, Robotham approached Pressed Steel Ltd to discuss having the bodies built at Cowley, although the company's £250,000 quote for tooling (some £10.5 million at today's values) was something he had to take sitting down. Nevertheless, the production estimate per body was half of Park Ward's pre-war rate, and after nine years' subsequent use of the shell for both the MkVI and later Rolls-Royce Silver Dawn – with only one tooling change to accommodate a more graceful tail in 1952 – Rolls-Royce could safely say it had had its money's worth.



The Rolls-Royce flagship of the early '30s was the Phantom II, shown here on the Park Ward stand of the 1933 Motor Show



'Rm' had to oversee a last-minute redesign of the V12-engined Phantom III's induction system before production started



The understated Standard Steel MkVI proved to be the right car at the right time, although a final fling with one of the wartime small-car projects – codenamed Myth – took place between 1945 and '47 at the insistence of Ernest Hives. In Robotham's view, the company was unready for that market (having no experience of the planned sales volumes or state-of-the-art mass production) unless it joined forces with a big manufacturer. What was worse, the type of experimental engine that had made a works-hack Austin 8 go like a bomb in 1942 proved totally inadequate in a substantial four-seater chassis and body to Crewe standards. "We eventually produced a thoroughly unattractive-looking car," admitted 'Rm' afterwards. But with the prospect of yet more tooling costs and no parts interchangeability with the MkVI, the appropriately-named Myth was quietly dropped.

## MOVE TO DIESEL

The Myth's demise left 'Rm' at a loose end, while his doom-and-gloom report on the fate of small-volume luxury cars in the American market had exasperated Hives into telling him to "stop bellyaching". A favourable change of direction occurred for Robotham in 1947, however, following on from an early post-war visit to the US that left him impressed by the weight-saving use of light alloys in truck engines. He reasoned that Rolls-Royce's similar

Pressed Steel Ltd quoted Robotham £250,000 for tooling in order to produce the bodies for the Bentley MkVI



experience with wartime aero engines made the company ideally suited to producing a diesel unit, and so 'Rm' and his Clan Foundry team set to work on developing the C-series motors, with the first batch supplied in supercharged form to earthmoving equipment specialists Blackwood Hodge for its Euclid dump truck. This was followed soon after by an order from Vickers for its new VR180 crawler tractor, although for that particular project the power units were redesigned in cast iron.

Thus the Oil Engine Division of Rolls-Royce was born, which was to solve a potential personnel problem for Hives – now overall managing director – in his 'cabinet reshuffle'. Robotham had chief engineer status,

but there were other high-achievers in line for main board directorships after distinguished wartime service with the company. One was Dr Llewellyn-Smith, with his extensive management experience of Rolls-Royce's Crewe and Glasgow plants; despite being junior to 'Rm', he was appointed a main board director, as well as general manager of the Car Division. Robotham was greatly disappointed to have missed out and even considered resigning, but he persevered at the Clan Foundry – where away from the main works he at least enjoyed complete autonomy – until 1949. Then, with the proposed move of Clan's engineering department to Crewe, Hives avoided the situation of 'Rm' reporting to »



## THE MEN BEHIND THE MARQUE W.A. ROBOTHAM

Llewellyn-Smith by separating the Oil and Car Divisions, making 'Rm' a board director as well as the Oil Engine Division's general manager.

As further consolidation of Robotham's empire, which saw him elevated to managing director of the Oil Engine Division in 1954, a new factory at Derby was opened to concentrate on Vickers tractor production – although this wasn't without its problems. The 12.17-litre, 180bhp supercharged Rolls-Royce C6 engines were certainly man enough, but in their haste to outhaul rival Caterpillar with a faster machine, Vickers' multi-featured crawlers experienced excessive downtime, leading to production being stopped after a whole batch of machines had to be scrapped.

This was bad news for Robotham's division, although things improved sufficiently for it to start finding new customers for the C6, including Scammell and even a few locomotive applications. Opportunities also extended to the industrial engine market, with demand for ever-increasing outputs of generator power. In marine circles this was hard-won, with Robotham having an uphill struggle at first to convince "the gnarled master mariners of a bygone era" that a weight-saving unit running at almost twice the speed of existing cast-iron versions could promise at least the same reliability. When a banana boat using Rolls-Royce equipment broke down in the Channel, a rousing chorus of we-told-you-so from "the Barnacle Bills who had spurned our products" was only silenced when it was discovered that the generator set had been corrupted by the ingress of heavier, unrefined fuel from the ship's engines. Many vessels subsequently used Rolls-Royce generators without incident, although as 'Rm' recalled, it took "a long purse and a steady nerve" to achieve this.

### FINAL FLOURISH

With Rolls-Royce's expanding aero business requiring ever more plant space, the Oil Engine Division was moved to the old Sentinel works at Shrewsbury in 1957, after the company's acquisition of the plant. Unfinished locomotive business awaited them from Sentinel's backlogged order book, and although it was a market the



The 1946-on MkVI was a particularly successful model for Crewe during the early post-war years, with over 5000 built



Left: Had it been held, the 1939 Earl's Court Motor Show would have seen the unveiling of the Pourtout-built Bentley Corniche

company wasn't desperate to enter, it resulted in Rolls-Royce-engined Sentinels becoming Britain's number one shunter. When 'Rm' took over, the place was running at a loss; but he did much to restore morale with a new welfare hall, a private stretch of the River Severn for the works fishing club, and inter-departmental cricket (at which Robotham admitted to being a duffer, allowing the workforce a laugh at his expense).

The sustained efforts of master and workers steadily restored the Shrewsbury plant's fortunes, including a regeneration of government orders for tank mechanical spares after Rover decided to end its commitment to the Meteor. In January 1963, however, Robotham retired unexpectedly early, following a period of increasingly rocky relationships with other main board members, whom he believed were taking unacceptable

financial risks in their rush for US commercial and military aircraft business. He also missed Hives, who had retired in 1957 and for whom he held the greatest admiration.

After retirement years spent on his Kent farm, Robotham died in 1980. If he was at times "combative with his peers", he avoided making an issue of it to the outside world. As he said at the end of his 44 years with the company: "I find it difficult to believe that anyone has ever had more loyal and spontaneous support than I from his colleagues during more than forty years of business life, or a better company to work for than Rolls-Royce". As the consummate self-starter – at times with no previous experience of method or market – in addition to his invaluable input as tester, evaluator and chassis engineer, his name deserves full prominence in the history of Rolls-Royce and Bentley. ■

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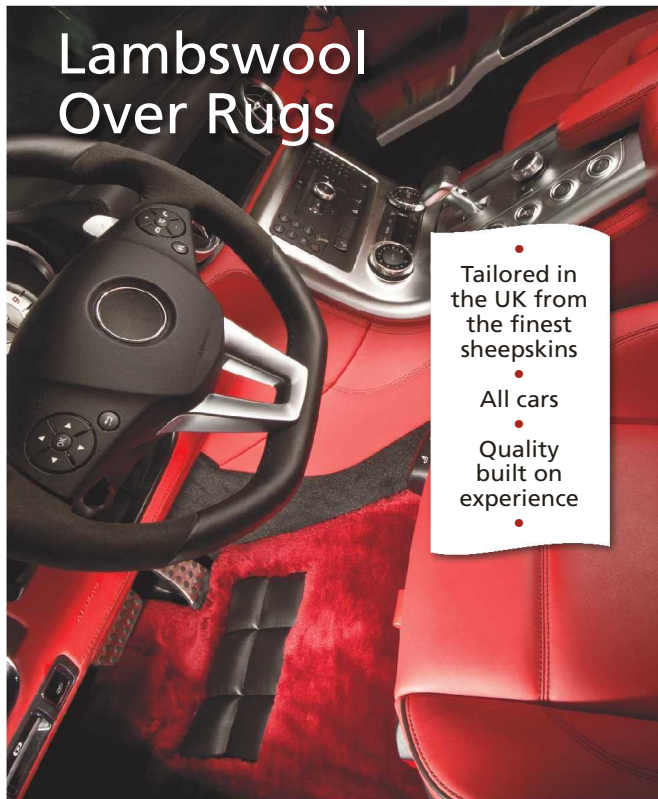
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# A YEAR TO SAVOUR

The Bentley Drivers Club is gearing up for one of the most significant years in its history, as it marks the centenary of Bentley Motors

**T**his year is a hugely important one for the Bentley Drivers Club, with 2019 seeing the club celebrating the centenary of Bentley Motors – making it an ideal time to join and enjoy the fantastic activities planned for this historic year. The ‘big one’ will be our annual Concours d’Elegance which will be held in the rarefied surroundings of Blenheim Palace, in association with the hugely popular Salon Privé event, on Sunday 8th September.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Bentley Motors, the BDC has tagged the event ‘1001 Bentleys at Blenheim’ – which, if you hadn’t already guessed, means the club will be looking to attract the world’s largest ever gathering of Bentleys in one place. Whether or not you’re a club member, we’d be delighted to welcome you and your Bentley – of whatever age – to Blenheim to help us achieve this goal. Our Concours d’Elegance will be bigger and better than ever this year, which means you can be a part of history.

One event that will be retaining its usual date slot is the annual BDC Race Meeting at Silverstone, which takes place on Saturday 3rd August. Plans are also in place to appropriately mark the Bentley centenary at this exciting day out.

It’s fitting that as we enter Bentley

Over 1000 cars are expected at the BDC’s Concours d’Elegance



Motors’ historic year, the BDC is in rude health. As we went to press, our membership total is around 3900, bolstered by a new affiliation with the Rolls-Royce Owners’ Club in the USA. We welcome its members into our fold and hope that both organisations can derive much mutual benefit from the tie-up.

So why is this such a great time to join the BDC? Well, apart from the Concours d’Elegance and Race Meeting, we are planning an array of new events that include track days and a family

open day – as well the grandest of grand tours that the club is organising on behalf of Bentley Motors. The Centenary Extraordinary Drive – the flagship event of Bentley’s 100th anniversary celebrations – is designed to attract Bentleys of all ages from across the globe. This exclusive 16-night tour (which starts on March 15th) will run from the Castle of Mey in the north of Scotland to the Brooklands race circuit in the south of England, taking in majestic routes and locations, with participants enjoying the very finest hotels, cuisine and wines along the way. Places are still available via Samuelson Wylie Associates, so call 01524 590614 or send an email to [centenarydrive@bdcl.org](mailto:centenarydrive@bdcl.org) if you’re interested.

In addition, our ever-active regions are arranging a host of extra-special centenary-related tours and events – both at home and abroad. We also have planned a number of incentives to attract new members, allowing them to take advantage of an ever growing portfolio of benefits available to all via a list of partners that includes Lockton, RH Insurance, Pirelli, Auto-Seal and Hand Picked Hotels. Whether you have a vintage Bentley or a more modern model, we’d love to welcome you to our ranks. Just contact our club office on 01295 738886 or go online to [www.bdcl.org](http://www.bdcl.org). ■



The annual Race Meeting once again takes place in early August



# Bentley DRIVERS CLUB

**F**ounded by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. The Bentley Drivers Club is proud of its ethos: a club of friends who share a love of all things Bentley. It's also the only club directly affiliated with Bentley Motors.

While some follow in the tyre tracks of the iconic 'Bentley Boys', competing in races and rallies, others take pleasure watching their modern-day counterparts in the latest GT3 race cars.

Off track, some simply enjoy driving their Bentley on the road, frequently in the company of other enthusiasts.

No matter what your inspiration, the BDC can help enhance your Bentley ownership and take your appreciation of this classic marque even deeper.

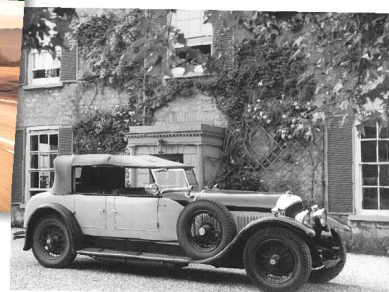
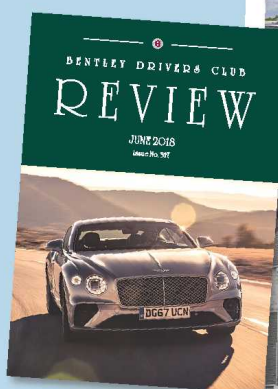
A great feature of our club is the excellent events we hold, both at home and abroad. These include our annual long-established Concours d'Elegance and Silverstone race meeting plus numerous tours and social occasions organised by our ever active Regions worldwide.

And 2019, of course, marks the centenary of the Bentley motor car, commemorated

by special events throughout the year - so what better time is there to join us?

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# OFF TO A STRONG START

After a hugely successful 2018, the RREC looks forward to another activity-packed year for its members to enjoy

**T**he Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club kicks off 2019 in style with 25 club members' Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars being invited to take their place directly behind the Lord Mayor's carriage in the London New Year's Day Parade. In addition to RREC members, these cars will carry High Commissioners, Ambassadors and celebrities.

The London New Year's Day Parade is the world's greatest street spectacular and attracts 10,000 participants from around the globe. This event, which takes place on a historic route through the City of Westminster, was attended by two thirds of a million spectators last year. Starting at 12 noon on Piccadilly, it is televised around the world on networks including the BBC, Sky, CNN and Russian TV, and there is a potential viewing of 600 million people for 2019.

The RREC cars taking part cover every era, ranging in age from a 1910 Silver Ghost right up to a modern-day 2014 Ghost. There will be six open-topped Silver Ghosts taking part, accompanied by other Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars from every decade in between.

Restrictions on road closures for assembly and dispersing have limited the RREC's participation, however, which means that around three-quarters of the club members who applied to take part are unable to do so. Not so for the first day of 2020, however, when the RREC has been given an unprecedented invitation to field up to a hundred cars in the Parade, with forty applications already received.

Benefits of RREC membership cover every aspect of owning, enjoying, maintaining, preserving and driving Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars. The club organises scores of seminars, workshops and rallies every year. Highlights already arranged for 2019 include a pre-war hands-on workshop in May, suitable for all levels of ability and experience, focusing on dismantling and hopefully re-assembling a variety of components for the 20hp and 20/25.

A one-day Silver Ghost Workshop – open to all members – is lined up for June, on the day before the Annual Rally that attracts around a thousand

cars. There is no need to own a Silver Ghost; you just need to be interested in these fascinating cars. Since this workshop is for one day only, attendees will be able to select those topics that interest them most. The workshop takes place in south Derbyshire, and is only a short drive from Burghley House for the Annual Rally.

RREC driving events are also open to all members and take place across the UK and Europe. Highlights already

announced for 2019 include the Welsh Weekend based in Llandrindod Wells in April; the Danish Spring Rally at the end of May; the East Midlands Spring Break at the start of June; and the Continental Rally, taking place in northern Germany this year, in September. In addition, there will be the regular South of England and North of England Rallies to complement the RREC's flagship Annual Rally. To find out more, go to [www.rrec.org.uk](http://www.rrec.org.uk) or call 01327 811788. ■



The RREC is taking part in the 2019 London New Year's Day Parade



A pre-war workshop is being organised for owners of the 20hp and 20/25





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# ENTRY-LEVEL NEWCOMER







Launched in the summer of 1984, the Eight was aimed at a younger audience than Bentley had traditionally attracted, giving the brand a more affordable entry-level model. We tell the tale of this important new addition to the range

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL GUINNESS

With work on a successor to the Silver Shadow under way by the early 1970s, Rolls-Royce management knew that replacing such a successful model wasn't a process to be rushed. The fact that the production-ready Silver Spirit wasn't unveiled until the autumn of 1980 underlines this. Throughout that development process, however, the subject of what to do with the Bentley marque was never far away from the thoughts of those in charge.

There was an argument – and one given serious consideration by the board of Rolls-Royce Motors – that Bentley should be phased out altogether, given that it accounted for a mere three per cent of all sales towards the end of the Silver Shadow family's career. The once mighty Bentley marque had been reduced to a mostly overlooked example of badge-engineering, and the debut of the Silver Spirit gave little indication that things were about to change.

Bentley did survive, of course, hence the launch of the Mulsanne; but as with its T-series predecessor, the newcomer was a Rolls-Royce in all but name, with only its badging and all-important grille marking it out as a Bentley. Even the initial marketing material for the two cars had the Mulsanne very much in the background, with both the launch video and the brochures of the time focusing primarily on the Silver Spirit.

Fortunately, however, Rolls-Royce was planning something of a renaissance for Bentley, a process that began in 1982 with the launch of the Mulsanne Turbo. It managed to look the part thanks to its body-colour radiator shell and sportier detailing, but what really mattered was the newcomer's Garrett AiResearch turbocharger – boosting power by an impressive 50 per cent and endowing the 'blown' Mulsanne with the kind of performance that a Bentley truly deserved.

By the time the Mulsanne Turbo was succeeded by the Turbo R in 1985 – complete with improved suspension and roadholding, plus an additional 30bhp courtesy of Bosch MK Motronic fuel-injection – Bentley was becoming a dominant force at the top end of the premium saloon market. The uprated suspension of the Turbo R successfully dealt with the criticisms levelled at the Mulsanne Turbo's handling (which was deemed by many to be too 'soft' for its performance), and this latest variation on the high-performance Bentley theme soon attracted a following in its own right. »



Bentley was on the up by the mid-1980s, and by the end of the decade had actually overtaken Rolls-Royce as the best-selling of the two marques in their home market. But it wasn't just via the Mulsanne Turbo and subsequent Turbo R that the Bentley resurgence began, as July 1984 saw the unveiling of a crucial new entry-level model.

## IN WITH THE EIGHT

The launch of the Bentley Eight was a clever move on the part of Rolls-Royce Motors, as it managed to bring potential ownership to a new breed of buyer. Inevitably, of course, one still had to be well-heeled in order to be able to afford a brand new Eight; but with a UK launch price of £49,497, this latest Bentley managed to undercut the normally-aspirated Mulsanne by a useful £5743.

That made the Eight the only Bentley of the mid-1980s to come in under the psychologically important £50,000 barrier. And with the regular Mulsanne

## "The Eight was the only Bentley to come in under the psychologically important £50,000 barrier"

at £55,240 (the same price as the Silver Spirit) and the Mulsanne Turbo at £61,743, it was easy to see the appeal of this latest variation on the SZ-series theme. It wasn't just in the value-for-money stakes that the Eight scored, however, as this was a model that also appealed in terms of specification – starting with its mesh grille, reminiscent of the classic racing Bentleys of old.

Rolls-Royce Motors couldn't risk launching a stripped-out model that lacked luxury, of course, and so came up with a spec guaranteed to appeal to slightly younger buyers in particular. Indeed, the company's marketing people used the phrase 'young entrepreneurs' during the launch of the Bentley Eight, recognising the fact that the Silver Spirit and non-turbocharged Mulsanne

were unlikely to appeal to new car buyers under 45, while at almost £62,000 the Mulsanne Turbo was beyond the financial grasp of many.

Rolls-Royce obviously needed to save money when it came to fitting out the Eight, yet it cleverly managed to do this without potential buyers feeling robbed of opulence. It couldn't offer quite the same level of exclusivity as a Mulsanne, but the Eight still had to impress with its interior treatment and its upmarket feel. Straight-grained (rather than burr) walnut was used on the dashboard and door cappings; the clock and outside temperature gauge were changed from digital to analogue; and leather upholstery in the Eight was initially an extra-cost option. In addition, the pockets built into the backs of the front



The clever pricing of the entry-level Eight opened up a whole new market for Bentley





## MEET THE OWNER

The proud owner of the 1987-model Bentley Eight featured here is Harvey Lea, who bought it just over two years ago after spotting it one evening at a local get-together of classic car owners. Harvey, who hails from Belper in Derbyshire, was immediately taken with the Bentley: "I'd been on the lookout for a V8-engined classic for some time," he explains. "I'd owned various V4s and V6s over the years, but never a V8. I was initially thinking about something American, but then I saw the Bentley."

The Eight wasn't for sale at the time, but that didn't prevent Harvey from making an offer and – after some hard negotiating – ending up with a particularly eye-catching example of this entry-level model. "I know it's the basic Bentley of its time, but it's far from basic in spec," admits Harvey. "The hide upholstery and wonderful veneer – which the previous owner had professionally restored – make sure it's still a luxurious car, and the driving experience is exactly as you'd expect. It's the perfect weekend car for cruising around in, and I still thoroughly enjoy every minute I spend behind the wheel."

The car came with a comprehensive history showing it had previously been dry-stored in a barn for a number of years, with the result that mice had chewed through a good proportion of its complex wiring system. The Eight was sent to a specialist auto-electrician for remedial work, but has been perfectly reliable since subsequently being acquired by Harvey: "I've spent nothing on it in repairs over the last two years, although I've only driven it about 500 miles during that time as I also own two other classic cars."

Harvey's Eight has been resprayed at some point (albeit in its original hue) and fitted with later-spec quad headlamps, but it remains in excellent condition to this day, with around 135,000 miles having been covered over the last three decades: "The car drives beautifully," reports Harvey, "and is still as smooth and effortless as you'd expect. It's a car I can't imagine selling anytime soon."

seats were of a mesh design instead of leather (hence their in-house nickname of 'string vests'), with lambswool rugs also being omitted from the spec. The options list was noticeably shorter than that of the Mulsanne, as was the choice of paintwork hues; but Rolls-Royce insisted that such changes were unlikely to deter the kind of sporting owner who was likely to be attracted by the Eight.

With a keen eye on its target market, the company made sure that the Eight's mechanical specification also held plenty of appeal, with the newcomer benefiting from stiffened front suspension that helped to reduce body roll. It certainly

enabled the 120mph Eight to handle with more confidence, pre-dating the Turbo R but giving an early indication of the way in which Rolls-Royce was trying to give the Bentley driving experience a character of its own.

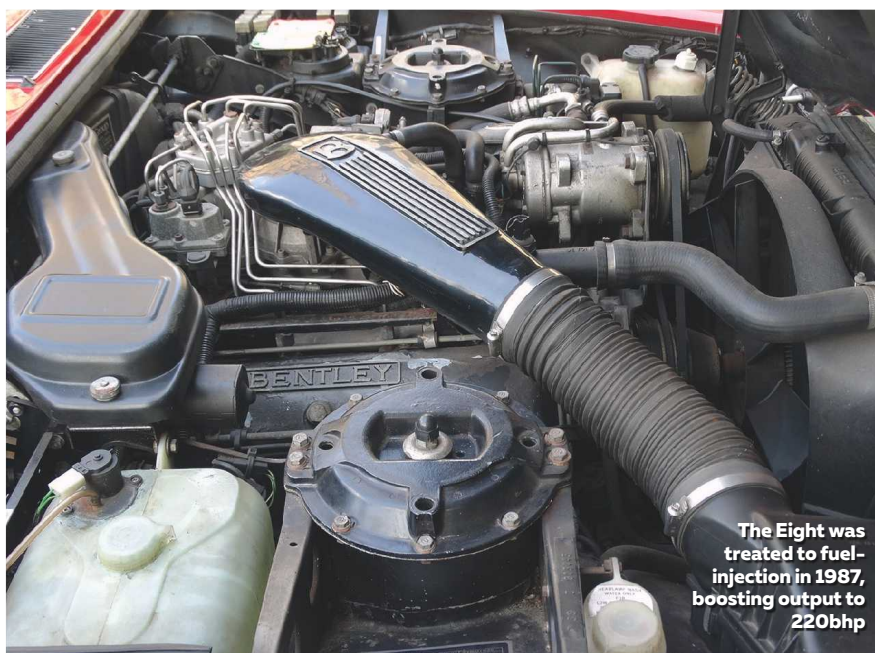
## GRADUAL CHANGES

With its relatively minor trim downgrade being combined with a welcome improvement in handling characteristics, the Eight proved to be a popular choice among Bentley buyers, achieving an impressive proportion of conquest sales almost immediately. Rolls-Royce »





**“Bentley’s newcomer also benefited from stiffened front suspension that helped to reduce body roll”**



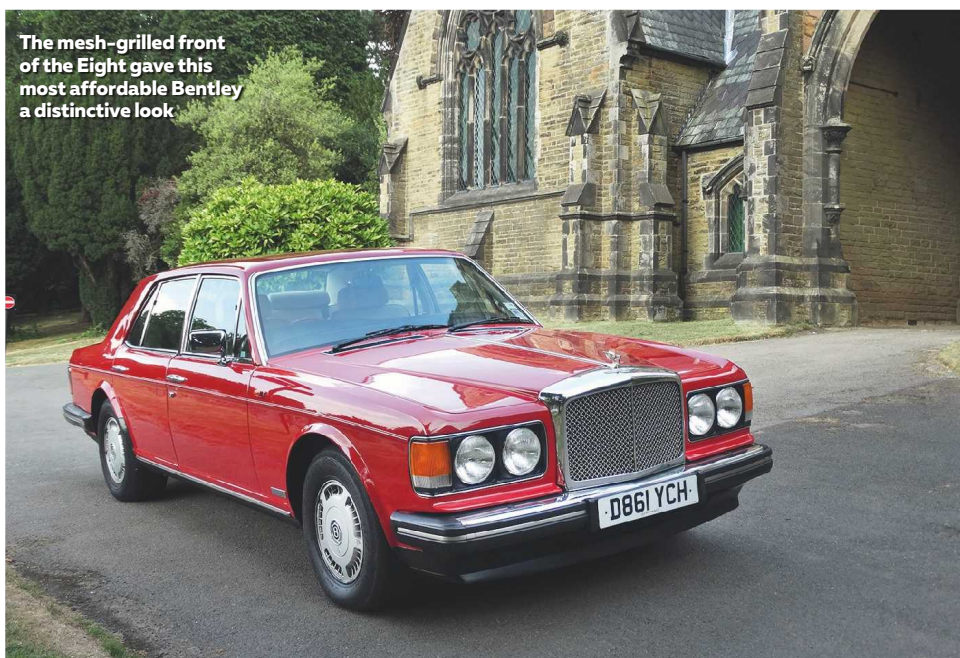
**The Eight was treated to fuel-injection in 1987, boosting output to 220bhp**

Motors knew, however, that regular updates of its Silver Spirit-based line-up were important in order to remain competitive, and so the Eight was treated to a number of specification changes during its successful career.

Bosch fuel injection arrived in time for the 1987 model year (boosting the 6750cc V8's output to 220bhp), as did ABS brakes as standard. Leather upholstery and electrically adjustable front seats (with memory) also arrived later that year, while for 1989 all Bentleys were fitted with 7-inch quad headlamps in order to differentiate them further from their Rolls-Royce cousins – a layout that seemed to particularly suit the mesh-grille front end of the Eight. Bentley brochures of the time referred to the new look as ‘purposeful’, and it was certainly a major improvement over the 5.75-inch quad lamps that were originally proposed by designers.

More changes were introduced





The mesh-grilled front of the Eight gave this most affordable Bentley a distinctive look

for the 1990 model year, coinciding with the launch of the Silver Spirit II – with which the Bentley line-up shared various technical upgrades, as well as interior improvements and a redesigned fascia. Production then continued through to the autumn of 1992, when both the Eight and the Mulsanne S (as the normally-aspirated Mulsanne had been known since 1987) were replaced by the Brooklands. By the time the Eight was in its final few months of production, its 1992 list price in the UK had risen to £81,547.

Throughout its eight-year career, the Eight had proved to be one of Bentley's biggest commercial successes, with 1734 produced in total. That was an extraordinary figure, as it meant that the Eight outsold both

the Mulsanne and Mulsanne S (1497 of which were produced during a joint career spanning 1980-92) as well as the Brooklands that replaced it (with 1619 built between 1992 and '98). Indeed, the Eight was the best-selling member of the normally-aspirated Bentley SZ-generation family; and while its production figures were inevitably dwarfed by those of its turbocharged cousins, this entry-level model deserves to be recognised for its achievements.

What started out as a UK-market trial to see how a sub-£50,000 Bentley would work ended up being a strong seller for the marque, with subsequent exports to Europe and the USA adding to its success. It might not have been the best-equipped, the fastest or the most desirable Bentley of its generation,

but the Eight succeeded in attracting a new generation of buyers to the brand. And on today's modern-classic market, it's a model that continues to offer a cost-effective introduction to the whole Bentley experience. ■

## PHOTO LOCATION

The Bentley Eight was photographed at Belper Cemetery, which lies within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site – a 15-mile stretch of the Derwent Valley between Matlock Bath and Derby. The cemetery dates back to the mid-19th century, with the two on-site mortuary chapels (Nonconformist and Anglican) being built by Birmingham architect Edward Holmes in 1858. The chapels are now Grade II listed.



# FROM THE ARCHIVES

We take a look at some of the most fascinating, most innovative and most successful Rolls-Royce and Bentley models via an array of period brochures, adverts and images

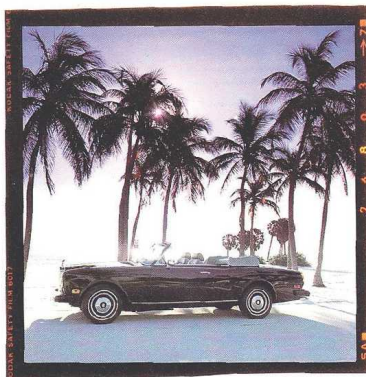
WORDS: PAUL GUINNESS PHOTOGRAPHY: VARIOUS

## ROLLS-ROYCE IN THE USA

Published in 1983, this particular issue of *The Journal* (the customer magazine of Rolls-Royce Motors) included a feature on the company's role in the USA, accompanied by this series of photographs showing the latest Corniche and Silver Spirit models in a variety of American locations – from Fort Lauderdale Beach to San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

The feature started by acknowledging Rolls-Royce's reputation for producing the finest cars: 'In a world where the big guys slug it out for volume auto sales, the supreme accolade of being the very best still rests with a comparative lightweight, a company that takes a year to produce in numbers what Detroit can assemble in only a few hours'.

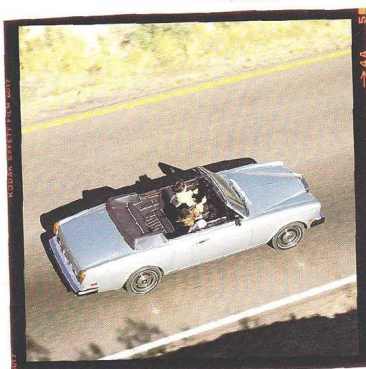
The article went on to quote the views of various American journalists when it came to Rolls-Royce motoring. Fritz Wirth, working for *Geo* magazine, wrote: 'The basic principle of a Rolls-Royce is deceptively simple – to move a leather sofa and two extravagant leather easy chairs from A to B... in the quietest possible way'. And John R White of the *Boston Globe* reported: 'Everybody knows a Rolls costs big bucks, so driving one says to the world: "I've made it big, very big".'



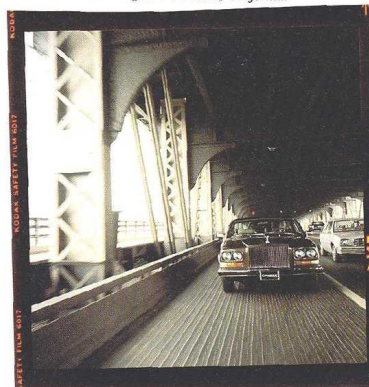
Fort Lauderdale Beach, Florida.



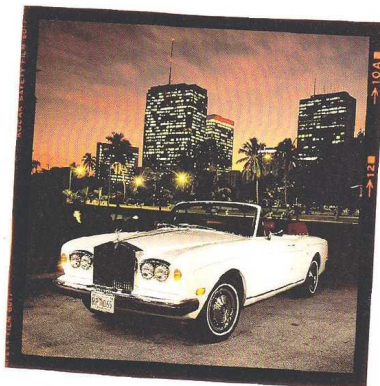
Evening near Westlake, California.



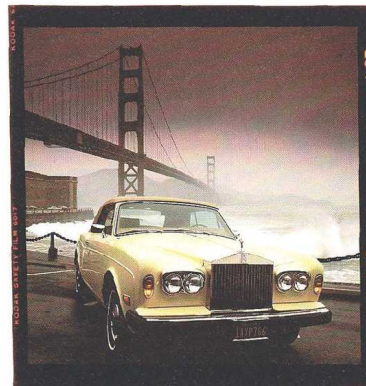
Near Scottsdale, Phoenix, Arizona.



New York.



Miami Downtown.



Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco.



## INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

August 1976 saw Rolls-Royce Motors issuing a publication focusing on its recent past, including its flotation on the London Stock Exchange in May 1973. The brochure explained that the company's 'share capital of £13,000,000 is held by more than 22,000 shareholders' and that the firm had an 'annual turnover in the region of £79,000,000'. Of particular interest, however, was this page dedicated to Rolls-Royce Motors' overseas activities.

It explained that 'demand for Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars is worldwide, and to meet it the company has sales and service facilities in most major countries'. It also pointed out the role of Crewe-based Rolls-Royce Export Services, the subsidiary that 'prepares all cars for overseas markets and maintains a close link with the factory'. The brochure concluded by predicting a bright future for the newly-independent car maker: 'The new Rolls-Royce Motors is the heir to a great tradition, not its prisoner'.



Rolls-Royce Camargue in the Loire Valley, France

## The International Scene.

The demand for Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars is worldwide and to meet it, the company has sales and service facilities in most major countries.

But to provide the closest possible support to dealers and a fast response to customer requirements, an efficient international marketing organisation is essential. One that is fully sensitive to the economic and other factors in each region that determine the potential for the company's product.

This is the task of a wholly-owned subsidiary, Rolls-Royce Motors International SA, established in August 1973. From headquarters in Lausanne, this company is undertaking the marketing of Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars in all markets outside the British Isles and is operating through a new European Division also based in Lausanne, and through Rolls-Royce Motors Inc., in the United States, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Limited, Canada, and

Rolls-Royce Motors of Australia Pty. Limited.

Rolls-Royce Motors International has a subsidiary at Crewe, Rolls-Royce Motors Export Services Limited, which prepares all cars for overseas markets and maintains a close link with the factory.

Motor Equipos SA, a Mexican company in which Rolls-Royce Motors has a minority interest, assembles and markets under licence Rolls-Royce diesels with a large local content but with major components supplied from Shrewsbury.

## Looking ahead.

At the end of the new beginning, Rolls-Royce Motors has laid and firmly consolidated the base for a prosperous future.

It is an independent young company. It continues to dedicate itself to the pursuit of excellence, but now the passion for perfection is tempered by a sharp appreciation of the realities of today and tomorrow. The new Rolls-Royce Motors is the heir to a great tradition, not its prisoner.

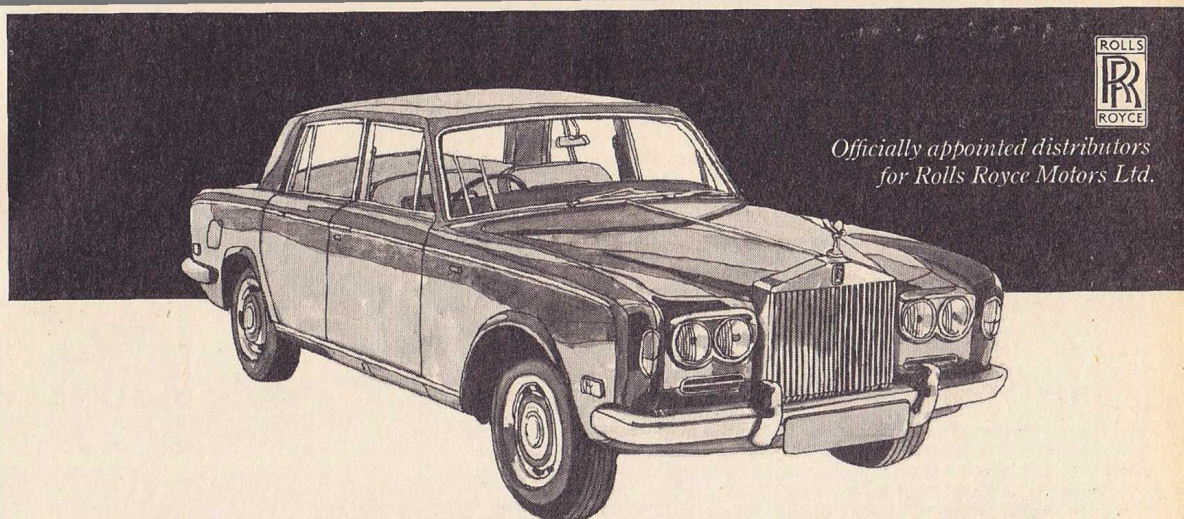
## KENNING AT YOUR SERVICE

If you were in the market for a brand new Silver Shadow in 1972, you might have been tempted to contact Kenning Motor Group, a company with two Rolls-Royce dealerships at that time. This Kenning advert described the latest Silver Shadow as

'everything you'd expect the ultimate motor car to be', and promised the best in customer care: 'The Kenning Motor Group does, of course, provide the kind of service (before and after sales) which befits a car of this class'.

London-based readers were

urged to head to Kenning Car Mart, famously located in Berkeley Street, while those in northern England could visit the Kennings showroom in Peel Street, Sheffield. Do any readers recall visiting these showrooms at around this time?



## Kennings, the finest people for the finest car.

The Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow is everything you'd expect the ultimate motor car to be. 6.75 litre engine, electrically operated automatic transmission, independent suspension with automatic ride height control.

The Kenning Motor Group does, of course, provide the kind of service (before and after sales) which befits a car of this class.

**KENNING  
CAR MART**



**KENNINGS**



12, Berkeley Street,  
London W.1.

Tel: 01-499 3434



Peel Street, Sheffield 10  
Tel: 71141




## ARRIVAL OF THE V8

The autumn of 1959 saw this two-page advert published in Britain's motoring magazines to announce the arrival of Rolls-Royce's all-new V8 powerplant, an engine that would go on to enjoy an incredibly long career powering a vast array of different models right through to the 21st century. This is where it all started, however, with the advert explaining that the V8 had been 'developed by Rolls-Royce over the past five years'.

The ad went on to boast that the new 6230cc engine fitted to the Phantom V and Silver Cloud II 'weighs no more than the six-cylinder engine which it replaces', but was capable of 'delivering greater torque over the entire speed range'. Rolls-Royce also stressed that the V8's 'smoothness and silence are such that there is little indication of the increased engine performance'.

*A new engine for the best car in the world*




The Rolls-Royce Phantom V and Silver Cloud II are powered by a new aluminium 8 cylinder engine. It gives more power with greater silence and smoothness.

**Aluminium Alloy Engine.** Developed by Rolls-Royce over the past five years, the new engine in the Phantom V and Silver Cloud II is a complete new unit (100 in. x 17.5 in. x 18 in.) made of aluminium alloy with a capacity of 6230 cc. It weighs no more than the 6 cylinder engine which it replaces, delivering greater torque over the entire speed range. Yet in smoothness and silence, we rank this new 8 in. 10 in. indication of the increased engine performance.

**High Safety Feature.** Other features include automatic transmission, power-assist steering, tilt control, and the high safety frame of Rolls-Royce designed over-engineered chassis, with two entirely separate hydraulic systems plus a mechanical linkage to the rear wheels.

**Air Conditioning.** The luxury, economy and performance units are redesigned to give increased capacity and flexibility of control. Two window demisters and two heater windows are available.



## HAND-BUILT TRADITIONALISM

The front cover of this all-model brochure from March 1975 announced that a 'Rolls-Royce is still a Rolls-Royce', with the pages that followed reassuring readers that the company upheld the greatest traditions of craftsmanship and quality. The photography used throughout made use of

various special effects, from star filters through to smoke generators, with this studio shot of the latest Corniche saloon being particularly atmospheric.

The brochure boasted that the Corniche 'starts life a little differently' from its Silver Shadow cousin, as it was 'hand-built by

traditional English coachbuilders at Mulliner Park Ward'. The brochure copywriters also assured readers that 'the skill, patience and refinement that go into every Rolls-Royce motor car are unchanged', despite major changes within the company itself throughout the early '70s.







## CAREFULLY INSPECTED

The summer of 1978 saw Rolls-Royce issuing a brochure featuring a series of ten advertisements that had recently appeared in *The Times*, including this particular tribute to the company's all-important inspectors. These were the people who had to make sure each and every Rolls-Royce was fit for its customer: 'Towards the end of the building process the hard men take over – the official inspectors.'

Their attention to detail was famous, as the brochure explained: 'Some of them examine the exterior of the car under lights of an intensity that would make many a stage manager green with envy'. But they also got to drive each car before it was signed off, with some inspectors spending '44 hours a week driving new cars along the highways and by-ways of Cheshire – the only area in the world where Rolls-Royce cars are regularly worked on by the side of the road'. Before each car reached its first owner, it had covered 'on average around 150 miles and is fully run-in'.

**GLACIER PCL 100 \***

**Bearings**

\* Plated copper lead bearings for extra fatigue strength

**GLACIER** — supply their PCL 100 Bearings to Rolls-Royce Ltd. for use in the new S2 engine which powers the Silver Cloud II, the Bentley S2 and the new Phantom V.

THE GLACIER METAL COMPANY LTD • ALPERTON • WEMBLEY • MIDDLESEX

## PROUDLY ASSOCIATED

The debut of Rolls-Royce's new V8 in 1959 saw various suppliers to the company advertising their connection in the motoring press, a list that included The Glacier Metal Company Ltd of Wembley. The firm was evidently proud to supply its latest PCL100 bearings for use in the engine 'which powers the Silver Cloud II, the Bentley S2 and the new Phantom V'. The advert went on to explain that PCL100s were 'plated copper lead bearings for extra fatigue strength'.



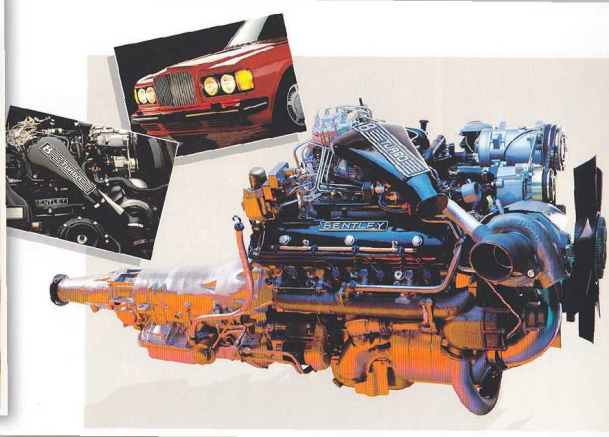
## POWER AND PRESTIGE

Published almost exactly thirty years ago was this all-model Bentley brochure, which inevitably included a generous section dedicated to the Turbo R – a car that was hailed as 'the world's ultimate luxury sporting saloon'. This was, of course, the top-performing

Bentley of the time, a car that was 'so refined that only the effortless flow of power betrays the presence of the electronically controlled intercooled turbocharger system'.

The brochure boasted that the Turbo R offered a top speed of 135mph, with 0-60mph achievable

in under seven seconds. And despite the fact that this high-powered Bentley looked the part thanks to its 'lowered body-coloured air dam, body sills and rear skirt', it was apparently still a car whose 'supremacy is worn with consummate modesty'.





# Vintage & Prestige

C L A S S I C C A R S

We're famous for selling the cars you never see



1909 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost  
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1924 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost Arthur Mulliner Limousine  
£148,000.00



1926 Rolls-Royce Phantom I, The Phantom of Love  
£1,100,000.00



1930 Rolls-Royce Phantom I York Roadster  
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1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom II Continental Sports Saloon  
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1933 Rolls-Royce Phantom II Wilkinson Tourer  
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# AMERICAN GATHERING

The Rolls-Royce Owners' Club hosts a week-long extravaganza in the USA each year, and for 2018 it headed to California – with an impressive array of members' cars on display

**N**estled in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, near beautiful Lake Tahoe in California, lies Squaw Valley, famous for its role in the 1960 Winter Olympics. In the late summer of 2018, however, it proved to be the perfect location for the Annual International Meet

of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club (RROC), with an impressive line-up of 'proper automobiles' helping to enhance the natural beauty of area.

The American-based RROC was formed in 1951 and held its first National Meet in Springfield, Massachusetts, the following year.

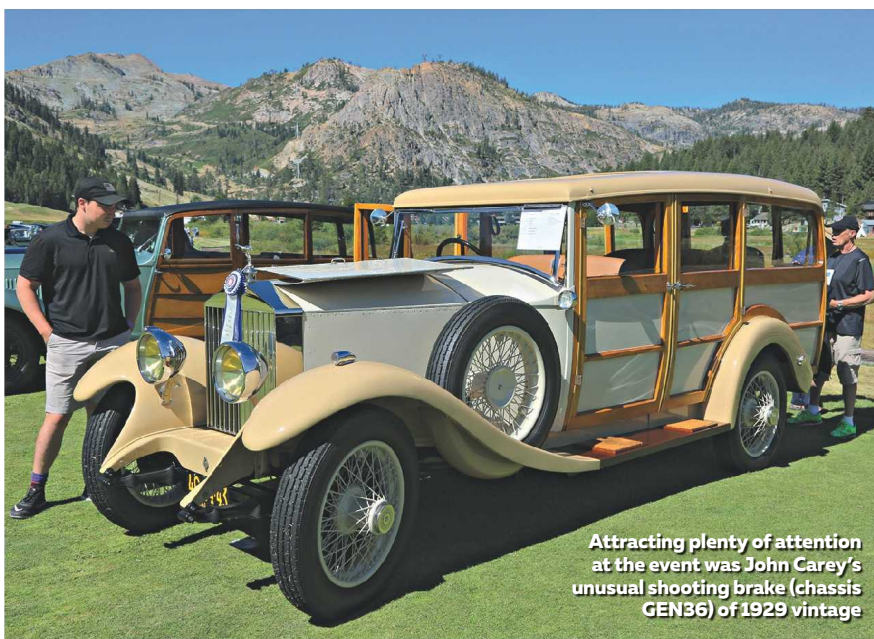
Since then the club has grown to over 6000 members in more than 40 different countries, and is equally welcoming to Bentley owners: "Our main focus is to keep Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars on the road and functional," explained the club's executive director, Mark Lizewskie, »



Among the many classics on display at Squaw Creek was this imposing Camargue – a fairly rare sight in the USA



Owned by Alan Kember is this wonderful 1939 Bentley 4 1/4 Litre by Park Ward, chassis number B61MX



Attracting plenty of attention at the event was John Carey's unusual shooting brake (chassis GEN36) of 1929 vintage



The oldest car on display was this 1912 Silver Ghost limousine by Laybourne, owned by Dr David Morrison



Among several Silver Ghosts was this 1922 Connaught limousine (chassis number 73HG), owned by Gregory Gill





**One of the more modern classics on show was this 1997 Bentley Continental T, brought to the event by Gregory Chew**



**Another Rolls-Royce shooting brake on show was this 20/25, built by Hooper in 1933 and now owned by Jeff Brown**

when we met at Squaw Valley. "Most of our members really drive their cars, and so we provide a huge amount of technical support through club publications, a members-only technical forum, and dedicated technical advisors who will give advice to members free of charge."

Other membership benefits include a bi-monthly publication, *The Flying Lady*, as well as an annual directory and register containing member and car information – something that's seen as a vital resource by many members. The club's headquarters is located in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, sharing a property with the Rolls-Royce Foundation. And while the RROC focuses on member benefits, the Foundation offers educational seminars, displays and, most importantly, the ability to carry out research on Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars. The combined office and museum space of the two organisations totals an impressive 16,000 square feet.

## MEMBERS' CARS

The most recent Annual International Meet (held at The Resort, Squaw Creek) lasted for almost an entire week and was filled with a large number of informative technical seminars, fun driving tours visiting local attractions and private collections, as well as keynote speakers from Hagerty Insurance and both the Rolls-Royce and Bentley factories. There was also a large sales area and a silent auction to benefit the Foundation, which all led up to the main event at the end of the week: the actual car show.

On Saturday morning, dozens of Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars made »



**Bloor Redding Jr displayed his 1993 Bentley Continental R – a superb example of this sought after coupe**



**This Bentley 8 Litre with Vanden Plas bodywork dates from 1931 and is in the ownership of Chris Larson**



**One particularly elegant offering was this 1934 Phantom II with Chapron bodywork, owned by Brent and Helen Heath**



**Everyone loves a Corniche convertible – and Christopher Coyle's 1982 example turned many heads**



**Looking impressive was this Silver Cloud II (chassis LSPA50) from 1959, currently owned by Christopher Silva**





**This extremely well-presented 1924 Bentley 3 Litre is a Vanden Plas-bodied car, currently owned by Richard Tilden**



**Among the vintage Bentleys was this 1929 6½ Litre, owned by Joe Harding and featuring H.J. Mulliner bodywork**



**Fit for a king is this rare 1989 Silver Spirit State Landaulette by Hooper, now in the custodianship of John Ellison Jr**



**This immaculate 1925 Silver Ghost by Mayfair (chassis number S11MK) was displayed by custodian Michael Adams**



**Period elegance was provided by this 1951 Hooper-bodied Silver Wraith, a superb survivor owned by Ronald Randolph-Wall**



**Another Hooper-built car was this 1936 Rolls-Royce 25/30 (chassis number GGM4), displayed by Dale Schell**



**This 1960 Silver Cloud II was one of the finest of its type on display, brought along by owner Richard Pescatore**



their way to a large green that is part of the championship golf course at Squaw Creek. All eras were well represented, with the earliest car on the field being a stunning red 1912 Silver Ghost limousine by Laybourne (chassis number 1937), owned by Dr David Morrison. A multiple show winner and a veteran of many tours in the UK, the car was imported to California by Dr Morrison in 2012, making its American debut at the following year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

Among some of the other notable cars in attendance at Squaw Creek were 1927 and '29 shooting brakes, a beautifully preserved 1922 Silver Ghost Connaught limousine, a 1921 Silver Ghost (53LE) with Morrison race

body, a magnificent 1934 Phantom II Cabriolet by Chapron, and a 1989 Silver Spirit State Landauette by Hooper. The top award, known as the Royce Memorial, went to Simon Curzon and his fastidiously maintained 1973 long-wheelbase Silver Shadow.

Not all the cars displayed were period classics, of course, as also on show was the latest Bentley Continental GT – a non-US certified pre-production model that was nevertheless very close to what will be available to American buyers in 2019, just in time for the marque's 100th anniversary. The GT looked stunning, attracting admirers all day long, and there were Bentley representatives on hand throughout the event to point out the car's many features and to answer any questions.

"This was my first Annual Meet as executive director," Mark Lizewskie told us. "The members of the RROC are a fun-loving group who really enjoy the camaraderie of fellow members. Some of them fall into either a traditionalist or technical group that is all about the cars, while others will focus on the social side of things. But the bottom line is that all of our members are hugely passionate people when it comes to Rolls-Royce and Bentley."

The club's Annual Meet moves to a different North American location each year, with the next one scheduled to be held in the city of Troy, near Detroit, over the week of July 22nd to 29th, 2019. For more information on the RROC and its events calendar, visit the club's website at [www.rroc.org](http://www.rroc.org). ■



**This 1921 Silver Ghost with race car bodywork is proudly owned by David Morrison – and attracted plenty of attention**



**One of the newest cars on show was Robert Nixon's superb Bentley Azure, which was built in 2007**



**This 1938 Coachcraft-bodied Derby Bentley belongs to Samuel Cunningham and boasts an impressive level of patina**



**Among several S-series Bentleys on display was Kim Spencer's splendid 1956 S1, chassis number B199LBC**



**Representing the Silver Dawn in the line-up was Dennis and Sherry Phillips' 1953 example, chassis number LSNF11**





# DETROIT, MICHIGAN

## JULY 22ND-27TH, 2019

Come to Detroit, the Motor City, car capital of the world for the 2019 Rolls-Royce Owners' Club National Meet! You will have the opportunity to visit the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant - the birthplace of the Model T, see General Motors' private collection which includes almost every concept car they have ever made, tour The Henry Ford museum, go on the Ford Rouge Factory Tour and watch the Ford F150 being built. All of this and much more! Plus, there will be a bonus day on Sunday, July 28th to participate in the Concours d'Elegance of America at St. John's.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION & A COMPLETE LISTING OF  
EVENTS, VISIT THE RROC NATIONAL MEET WEBSITE  
[WWW.RROCDETROIT.ORG](http://WWW.RROCDETROIT.ORG)**

**FOR INFORMATION ON RROC OR  
MEMBERSHIP, VISIT US ONLINE [WWW.RROC.ORG](http://WWW.RROC.ORG)**





# COMING SOON...

**ROLLS-ROYCE  
& BENTLEY** *driver*

Want to know what's scheduled for the next issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*? As always, we've got some great features coming your way.



## SENSATIONAL SILVER CLOUD

Motoring writer Martin Buckley tells the tale of his Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II – a much loved car with a fascinating history – and reveals his experiences of living with such a superbly preserved example



## HISTORIC ROAD TRIP

Ian Adcock recalls driving W.O. Bentley's 1930 8-Litre to Le Mans, a memorable adventure at the wheel of the H.J. Mulliner-bodied car used by the company founder during its first two years



## FUNERAL FLEET

We catch up with funeral director (and marque enthusiast) Paul Capper to discover what it's like running a three-vehicle fleet of hard-working Rolls-Royces



## AFFORDABLE CHOICE

With a maximum budget of £20,000, we look at what's available to today's classic buyer – from project cars to excellent examples – and reveal the pitfalls



## BENTLEY CONVERT

After owning a succession of Silver Spirits, SZ-series fan Paul Mattinson recently invested in a 1994 Bentley Brooklands – but was it a wise decision?

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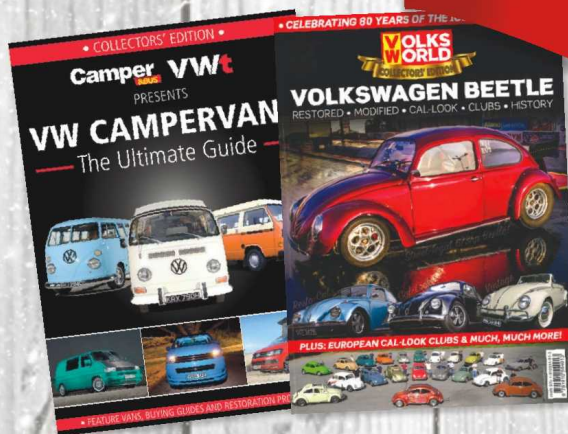
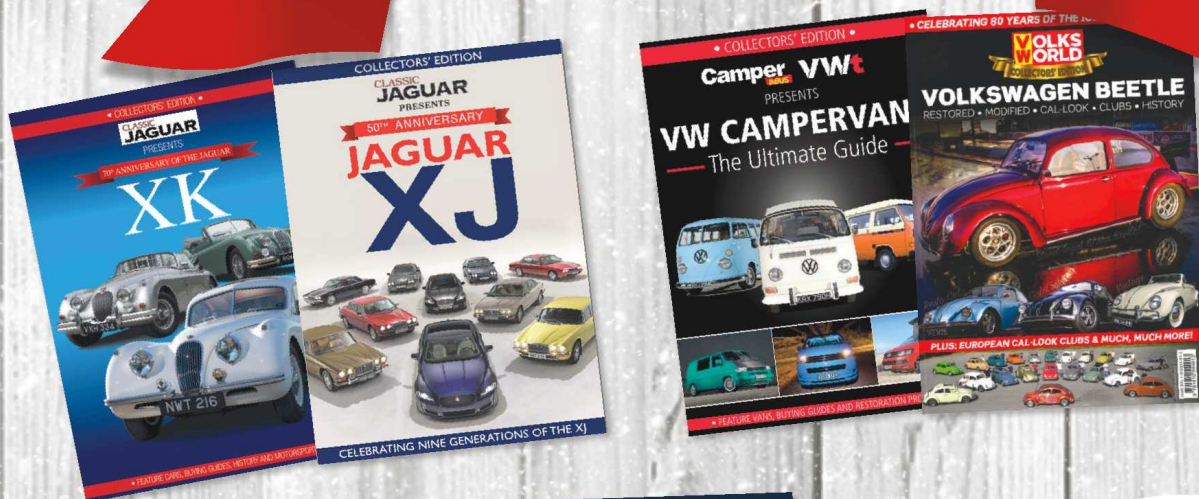
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# IT'S SHOWTIME!

Well, it certainly was in November thanks to the annual Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show, at which there was plenty to interest the Rolls-Royce and Bentley enthusiasts

**A**lmost three and a half decades on from the very first event, the annual Classic Motor Show at Birmingham's NEC continues to attract the crowds – with more than 71,000 motoring fans attending the most recent three-day extravaganza, which took place in November. With 300 club stands and a total of 3000 vehicles on display, this remains the largest

indoor classic vehicle event in the UK.

One of the highlights each year is the classic car auction, with Silverstone Auctions once again hosting a prestigious sale with a wide array of makes and models on offer. Among the headline-grabbing cars available was a 1984 Rolls-Royce Corniche Convertible, which had been gifted to Frank Sinatra by fellow Rat Pack members Sammy Davis Jr and Dean

Martin for his 70th birthday. Presented in its original Mason Black and with just 66,000 miles on its odometer, the Corniche had recently been treated to £47,000 worth of mechanical recommissioning and sympathetic preservation. After a lengthy bidding war, it ended up selling for £140,625 including buyer's premium – more than £15,000 above its upper estimate.

Among the modern classics in the



The RREC displayed a number of Bentleys, including this stunning example of a Turbo R from 1990



Turning heads on the BDC stand was this 1929 4½ Litre saloon, previously a star of *Downton Abbey* and *Peaky Blinders*



Dating from 1953 was a Hooper-built Silver Wraith displayed by the RREC – one of just twenty with this body style



Representing the Rolls-Royce 20hp on the RREC stand was this splendid Barker-bodied saloon with eye-catching colour scheme



auction was a 2008 Bentley Brooklands Coupe, owned by the managing director of Silverstone Auctions, Nick Whale. This superb 23,000-mile example attracted a winning bid of £92,250 – which is surely good value for an exclusive model that cost £275,000 when new. Sadly, however, a 1964 Bentley S3 Continental Coupe by Mulliner Park Ward (chassis number BC138XC) failed to sell and was made available post-auction for £115,000.

Both the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club and Bentley Drivers Club put on excellent displays at the show, with each organisation featuring an array of different models to appeal to fans of all eras. Both clubs reported plenty of interest from the public throughout the three days, with new members recruited as a result.

For anyone interested in this superb finale to the classic show season, the 2019 event has been scheduled for November 8th to 10th. And as it marks the 35th anniversary of NEC Classic Motor Shows, the next one is likely to be bigger and better than ever. Make a note in your diary... and we'll see you there! ■



**The very latest Bentley Continental GT attracted plenty of attention over on the RREC stand**



**The BDC displayed this 2012 Continental GT Supersports ISR – one of just a hundred examples built**



**There was no denying the attention-grabbing capability of this 2012 Zagato-bodied Continental GT on the BDC's stand**



**This 1964 Bentley S3 Mulliner Park Ward Coupe failed to find a new owner – and was offered for sale after the event**



**What would you pay for a 23,000-mile Brooklands Coupe from 2008? This one changed hands for £92,250**



**More than £140,000 was paid for this Corniche Convertible, an impressive example once owned by Frank Sinatra**



**This Arthur Mulliner-bodied 1924 Silver Ghost was provided by Vintage & Prestige for display on the RREC stand**



**Vintage & Prestige had its own NEC stand, offering this 1911 Silver Ghost Rois des Belges Tourer for £950,000**



**The Bentley S2 on the RREC's stand was a late-model example in superb order**



# PERSONAL CHOICE

Here at *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, we invite readers to share photographs and stories of their much-loved cars. Check out these latest arrivals...

## 1956 BENTLEY S1

OWNER: JEFF KELLEY

I thought I would introduce fellow readers to my 1956 Bentley S1, a right-hand drive car with chassis number B239CM. I don't know when she arrived in the USA, but I purchased her in 2014 from a guy in Alabama who had let her sit idle for many years. Mechanically she has been neglected but is definitely restorable; the body is in good shape and the interior is excellent for a car this age.

There is some rust in the rear quarters, which I have found is relatively common on the S-series and Silver Cloud models. The engine is tired but runs fairly well. I am currently rebuilding the SU carburettors, and will follow this up with some fine tuning. I have rebuilt the rear wheel cylinders and installed all new springs on the rear brakes.

Among my next tasks will be rebuilding the front brakes and improving the leather upholstery; the leather is complete and intact but needs cleaning and some work to restore the soft texture. The paintwork is a little tired, and the car will therefore need a respray in its original silver/blue colour scheme. Amazingly, the chrome is in decent condition (apart from some pitting on a couple of door handles) and will therefore only require polishing. All in all, she is a sweet old lady deserving of restoration.

I wish I could trace more of her history, but so far have found only limited information. I will be contacting the RREC, however, to see what additional information I can obtain from the original build records. Her



Jeff's Bentley S1 is an ongoing project with plenty of potential



sister – my 1973 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow – appeared in Issue 4 of your magazine, and I would be thrilled if the Bentley could share that distinction.

Here in Oklahoma, such classy automobiles are rare and certainly attract a great deal of attention. I

am keen to ensure that the Bentley ends up in the kind of condition where she can compete in our regional car shows, like my Rolls Royce. Although there's still much work to be done, such classy ladies deserve our attention and dedication. ■

## SHOW US YOUR PRIDE AND JOY

If you fancy seeing your own Rolls-Royce or Bentley within these pages, it couldn't be easier! We're interested in any model of any age – and even its condition isn't important, as we're just as keen to see ongoing projects as we are potential prize-winners. All you need to do is email us a small selection of

good quality jpeg images – and we'll do the rest. Within your email, don't forget to tell us a bit of history about your car, details of any work carried out, or perhaps your future plans for it. The more information, the better!

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# 1982 ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER SPIRIT

OWNER: STEVE TASCHINI

You could argue that it was the Bank of England base rate that indirectly led to the purchase of my Silver Spirit in 2014. After taking early retirement from the BBC, I put some money into an ISA. A year later it had made nearly £2. So, what to do with £5002 that might bring more joy?

Having recently sold 'Luigi', a 1970s Fiat 500 that we'd owned for eight years, we were looking for a replacement hobby. Many years ago, I had driven Rolls-Royces for an enthusiast who also hired them out as wedding cars, and so I knew how exceptional they are. The idea of owning one, however, had been the stuff of dreams until I searched a well-known auction site.

I couldn't get to a nice enough Silver Shadow on my budget, but Silver Spirits were very much in my range if I was prepared to put some work in... and haggle a bit. The car I ended up with was a 32,000-mile example with just two previous owners and a full service history. My friends and I travelled from Northamptonshire up to Burnley to see it, but things didn't go too well on the test drive. An emergency stop caused the brake pipes over the left manifold to burst, causing clouds of smoke to come from the engine bay – a bit embarrassing on the public highway. The owner offered to repair them and a week later we met halfway on the M6 to do the deal.

Years of living in a garage, not doing very much, had taken its toll on the Silver Spirit. But via a combination of time on my drive and the capability



Ownership of the Silver Spirit was the result of poorly-performing savings

of Rolls-Royce and Bentley specialist Hillier Hill, our Rolls-Royce is now a well-loved, reliable and well-used addition to the family. Thanks to the Rolls Royce Enthusiasts' Club, I also have the factory file for the car; it's amazing to see the attention to detail that went into her build during the autumn and winter of 1981.

Much of the underbody rust, as well as mechanical and structural work, has been sorted over the last four years. This winter the schedule of work will include some attention to the sills and wheel arches, while

inside I'll be fitting a refurbished set of wood and tackling the leather seats. Also on the to-do list is a refurbished air-conditioning unit, plus new rear wheel bearings and brake discs.

During my ownership, my approach has been to enjoy owning a Rolls-Royce without stressing about making it perfect. As a friend said, it's a highly usable classic. I love the fact that this was one of the first Silver Spirits, hand-made by craftsmen at Crewe – and an appreciating object of automotive history. It's got to be better than a flat-lining ISA, hasn't it? ■

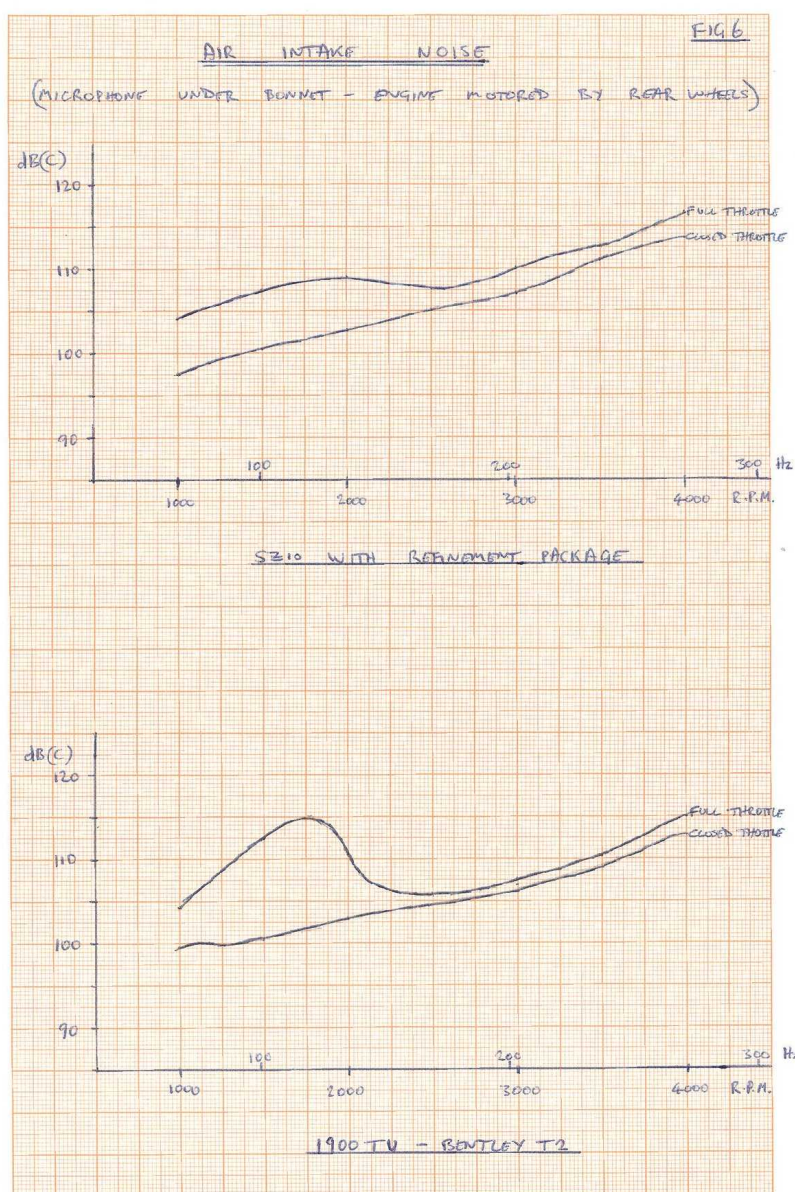




# KEEP THE NOISE DOWN!

With the first ten years of his working life spent at Crewe, Tony Spillane was involved in many aspects of Rolls-Royce development. In the fifth and final instalment of his story, he explains his involvement in reducing air intake noise levels on the Camargue and Corniche

ILLUSTRATION: TONY SPILLANE



Tony's graph shows the differences in air intake noise between the Bentley T2 and new SZ

Back in the 1970s, the chassis department was a very influential part of Rolls-Royce Motors, responsible for such vital aspects of vehicle development as ride and handling, noise and vibration, front and rear suspension, subframes, steering, brakes, gearbox and final drive, wheels and tyres, the air intake system and even air conditioning. And soon after I joined the department, I was asked to look at the issue of air intake noise on the newly developed Solex downdraught carburettor version of the L410 V8 engine, which powered the Corniche and Camargue.

Although these coachbuilt cars were a little heavier than the Silver Shadow, Rolls-Royce believed that they shouldn't be any slower, and so the Solex spec was developed to give more power. Unfortunately, however, under heavy acceleration it created more noise, and I was tasked with reducing this.

A hole was knocked in the wall between two adjoining engine test beds, and the engines joined with a propshaft through the wall. One engine powered the other (non-firing) engine. This meant that on the non-firing engine, air intake noise could be heard without any combustion or exhaust noise present. The Solex-spec engine had a flat, circular 'pancake' air filter on top, with a pair of tapering air inlet 'trumpets' – essentially a copy of American car practice of the time.

Playing around with the air cleaner casing didn't seem to get us anywhere, so I looked around for inspiration. Many European models were ducting their air intake system to the front of the car, with a 'tuning hole' added somewhere along the length of the ducting. Reverting back to car testing, this was mocked up on a prototype Camargue and immediately the noise



was much reduced. The next stage was to come up with a feasible solution, bearing in mind the space constraints and lack of an obvious frontal location for the air intake system.

Air intake noise was tested as follows. A quiet, smooth road was used and the car driven up to about 70mph in intermediate gear. The ignition was then switched off, and the car used to motor the engine as it slowed down. The difference in noise between full throttle and closed throttle was due to air intake noise, which could then be judged subjectively as well as being measured and plotted against engine RPM for later analysis and comparisons.

All Rolls-Royces of the era had a bolt-on flat steel plate above the radiator, just behind the grille. Although access was complicated by the bonnet hinge mechanism, it was possible to fit a pair of air inlet ducts to this plate and connect them to the air cleaner unit by rubber hoses. A small hole was cut in these rubber hoses to stop an 'organ-like' resonance in the pipes. Objective and subjective results showed that this overcame the intake noise problem, and so it was fitted on production cars.

## MORE DEVELOPMENT

This success resulted in me being given all future air cleaner development work, with two projects on the horizon being the turbocharged engine and the SZ vehicle project. The engine development people gave me a spec for the air cleaner system required for the turbo engine in terms of a maximum allowable pressure drop across the air cleaner at full engine air flow (there was no need for a hot air intake system, as used on the SU carburettor engines). The SZ style resulted in a different bonnet shut line, and hence inner wing location, which prohibited the fitment of the SY air cleaner system. The engine people also wanted a better hot air pick-up and a full mixing capability from hot to cold air.

Taking all of these requirements together meant that a new air intake unit was required. One early consideration was whether a rubber-mounted air cleaner unit would give any benefits, but a mock-up on a Silver Shadow proved that this wasn't the case. The air cleaner filter element

companies were then contacted, for advice about minimising air filter pressure drop, with the surprising recommendation being to reverse the air flow through the element.

On SY the airflow is from outside to inside, while on SZ it is from inside to outside. A new air cleaner system was designed, made entirely from sheet steel, with all the 'plumbing' being inside the under-bonnet area. Although this required a slightly more awkward procedure to access the filter element, it gave a greatly improved performance.

The cold air inlet duct was fitted behind the front bumper. This gave a very good result for minimising air intake noise, but there were concerns about possible water and snow ingress. To check this out, some wading tests were undertaken in Wales, on known fords across the road, which proved to be problem-free. Then some snow tests were carried out, with a test car being put on stand-by one winter while the weather forecasts were watched. We then took it up to Scotland when there was snow forecast and, after a bit of chasing, we finally caught up with the snow over the border in Alnwick. There was so much snow, in fact, that Alnwick got cut off, but we

still managed plenty of testing – all of which proved that there were no issues with the air intake location.

The turbo spec used the main SZ air cleaner housing and filter element, but deleted the hot/cold change-over unit and inlet ducting. In its place was a large glassfibre 'swirl duct' that fitted onto the end of the air cleaner unit and

allowed the fitting of a larger cold air inlet trunking, achieving the low pressure drop required for the turbo engine. Intake noise is rarely a problem on a turbo engine, as

the inlet turbine blades tend to 'chop up' the low frequency air pulses.

These glassfibre components on the turbocharged cars also became popular with some of the company's development engineers for their domestic tumble driers, in order to make a venting kit! Also, the vehicle's water pump bearings were good replacements for many a washing machine's drum bearings. Well, you can't stop a good development engineer from wanting to innovate...

Much of the air cleaner development work was documented in the Rolls-Royce technical report CCR 1219, with components fitted to the prototype SZ cars for testing and subsequently released to production. ■

## **"To check this out, some wading tests were undertaken in Wales on known fords across the road"**

**The coachbuilt Camargue employed the L410 V8 with Solex downdraught carburettor**



Camargue







Once restored and delivered to Nigeria, 'ALW 11' returned to royal duties

# OUT OF AFRICA

When Martin Hawes, now of The Beaconsfield Workshop, was tasked with restoring the Rolls-Royce that had transported Her Majesty the Queen during her 1956 visit to Nigeria, an epic adventure ensued

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: GORDON BRUCE

If motor cars could share their secrets, this unique Rolls-Royce 'ALW 11' would merit its own movie. It was assured a colourful existence when, as an unsuspecting long-wheelbase Silver Wraith chassis, it was purchased in 1952 by the eccentric Turkish-born playboy Nubar Gulbenkian, a man once described as 'so tough that every day he tired out three stockbrokers, three

horses and three women'. An oil tycoon of note, he was a frequent resident of the Ritz Hotel and cut quite a dash around town with his flowing beard, cigar, monocle and buttonhole orchid. He was also renowned for his taste in motor cars, which were every bit as flamboyant as the man himself.

He reputedly had a chauffeur called Wooster, who he'd encourage to

drive with vigour, as an aid to which Gulbenkian took to fitting a second speedometer in the rear of his cars. Rapid sports machines were certainly his pre-war weapons of choice, but post hostilities he developed a well-documented passion for the Rolls-Royce marque, which resulted in a number of unforgettable designs.

The first one, nicknamed the



Pantehnicon, was constructed by Hooper to Gulbenkian's instructions in 1947. To many it resembled the probable lovechild of a Rolls-Royce limousine and a military vehicle, and is said to have displeased both Hooper and Rolls-Royce. Some of his subsequent productions found far greater accord, however, none more so than 'ALW 11', which was immortalised in model form by French toy maker FYP. The attraction is self-evident, as body number 9867 (to Hooper design N.833) is an extremely elegant and capacious four-door cabriolet, complete with a folding roof structure that was way ahead of its time, retracting completely from view when in the open position despite its considerable proportions.

Gulbenkian shipped the Wraith to his home in France and then on to Kaduna, Nigeria, where at some stage it was acquired by the Government of the day. This resulted in its second claim to fame as transport for Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh during their 1956 visit to Nigeria, when they rode open-topped to mass cheering from the admiring crowds. Following Nigeria's independence, 'ALW 11' became the property of the Emir of Kano, Abdullahi Bayero, before being passed on to his successor – Alhaji Dr. Ado Abdullahi Bayero – in 2009.

## IN NEED OF WORK

Though still in occasional use, 'ALW 11' had by then become woefully in need of attention. The trigger to its eventual rebuild was another Rolls-Royce in the Emir's care, a Silver Cloud III, which had been treated to a £350,000 body-off restoration in the UK but subsequently developed myriad problems. With a reputation for successfully maintaining cars from the royal fleets of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Qatar and Britain, Martin Hawes (now of The Beaconsfield Workshop fame) and his colleagues of the time were the obvious people to turn to.

Martin recalls: "The Emir summoned us to Nigeria to investigate the recalcitrant Silver Cloud. Though guests of royalty, it was us who were treated like kings – accommodated in the finest of hotels, watched over by armed guards at night, and entertained by the Emir personally. Given the run of His Highness's garages, it didn't take long to establish what a sorry state the Silver Cloud was in, and as we had no hope of resolving the major issues on African soil, it was

## "It provided transport for Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh during their 1956 visit to Nigeria"



agreed the car would be returned to the UK. The more time we spent with the Emir, the more we realised what a genuine car enthusiast he was, and therefore jumped at the chance to view the full gamut of his fleet – which is when we first saw 'ALW 11' and learned of its spectacular creation and treasured role in the Queen's 1956 tour."

Though it still ran (Martin managed to drive it round the royal courtyard), 'ALW 11' also needed a level of attention that could only be provided back in the UK: "It was agreed that both Rolls-Royces would be dispatched to Britain, although with no sign of them for many weeks we began to wonder if His Highness had had second thoughts. Then they suddenly appeared without warning, and we discovered exactly what we'd taken on! The Cloud turned out to be a death trap with serious steering, fuel, wiring and engine issues, but happily drew immense praise from the Emir once properly repaired and returned to Nigeria."

## MAJOR PROJECT

Martin then turned his attention to the historic Silver Wraith: "Buoyed by the positive reaction, we now focused on

'ALW 11', which ended up occupying all of my working days for the next thirteen months. What had initially appeared to be a solid car turned out to be anything but, as thirty years' exposure to dust and sand had rotted its ash frame, which now needed totally replacing. The strip-down revealed all manner of other issues, from a monkey's skeleton found under the rear seat to acres of filler in the bespoke bodywork. Every day brought a new challenge. Nevertheless, slowly but surely, a replacement frame was constructed and the body was rid of its filler and persuaded back into shape."

One of the few deviations from original spec came via the all-important folding roof, explains Martin: "A fresh top-quality hood was manufactured, incorporating a single rear window which was deemed preferable to the original two narrow ones. The Rolls-Royce was rewired and the mechanical components investigated in detail, as a result of which pretty well every item was overhauled. It was around this stage in the project that we made the move to larger premises, and so had the added pressure of ensuring all the car's components arrived intact and undamaged."

"After suitable preparation, the refitted body was sprayed in its »



## FEATURE CAR

### EMIR OF KANO'S SILVER WRAITH



With the hood fully retracted, this special Silver Wraith is impressively elegant



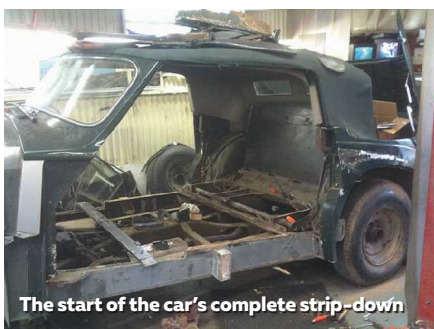
Note the rear-mounted speedometer and freshly installed handrail

original colours of green over silver, and the interior was fully refurbished and re-trimmed in a notably tough grade of magnolia-coloured hide. True to his reputation, Gulbenkian had installed a second speedometer in the rear of this Rolls-Royce, which was still in place and merely needed reconditioning to bring back to life."

One minor but useful modification made to the car was the installation of a bespoke rear handrail, explains Martin: "Among the reference photos we'd collected was one of His Highness standing in the rear compartment, enthusiastically waving to his people, during which it was clear he had only the rear side window to call upon for support – a situation that was less than ideal for either him or the window! Our solution was to install an original chrome-plated Rolls-Royce badge bar to the top of the division, a job that sounds easy enough but actually involved adding steel to the B-pillars and the floor, as well as rebuilding the division itself. Up front, meanwhile, Rolls-Royce aficionados will recognise the Spirit of Ecstasy as one of the rare 'kneeling' versions."

## UNIQUE CHALLENGES

A coachbuilt car can, of course, present its own particular set of challenges to any restorer, as Martin admits: "While parts for standard steel Rolls-Royce and Bentley saloons are pleasingly



The start of the car's complete strip-down



The engine required a major overhaul



'ALW 11' was barely recognisable by this stage



Those rear wheel spats are simply enormous



The huge headlamp cavities dominate the front



Repainted and well on its way to completion





The Silver Wraith being offloaded at Heathrow prior to its return to Nigeria



'ALW 11' and the Silver Cloud III, both of them restored in Beaconsfield

## "The strip-down revealed various issues, as well as a monkey's skeleton found under the rear seat"

plentiful, most items on the Gulbenkian car are bespoke. The large perspex covers for the integral front lights are an obvious case in point, both of which needed replacing – and while metal fabrication was one of our in-house fortes, the best of specialist suppliers had to be sought for components like those covers. The final challenge was satisfying His Highness's requirement to play his anthem at volume via the car. In the end we opted for a simple, modern solution that avoided destroying any of the vehicle's originality, by recording the music onto an iPad to which speakers could be

connected as and when required."

As is the way with such projects, what seemed like a never-ending job was suddenly complete, and the now pristine Wraith was carefully prepared for its journey back to Africa: "Having preceded its arrival, and being excited about presenting the car to the Emir, you can imagine our absolute horror at seeing it arrive in Kaduna on the back of an ageing Coca-Cola lorry, to which it was secured by a single strap running up and over the new hood. Close inspection revealed this had unsurprisingly damaged the high quality mohair fabric, exposing several

inches of the lighter backing material.

As a temporary solution, we scoured the local shops for a felt-tip pen in a suitable shade of green, and also had to deftly tease out a dent that had been inflicted on a front wing. Only then were we able to witness first-hand the Emir's joy at seeing his family heirloom in as-new condition once more."

The hospitality provided for Martin and his colleagues was just as lavish as before: "We were again made incredibly welcome by our host, who insisted that we participate in the Durbar festival – a celebration marking the end of Ramadan in some Nigerian cities. Having equipped the royal garage with a suitable selection of tools and parts, the intention was for us to then return on a regular basis in order to maintain the Rolls-Royces and other members of his Highness's car collection. It was also proposed that we would fully restore his rare Mercedes-Benz Adenauer four-door cabriolet. However, mounting troubles within Nigeria sadly scuppered these grand plans and we never saw the Emir or his cars again."

Still very much involved in the maintenance, repair and restoration of Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, Martin Hawes is these days a director of The Beaconsfield Workshop ([www.thebeaconsfieldworkshop.co.uk](http://www.thebeaconsfieldworkshop.co.uk)) and, alongside partner David Redrup, gets to work on a wide array of different models: "Some great projects have passed through our business in the last few years, but nothing has yet surpassed the story of 'ALW 11' – a car that combined unforgettable design with a unique chain of royal connections." ■



Replica covers for the lights were created by a perspex specialist





## • THE BIG PICTURE •

**Six decades ago, Crewe was kept busy building the Silver Cloud and S-series models – with this nostalgic image showing the work involved in making sure each bodyshell was perfect**

WORDS: PAUL GUINNESS PHOTOGRAPHY: BENTLEY MOTORS





This fascinating photograph dates from the late 1950s and shows a trio of Silver Cloud and S-series bodyshells having rectification work carried out by craftsmen at Crewe, each car featuring various chalk marks showing where minor issues needed sorting. Even the tiniest imperfections would have been spotted, marked and then dealt with, ensuring that each bodyshell was in tip-top condition before making its way through to the paint shop.

Rolls-Royce and Bentley buyers expected perfection, of course... and the experts at Crewe knew how to supply it. The Silver Cloud and S-Series went on to be a major success, remaining in production for a decade and selling strongly throughout the three generations of each model. A total of 6699 Silver Clouds and 7164 Bentley S-series cars ended up rolling out of Crewe during their ten years on sale.



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## BENTLEY

### ARNAGE



**52,000 miles, £27,995.** It is a 2005 facelift Mulliner model. It has a lovely biscuit interior which compliments the black exterior, the majority of these later cars have the black interior which ages poorly and doesn't quite do the trick. The wood is also lovely in this particular car. Please call 0797 0024242.  
6390

### CONTINENTAL R



**1992, 85,000 miles, £36,495.** Royal blue coach work, full leather magnolia hide with dark blue piping and lambs wool rugs. Fully documented history from new with receipts. Professional LPG conversion with certification. Economic, appreciating investment and a joy to drive. Please call 07970 886345, Vale of Glamorgan.  
4799

### CONTINENTAL T



**1998, 28,000 miles, £94,950.** This Continental T has a very low mileage and a full service history, it is in excellent condition. Finished in silver pearl with light grey hide and contrasting Slate piping. Please call 01737 844999 (T).  
6630

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**1990, 83,000 miles, £14,950.** Finished in Vermillion with cream coach lines and sports wheels. Magnolia sports interior piped in St James with St James carpets piped in Magnolia. Known to us for the last 11 years and has been lovingly cared for and maintained. This car is stunning in every way and comes with a full history. Please call 02085 679729 (T).  
6477

### TURBO R

**1990, 110,000 miles, £5,000.** Good example for year. Excellent interior and exterior and long MoT July 2019 with service history. Must be seen. Please call 01227 281240, Kent.  
6356

### TURBO R LWB



**1997, 105,000 miles, £11,995.** A fantastic looking and driving car. Top of the range classic. Royal blue metallic with blue piped magnolia hide interior. Please call 01704 211908, Lincs.  
6133

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### SHADOW II



**1980, 42,000 miles, £32,500.** Fully documented service and maintenance history. Immaculate throughout with a fresh MoT and ready for home and continental touring in style and comfort. Please call 01403 871252 or email randcbrailley@gmail.com.  
5903

### SILVER SHADOW



**1975, 114,000 miles, POA.** Full history from new. Peacock blue with champagne leather interior. Although this car is now tax and MoT free it has an MoT until October 2019. Drives well and is a real head turner. Please call 01384 422178, West Midlands.  
5863

### SILVER SHADOW II

**1977, 105,000 miles, £12,995.** An excellent looking and driving car. Unmarked gold coachwork. Walnut leather interior and fully serviced by qualified engineer. A well above average roller. Please call 07860 266949, Lancs.  
6100

### SILVER SHADOW II



**1979, 57,000 miles, £36,000.** A beautiful and totally original left hand drive Silver Shadow in exceptional condition throughout. Please call 01732 886002 (T).  
6460

### SILVER SPIRIT



**1986, 60,968 miles, £15,000.** Maintained by Rolls-Royce main agents up until 2011. Full service history. A wonderfully maintained example, simply outstanding. Please call 01732 886002 (T).  
6466

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6129

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6113

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5774

### ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER SHADOW MASCOT



**£225.** On base with RR logo and RR markings around the base. Please call 07968 659967, Kent.  
6263





## PAUL GUINNESS

A press release issued almost two decades ago announced the latest Rolls-Royce and Bentley sales figures – followed by an explanation of the marques' mighty share of the Exclusive Price Point market

**A**mong some fascinating paperwork I came across recently was a press release issued by Volkswagen-owned Rolls-Royce & Bentley Motor Cars in October 1999, reporting on the firm's sales figures for the first nine months of that year: 'During the period January to September 1999, 1080 motor cars have been sold worldwide compared to 1115 in the first nine months of 1998, a reduction of 3.1%'.

This was, of course, a turbulent time for both marques, with Volkswagen and BMW almost coming to corporate blows when it came to ownership, production rights and so on. As has already been reported numerous times in this magazine, the situation would eventually be resolved by Volkswagen retaining Bentley, with an agreement for BMW to then take on Rolls-Royce from the end of 2002. This left the final year of the '90s and the first two years of the 'noughties' as a slightly awkward interim period, as speculation mounted about the future of each marque.

Naturally, however, the press release tried to put a positive spin on things: 'The introduction of our 2000 model year motor cars, with increased passenger accommodation and additional features such as satellite navigation in the Rolls-Royce Silver Seraph and Bentley Arnage, have been very well received'. The decision to reintroduce the classic British-built V8, however, was the biggest news of all for Bentley, effectively usurping the smaller twin-turbo V8 supplied by BMW: 'The greatest welcome has been accorded to the introduction of our legendary six-and-three-quarter litre V8 into the Arnage Red Label'.

Deliveries of the re-engined Arnage would begin in the November, which the press release admitted would 'lead to some "holdback" between now and then' as customers waited for the latest-spec models. But it would, insisted the company, 'start us off on a high note in 2000'.

Accompanying the press release was an analysis of what the firm referred to as the High Luxury Sector (HLS) of the



### "The Exclusive Price Point sector saw Rolls-Royce and Bentley achieving an impressive market share of 54%"

market, which it defined as cars costing upwards of £60,000 in the UK. It stated that out of a total worldwide car market of 55 million cars, HLS models accounted for just 55,000 units – with the German marques of Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Porsche taking 84% of that figure. By comparison, Rolls-Royce & Bentley Motor Cars had a worldwide HLS market share of just 3.0%. But the company recognised that its range went much further upmarket than most manufacturers, at which level its market share was drastically improved.

The Exclusive Price Point (EPP) sector of the time, which in the UK referred to cars costing £110,000-plus, saw Rolls-Royce and Bentley achieving an impressive market share of 54%. At

that price point, the German threesome mentioned earlier had no presence, leaving only Ferrari (36%), Lamborghini (7%) and Aston Martin (3%) to fill the rest of the EPP sector of the market.

The conclusion of the report was that 'the focus of our efforts is on Bentley', which wasn't surprising given Volkswagen's very short-term involvement with the Rolls-Royce marque. More important, however, was the company's major share of the upper-end of the car market, where well over half of all EPP buyers twenty years ago were opting for Rolls-Royces and Bentleys. The future for both marques looked bright, even if their direction in terms of new model development was still open to speculation. ■





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