



THE CAPITAL LETTER

Quarterly journal of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia (A.C.T. Branch) Inc.
Serving the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding areas.



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DEDICATED TO ROLLS-ROYCE & BENTLEY ENTHUSIASTS

Autumn 2020



BEP46078

1993 Bentley Brooklands saloon

Graham & Rosa Cornish (Vic.)




From the Editor & President

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Just as our last edition closed for press came the news that 1993 Bentley Brooklands BEP46078, then owned by our Branch members Rob & Bonnie Young, was being acquired by Graham & Rosa Cornish (Vic.). Graham is the son of members David & Thea Cornish, from whom Rob Young bought the car after David passed away. Graham & Rosa already had the family Bentley R-Type in their garage, so with the Brooklands returning, both of David & Thea's cars are reunited in the Cornish family. Once home in Victoria, the 'YM-002' registration number previously fitted was reinstated. See front cover and below.

Five cars of our Branch met nine of the N.S.W. Branch for our annual joint run on February 16th (counting Federal President Joe Quattrocchi's car twice as he is a member of both Branches). See photographic coverage from page 4. During the event David Neely spoke on the delivery of the first Rolls-Royce to be imported into Australia, and about C.B. Kellow the importer, who incidently changed his first name by deed poll, 

Below: Just before leaving Martin & Manuela Bennett's home with their newly-acquired, or perhaps re-acquired, 1993 Bentley Brooklands BEP46078 are Graham & Rosa Cornish (Vic.). Photograph by the Editor.



Front Cover: 1993 Bentley Brooklands BEP46078, now owned by Graham & Rosa Cornish (Vic.), seen some years ago when owned by Graham's parents, David & Thea. The number plate was a Victorian replica of the New South Wales one that the car wore when it was new, in the role of York Motors' Bentley demonstrator. Photograph by the Editor.

from Henry to Charles. Kellow had earlier made a name for himself in the 1890s as a racing cyclist, firstly using 'penny-farthings' and later the new 'safety' bicycles. He is said to have once met Charles Rolls. Kellow-Falkiner Motors in Melbourne was the Rolls-Royce & Bentley 'special retailer' for several decades, serving Victoria and the Southern Riverina district of New South Wales until well into the Silver Spirit period.

Somewhat unusually we had events only a fortnight apart, with 'Wheels', at Queanbeyan Showground, on March 1st. People were clearly avoiding large gatherings, because several clubs' displays were noticeably 'light-on', including ours. Only four of our Branch cars participated – none of them from the A.C.T. – and no Bentleys in complete contrast to last year! A single page (13) in this edition was sufficient to cover that!

The dreaded virus struck again in a far bigger and more far-reaching way with the cancellation of the Federal Rally. I for one was very much looking forward to the 'Great Gatsby' Rally in Leura into which a hard-working New South Wales Branch Federal Rally organising committee had invested so much devoted effort. The cancellation of a Federal Rally is an unprecedented step that would only be taken in circumstances of the utmost unavoidability.

Similarly, in our Branch a decision – the only possible one in the circumstances – has been made to avoid all meetings and events until at least the end of June, after which the situation will be re-assessed. The Events Calendar below reflects that decision, and will be subject to further changes should they become necessary, as well as to 'flesh out' the later part of the year's events if we receive the 'all clear'. This edition of *The Capital Letter* also reflects the curtailed activities of the Club by being temporarily reduced from the usual 20 pages to 16. There is nevertheless an excellent article by Ian Irwin in this edition (pages 10 to 12) which is a tale of determination, triumph, disappointment, happy coincidence and a very strong element of 'all's well that ends well'.

While this edition was being prepared for press came the sad news that member Doug Bindon-Howell had passed away. Doug joined the A.C.T. Branch in 2001 and during his membership was the owner of two Silver Spirits, both 1985 models, ASF13853 and ASF13486, the latter of which was used as his daily driver and was still in his possession at the time of his death. Our sympathy and condolences to Doug's family.

Martin Bennett
Branch President

Branch Events Calendar

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

JULY

Sunday July 5th: 'Cars & Coffee' morning at Sutton Bakery. This was well-supported last year and we look forward to your company again to break the events 'drought'. Car discussions over coffee and inspections in the Bakery car-park.

AUGUST

Wednesday August 5th: Branch Meeting at the Ainslie Football Club. Dinner from 6.00 p.m., Meeting at 7.30.

Sunday August 9th: Vineyard run to Shaw's of Murrumbateman, where you can sample award-winning cool-climate wines and enjoy lunch at Olleyville restaurant within the winery.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday September 20th: 'Cars & Coffee' run to Braidwood Bakery. Stay on for lunch if you choose.

OCTOBER

Wednesday October 7th: Branch Meeting at the Ainslie Football Club. Dinner from 6.00 p.m., Meeting at 7.30.

DECEMBER

Wednesday December 2nd: Branch Meeting at the Ainslie Football Club. Dinner from 6.00 p.m., Meeting at 7.30.

Saturday December 5th: End-of-year Get-together. Details to follow.

Sunday December 6th: 'Terribly British Day', Queanbeyan Park.



Above: John Matheson & Jeanne Eve (N.S.W.) drove their Bentley Bentayga.

Joint Event with the New South Wales Branch 'Riversdale', Goulburn, N.S.W.



Sunday February 16th



Below: Bentley Continental GTs: the white one nearest the camera is Ian & Tina Oliver's 2016 model, BNG56355, while the silver car, BNH61903, a year newer, is owned by Mal & Robyn Henderson (N.S.W.).





Above: Nearest the camera is John Tetley's 1981 Bentley Mulsanne BSB03228, while behind is your Editor's 1950 Silver Wraith WHD101.

Below: Keith Wherry & Marie Harland brought their 1991 Bentley Continental Convertible BDM30454. Even after more than half a century since its introduction, what is essentially the Bentley T-Series drophead coupé coachwork by Mulliner Park Ward is still a head-turner. Its mohair hood and subtle wheel-arch trims are really nice touches.





Above: Federal President Joe Quattrocchi, a member of both participating Branches, brought his 1986 Bentley Mulsanne saloon, BSG14738.

Below: The badges on the back of the boot of this car indicate that it is a Bentley Turbo R. It is in fact a 1993 edition of that high-performance model, BRP46286, with picnic tables in the backs of the front seats and other nice features.





Above: 1977 Silver Shadow II SRH30408, owned by David Marshall-Martin (N.S.W.). These cars age so gracefully that it is amazing, well over 40 years on, that they still look so good.

Below: 1997 Silver Spur ANH59112, owned by Nick Illek (N.S.W.). Again, picnic tables behind the front seats of this long wheelbase saloon.





***Above:** New South Wales Branch President Jeanne Eve (centre) addressing the throng in the 'Riversdale' dining room.*

***Below:** Former Federal President and Honorary Life Member Keith Wherry (N.S.W.).*



***Above:** Club Historian David Neely (N.S.W.) addressing the group on the background to the first Rolls-Royce to arrive in Australia – 1906 'Heavy Twenty' 40509.*



Above: 1985 Silver Spirit ASF13836, owned by David & Linda Neely (N.S.W.).

Below: When we adjourned to lunch at Rose's, a lifetime of local knowledge enabled Bryce Ronning to secure the premium parking spot, which was a good look with WFC67 the subject of much admiring attention.





Above: The writer aged 26 pretending he owns the Gunnedah Spyker. An identical model to the Queanbeyan car.

My Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost connection, and a Spyker that came to the rescue . . .

By Ian Irwin © March, 2020

My interest in Rolls-Royce Silver Ghosts began in the early 1950s, when as a young lad, I had read about them, and enthusiastically developed the most unlikely ambition to eventually own one. Whilst I was still in short pants, I expressed the ambition to own such a car at the earliest possible opportunity in life. Parental wisdom and counselling failed dismally. I was not to be put off easily. Other cars came along in the interim, but all were casual affairs, and the passion to own a Ghost persisted.

Early in 1960, and holding my Driver's Licence for just a couple of years, I took my Dad to look over some Rolls-Royce cars and chassis, five in all. He was unimpressed, despite them being Ghost and Phantom I cars. Every one of them needed a major restoration, and their general condition confirmed his earlier views.

Fast forward six years, and then a teacher in Canberra, I acquired the remains of a rare 1905 Spyker car near the Queanbeyan River, a couple of miles out of town.

These to the Dutch, were the pride of the cars of Holland. They were magnificently engineered. Only a handful of them have survived. One, with the round radiator, played second-fiddle to the Darracq, 'Genevieve' in the film of that name. As rare as they come, highly desirable, but my Spyker was incomplete. It's a great story for another day. Spare parts were non-existent despite an extensive global search.

There were two similar Spyker cars in Australia, and be-

Below: The 1906 model 20 Horsepower Spyker from Queensland.



tween 1968 and 1970, I had met their owners and got to inspect these cars at first hand, one from Brisbane, the other in Gunnedah, N.S.W. I contemplated the rebuild, but in the era, it was 'a bridge too far'. Both sold to Holland at prices vastly in excess of Edwardian Silver Ghosts of the time, one of them for more than four times the value of our brand new house purchased in 1967.

Then came an offer from a Spyker collector in Holland. Offers flowed and were rejected time and again. The Dutch billionaire, on business, called to see the parts. More offers, refusals and my Dad told me he thought I was looking a gift horse in the mouth.

Then after four years, Fate jumped in, and two 'Edwardian' Silver Ghost chassis, both part restored were offered for sale in Sydney. I drove to Sydney, by which time one had been sold. I bought the other, offered as the 1913 chassis, 'Chassis 2678'.

My long-held dream had come true!

Further negotiations with the 'Dutch connection' were successful, and made way for the new era.

Having acquired this Silver Ghost, of the Edwardian era, I was proud of my achievement in closing the deal. I was not yet 30 years of age. Ghost owners from near and far called in to view my acquisition. Some spent a long time inspecting many aspects, under the chassis, and under the bonnet. Others stopped in for a glimpse and a chat.

I acquired Rolls-Royce factory details of 2678. It was built as a Colonial chassis, to be fitted with London-Edinburgh Colonial coachwork. The original intent was that the car would be bodied by Vanden Plas of Westminster. I commenced negotiations with Wilkinson's of Derby for the construction of London-Edinburgh coachwork, and received plans and photos, and details of costs.

But then things took a very sour turn. In time, it was established by others more experienced in these things than I, that it was neither Chassis 2678, nor even a 1913 or Edwardian chassis. As one who had always dreamed of owning an early Silver Ghost, the earlier the better, this was a massive blow.

So what did we have? Over time it was established that the chassis was of post-Great War construction. It was in fact a 1921 model, and eventually it was established that it was Chassis 26PE.

On January 31, 2020, I received my copy of the magnificent publication celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the 20-Ghost Club. For the first time, I saw a photo of the original coachwork on 26PE. It was ordered in 1918 by Major Edward Fitzgerald of Green St., Mayfair, London, W1, but not delivered until 1920.

Faced with a dilemma of monumental proportions, and with a mind confused by what had transpired, I decided this was not the chassis I wanted. I was not the least keen on a vintage

chassis and made the decision that it had to go. Sold as what it was, it departed in November 1975.

But once again, Fate had played her hand. This time to my advantage. And within days I was on the trail of the 1910 Rolls-Royce, Chassis 1404, which has now been with us for 39 years. But that's another story.

But there's a little more that few would know. In the early 1980s, I purchased an assortment of Ghost parts from the U.K., specifically to acquire a few bits and pieces for 1404. It later turned out that these parts came from two different chassis in the U.K. There were some parts from a 1912 car, Chassis 2082, and parts from a 1913 car, Chassis 2531, and other parts from a mix of chassis. No chassis frame, no radiator, lots of parts missing, and certainly none of the desirable and essential goodies.

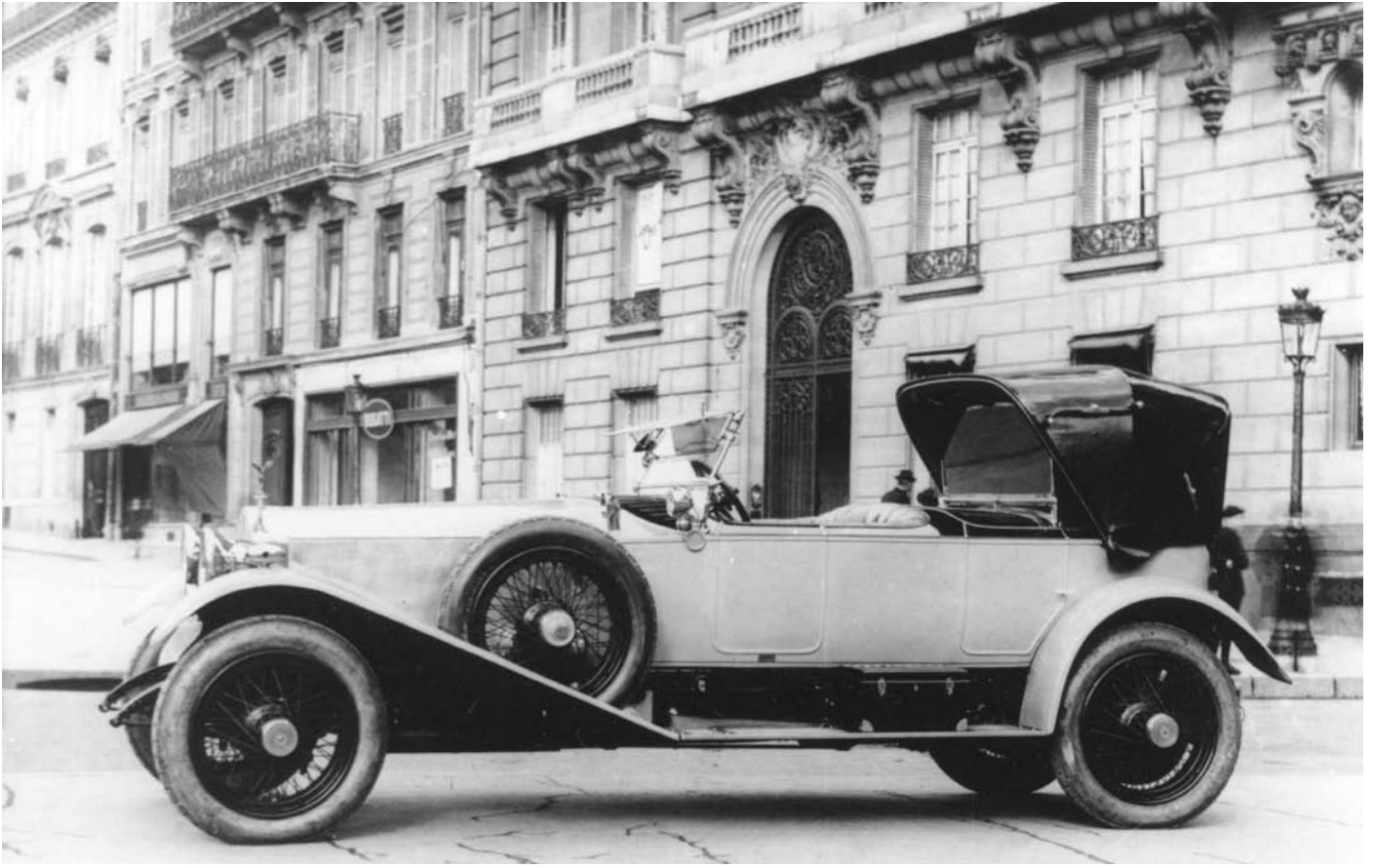
I used some 1910 brake shoes that had been sold from Victoria to the U.K. in the early 1970s, as the 1404 shoes were missing, and a few other smaller bits. I then sold the rest, but it remained with me for some years, uncollected.

When John Burns bought his 1912 car, Chassis 2082, from the Percy Markham Collection of Perth, it was established that this car was a composite of parts from 2082 and 2531. I had long established that the remains of these two cars were blended in London's West End in the 1957-1960 period. The 1912 car, Chassis 2082, was constructed, using the 1913 ➡



Below: 'Chassis 2678' as acquired in October 1970. It was a rolling chassis, with restored radiator, beautiful large CAV head lamps, a handful of hard-to-find 1913 features, and carrying two original factory chassis plates, one on the fire-wall and one on the coil box lid, bearing the number 2678.





Above: Never before seen, this image of 26PE arrived on 31st January 2020, revealing the car's delightful original coachwork, a Salamanca Cabriolet by Henri Labourdette of Paris. Note the most unusual large rear seat screen.

frame and rear axle assembly and cantilever suspension. The residue then consisted of left-overs.

John negotiated the parts I had sold, which were still in my garage after some seven years or so.

Then, a long story short, John sold his 2082, much as it had

been when he acquired it, along with residual components of 2513, to Jonathon Harley, a renowned restorer.

Harley no doubt had vital components on his workshop shelves, that enabled both these chassis to be rebuilt correctly, although a lot of additional parts were needed to complete the exercise.



Below left: 26PE was sold to Murray Rainey of Geelong and Surrey, England. It returned to the U.K. in 1982. It is seen here, in Africa, then owned by enthusiastic owner Stuart Halsall. In his ownership, the car covered thousands of miles in Africa, Europe and the U.K. **Below right:** Ample proof of all's well that ends well may be found in this photograph of Ian & Ida Irwin's Silver Ghost chassis 1404, a 1910 matching numbers Silver Ghost, seen here fully restored and gracing a Branch event.





Above: In all of the time since we began participating in 'Wheels' some decades ago we have never produced anywhere near as small a display as this, nor have we ever previously had no cars whatsoever from within the A.C.T. From left to right, the cars present were Tim & Linda Collins' 1986 Silver Spirit ASG15221, Bryce Ronning's 1949 Silver Wraith WFC67, your Editor's 1950 Silver Wraith WHD101 and Chris O'Rourke's 1957 Silver Cloud SED57.

‘Wheels’ 2020 display day Queanbeyan Showground

Sunday March 1st

Below: Also seen at 'Wheels' though displayed on a different part of the field, was this 1963 Silver Cloud III brought along by Charles Chelliah, accompanied by fellow N.S.W. member Nick Illek.





Above: Although we think of today's city traffic as congested and chaotic, this 1950 Sydney street-scape perhaps shows that it hasn't changed all that much! We are looking along Oxford Street from Taylor Square with the Oxford Hotel on the right-hand corner, still a readily recognisable landmark today. The trams and Leyland double-decker buses were characteristic features of the Sydney scene in those days. Most of the cars are British makes, with some American ones in evidence. Behind the Wolseley on the right is a Rolls-Royce. With its post-war type horn grilles and other visual clues, it might easily be supposed that it is a Silver Wraith. However, it is in fact GWX79 – a 1933 20/25 that was rebodied after the War to resemble one of the then current crop of cars, the degree of success in that exercise being in the eye of the beholder. Photograph from Steve McDonald via David Neely (both N.S.W.).



Opposite page: A lovely Jack Barclay Ltd advertisement, ca.1958 and very typical of the period, depicting that firm's famous Berkeley Square showroom in London's West End, with the then current Silver Cloud and Bentley S-Type cars in the foreground and earlier models offered secondhand in the background.

Left: Your Editor and Bryce Ronning recently visited Club member Garrath Will's Rolls-Royce & Bentley maintenance and repair business, TK Motors, in Moss Vale. While there we saw this 50,000-series (Silver Spirit spec.) Corniche Convertible, owned by a non-member and therefore unable to be identified.

COUNTRY LIFE ANNUAL, 1958

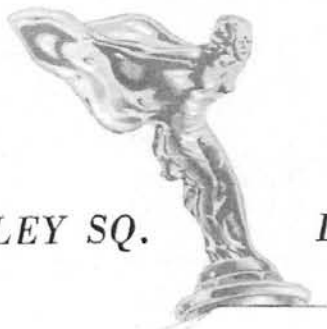
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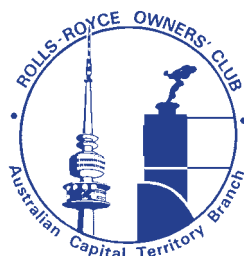
BERKELEY SQ.

LONDON, W.1

Tailpiece . . .



Some of the Club cars at 'Riversdale', Goulburn, during the joint A.C.T./N.S.W. event on 16th February. Photo by the Editor.



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