



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 2021



B14MD

1951 Bentley Mk VI Park Ward drophead coupé

Ian & Tina Oliver

Touring Devon by Bentley drophead

From the Editor & President

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As reported in our last issue, our Branch website is up and running, thanks to the skilled and speedy efforts of our Webmaster Tim Collins. If you haven't visited yet, go to rrocact.org.au and enjoy! If you would like to peruse the current or archived editions of *The Capital Letter* you will be asked to enter a login which is **rrocact** and then a password which is **Summer2021** – in each case these are case-sensitive with no spaces.

At our February Meeting members discussed the electronic transmission of *The Capital Letter*, which is now accomplished by means of the Branch website. When it was first proposed that we change to an electronic version of the journal, it was confidently predicted that few if any members would require the hard-copy version and that it would in time be phased out. In the event, however, two-thirds of our membership have continued to request – and pay for – a hard-copy *Capital Letter*. The Meeting therefor did not consider that the move towards an electronic-only journal was one of our more notable successes! Although this will require further discussion as to the way forward, the consensus of the Meeting was that we should return to a hard-copy journal posted to all members, with annual dues adjusted accordingly. This will be decided at our Annual General Meeting when we set the following year's membership dues.

The Sub-Committee charged with the task of reviewing the Federal Deed, the legal instrument that constitutes the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia, the national Club of which we are a Branch, has made encouraging progress, though I would be the first to admit that it has been rather slower than any of us would have preferred. Early in the process, a proposed new Deed was introduced by the New South Wales Branch. When Queensland opted for supporting that version, the remain-

Below: Our Junior Vice-President and Technical Registrar Peter Toet's Phantom II Thrupp & Maberly limousine de ville, 93TA, attracted a good deal of attention at 'Wheels' on 28th February.



Front Cover: *How better to tour the glorious south-western English county of Devon in Summer than in a superb Bentley drophead coupé in the company of like-minded owners and their cars? In 2018 Ian & Tina Oliver and their 1951 Bentley Mk VI Park Ward drophead B14MD were all in the right place at the right time to do exactly that. Narrow lanes with high banks were the order of the day on the Tour. See page 10.*

ing Branches, after seeing the Victoria Branch version which included amendments proposed by all of the other Branches, decided that we would support that. It made good sense, because it meant that instead of having five proposed Deeds for the Sub-Committee to work with, we only had two. The proposed Deed to which our A.C.T. Branch representatives had given their support, and which incorporates the features that we had approved, is now the amended Deed that we will support at the Annual General Meeting in Geelong.

The current venue for the Terribly British Day, Queanbeyan Park, is a particularly enjoyable one. The dense coverage of deciduous trees makes for a lovely atmosphere, while rendering photography tricky! The brightly contrasting dappled light is very difficult to deal with, and some of the cars present on 6th December, covered in this edition, were so placed as to be practically impossible to photograph successfully. In other words – it's better to be there! And lots of our members were there, as were a goodly number of New South Wales Branch members and their beautiful cars, as well as one Victoria Branch member – Denis Deasey in his fine Bentley S3.

So far, the members who have volunteered to assist with the organisation of the 2022 Federal Rally in Canberra have met four times, making significant progress. Recently, a decision was made to flag all Federal Rally Organising Committee meetings to all members via email. Members wishing to attend will be made welcome, with absolutely no pressure to accept any responsibility for any aspect of the Rally, though of course offers of help will be well received.

The coronavirus is still disrupting normal life in various ways including Club life. However, it is clear from the account in PRAECLARUM 1-21 of the spectacularly successful SMART Register's 'Mudgee Muster', very capably organised by our Federal President Bruce Duncan, that members are hungry for bigger and better events as we are gradually get back to normal. Our own Branch events are still more fluid than they normally would be, and members are becoming accustomed to watching out for email advice of changes. To assist with that, we are hoping to introduce a system of text-messaging alerts of approaching events, both as a reminder of the event and as a means of advising of changes.

From a Victoria Branch member comes the unhappy news that our Branch member Chris White has been injured. Chris, who lives in Appollo Bay, Victoria, contributed a fine article to *The Capital Letter* on his 20 Horsepower GPK1, published over two recent editions. He is in rehab in Geelong for five weeks and at the time of writing was just starting to walk with assistance. He is unsure how long he will be in hospital or when he will fully recover, and has other health issues to be dealt with. I am sure that all members will join me in wishing Chris all the very best for a speedy recovery.

Congratulations are due to our member Mike Mulvihill on his election as Chairman of the Bentley Drivers' Club of New South Wales.

Finally, before closing for press our Silver Wraith WHD101 found an excellent new owner in Melbourne, its original home city. However, we were only without a marque car for less than 24 hours, Ian & Tina Oliver having kindly agreed to sell us their 1960 Bentley S2 B25CT. It's first outing in our ownership was the mid-week run that the February meeting had decided to trial. There is no possible room for doubt about the success of that event, so the concept will be continued and developed, in addition to normal Sunday runs.

Martin Bennett



Branch Events Calendar

Members should please note that dates and details of events listed here are in some cases indicative only and are subject to change. Timely notice of 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*.

MAY

Friday 14th to Monday 17th May: The 2021 Annual Federal Rally of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia, Geelong, Victoria.

JUNE

Wednesday 2nd June: Bi-monthly Branch Meeting 7.00 p.m. for 7.30 meeting at the home of our Secretary, Peter Hyland, 49 Barnett Close, Swinger Hill.

Wednesday 16th June: Mid-week 'Coffee & Cars' run. Destination to be announced.



Above: ASR54357 cutting a striking figure at Old Parliament House in Canberra.

A.C.T. Branch members' cars:

1994 Silver Spirit III ASR54357 – a recent acquisition

Branch Secretary Peter Hyland recently came across an opportunity to acquire his “dream car” – a 1994 Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit III; and to boot, it is in what he describes as “schmick” condition! Even with less than 60,000 km. on the clock, he has no desire to enter it into any Club Concours judging events. – he says it is a car to be driven and enjoyed.

After Googling the David Ekberg advert in the August 2020 PRAECLARUM (p.7883), Peter bought the car from that Melbourne dealer. Ekbergs also accepted Peter’s 1982 Silver Spirit (ASC04176) as a trade-in. It later transpired that Ekbergs had bought the newer car at a Shannons Sydney auction in February 2020.

As evidenced in the Crewe factory build records, the car came off the production line in late November 1993 to the customised order of Cornes & Co Ltd, the R-R Agents in Japan. It was then immediately shipped off to Japan (together with a 1994 Bentley Turbo R lwb saloon BPR54378), per the *Tokyo Express* arriving there from Southampton on 20th December 1993.

The original order specified many items, but the more inter-

esting ones were – an opening compartment in the rear seat armrest, wood veneered front and rear door panels, English-language handbooks, lambswool rugs front and rear and Duchess straps to both rear seats. Items to be omitted included picnic tables, loose footrests, cocktail cabinet, badge bar, air horns, adjustable rear seats and a rug to the boot. The invoiced ex-factory total cost on 27/10/1993 was £76,969 (plus freight of £800).

Nearing 17 years old, the car arrived in Sydney and was approved as a “Personally Imported Vehicle” on 28th June 2010. It was then duly registered in (Botany) N.S.W. on 15th July 2010 with registration number YT 88 GJ.

With an English version of the manuals having been originally specified, and the car meeting the then current, Australian Design Rules (ADRs), suggests that the car might have been eventually destined for Australia. However, privacy law have hampered Peter’s further search of the car’s subsequent N.S.W. ownership. However, a copy of a John Vawser workshop invoice dated 27th March 2017, confirms the above N.S.W. reg. number and the then current “EA Furniture” company ownership. It also stated the odometer read-



This page: The Silver Spirit III woodwork was even more of a work of art than we are accustomed to in other SZ-series saloons. The fascia (above) and door capping rails (right) incorporated crossbanded edging with light-coloured inlays, providing a most satisfying appearance.



ing to be only 57,075 km. – after 23 years! The recorded kilometrage when Peter acquired the car in November 2020, after 26 years, was still only 58,372, or little more than 2,000 km. per year.

Into the front seat rear pockets, Peter transferred from his previous '82 Spirit, the original R-R “Cocktail Units” available only in the U.K. & U.S. markets. These now make quite a statement in the Silver Spirit III’s rear compartment, looking quite natural in place as originally designed!

After registration in the A.C.T. on 19th November 2020, the car made its A.C.T. Branch debut at the End-of-year Get-together at Collector’s Bushranger Pub event on 5th December 2020, and then at the Terribly British Day in Queanbeyan Park the following day.

Very many interested admirers and R.R.O.C.A. members inspected the car throughout the display and asked some interesting questions – one young lad asked “who made Rolls-Royces?”.





Above: A jovial Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia Federal President, Bruce Duncan, in his 1989 Silver Spirit ASK26816.

Terribly British Day

Queanbeyan Park

6th December 2020



Left: Bryce Ronning's 1949 Silver Wraith Hooper touring limousine, WFC67, has reverted to once again being the only Silver Wraith in the Goulburn area!

Right: Your Editor's 1950 Silver Wraith H.J. Mulliner touring limousine, WHD101, has been sold since this photograph was taken, returning to its original domicile city, Melbourne.



Below: Mike Mulvihill's 1961 Silver Cloud II, SZD313.



Right: Ian & Tina Oliver's much-travelled 1951 Bentley Mk VI Park Ward drophead coupé, B14MD – see also page 10.





Above: Chris & Narelle O-Rourke's 1957 Silver Cloud, SED51, made an interesting comparison with the Silver Cloud III two-door saloon (*Below*) with the two Silver Clouds having nothing in common in terms of their styling. The two-door car was exhibited by a New South Wales Branch member, several of whom were present.





Above: Tim & Linda Collins brought their 1986 Silver Spirit ASG15221.

Below: The beautifully furnished and spacious, luxurious interior of the 2016 Bentley Mulsanne shown by Keith Wherry & Marie Harland of the N.S.W. Branch.





Above: The fabulous views of Soar Mill Cove provided an excellent backdrop for a car shoot during the Tour.

Returning to the U.K. with Bentley Mk VI Park Ward drophead coupé B14MD

Part 4: R.R.E.C. Early Post-war Register Tour of Devon

24th-28th September. 2018

By Ian Oliver

The trip south to Devon from P & A Wood at Dunmow was to be our first long trip of our journey. We were very keen to undertake the 270 mile trip and allowed ourselves a full day to reach our destination the day before the event commenced.

We gathered on Monday 24th September at Soar Mill Cove Hotel, not far from Salcombe, south Devon for the event organised by John & Liz Field with Eric Healey being the Registrar. John had sent helpful instructions about the best route for the last few miles to the hotel. Some, including myself, did not have these to hand and had to rely on sat-nav which took us instead along winding, high-sided, very narrow lanes. The programme for Tuesday did not include a lot of driving, as most had made long journeys the day before. We drove about 20 miles to Totnes and the Steamer Quay car park where a security guard kept an eye on the cars while we were

away. An open-top bus then took us around Totnes and on to Paignton. At Dartmouth Steam Railway Station, we boarded a train hauled by *King Edward II*, a GWR 4-6-0 steam engine. The *Devon Belle* observation carriage at the rear of the train had been reserved for our use. Lovely views of Tor Bay and the River Dart were enjoyed on the way to Kingswear where we took the ferry to Dartmouth. After lunch, we boarded the train for our return to Totnes, hauled by *Cardiff Castle*.

Dartmoor was at its best on Wednesday, following a wet weekend. Our route took us to Buckfast Abbey, then we followed the Dart valley to Poundsgate, before the climb towards Two Bridges. The hills and narrow roads were manageable challenges.

Driving on to Princetown and Dartmoor prison, some visited



***Above:** B14MD may be seen amongst the cars lined up at Totnes where we boarded the open-top double-decker bus, then the steam train, ferry, then the train back. The second car from the camera is a Bentley Continental 'Flying Spur' which looks very like the local example seen on page 19.*

***Below:** Fuel starvation problems were encountered but thankfully the breakdown occurred where we were able to pull over and obtain assistance.*





Above: At Mount Edgcumbe Estate our cars were backed in front of the house, where traffic is not normally allowed.

the prison museum. On a steeper mountain climb we were to experience the dreaded fuel starvation which was luckily encountered opposite one of the only breaks in the steep climb at a stopover called Pixieland. The blocked additional in-line fuel filter installed by P & A Wood was swapped together with a spare fuel pump fortunately being carried in the car. Off the moor, we encountered faster roads and returned to the hotel through Modbury, keeping up with a glorious S1 Bentley Continental.

Ferries are always fun and the Torpoint ferry was no exception on Thursday. There are usually three ferries crossing the Tamar but the local news said one was out of service, and queues were expected.

Our next stop was Mount Edgcumbe Estate and our cars were parked in front of the house, where traffic is not normally allowed. Following that, we moved on to the Orangery for lunch and the cars were re-parked in a tree-lined avenue and admired by passing visitors.

After lunch, there was time for a walk in the formal gardens. The grounds have good roads, some built by the Americans for armoured vehicles in World War 2. These were loaded

from two embarkation points in the grounds, prior to the invasion of Normandy.

The return journey took us over the Tamar bridge and allowed a glimpse of I.K. Brunel's magnificent 1859 railway bridge downstream. It was good to see this historic bridge preserved and in regular use.

We need not have been nervous about attending this event as newcomers from overseas. Everyone made us most welcome. Thank you to all. One of the benefits was the chance to meet other owners with the same model of car. Also, those with detailed knowledge were most willing to share views on technical problems.

The function on the night before our departure was an opportunity to have a few laughs and say farewell to a lot of new friends. The two awards were for the distance most travelled and the award for the car voted by the participants for the car that you would like to take home. I must admit that when I was asked to complete our form, the distance travelled of 12,600 miles would have to be hard to beat. Registrar Eric Healey, in announcing the distance award was quick to disqualify our car because it was shipped and despite some



Above: B14MD following the Bentley Continental S1 'Flying Spur' saloon over a centuries-old river bridge.

Below: Green, undulating fields and hedgerows with scattered farms are typical of rural Devon scenes.





Above: B14MD passing through one of the many picturesque rural villages with stone-built houses and walls.



Left: Registrar Eric Healey presents Ian with the Members' Choice Award trophy for B14MD.

outry from a particular lawyer who made a plea that the award did not stipulate “driven”, upheld the decision and claimed that we had cheated! We all had a laugh. Our car won the most popular car award, voted by the members. We were extremely surprised as there were some very fine vehicles at the event.

After departing the Hotel at Soar Mill Cove the next day we headed to Southampton where we were to hand the car to the shipping company and the next day head to London for our departure home.

The U.K. journey with B14MD remains as one of our most treasured car experiences that we have ever had. The privilege of being able to take the car to such events, the friendships made, the challenge, obtaining U.K. history of the car, memorabilia shopping and the fond memories will be long lasting with us.





Above: John Tetley did us proud by displaying his Bentley and his other Bentley! They are 1987 Turbo R BSH21535 on the left, and 1981 Mulsanne BSB03228.

‘Wheels’ 2021

28th February

Below: Tim & Linda Collins’ 1986 Silver Spirit ASG15221.





Above: Chris & Narelle O'Rourke's 1957 Silver Cloud, SED51.

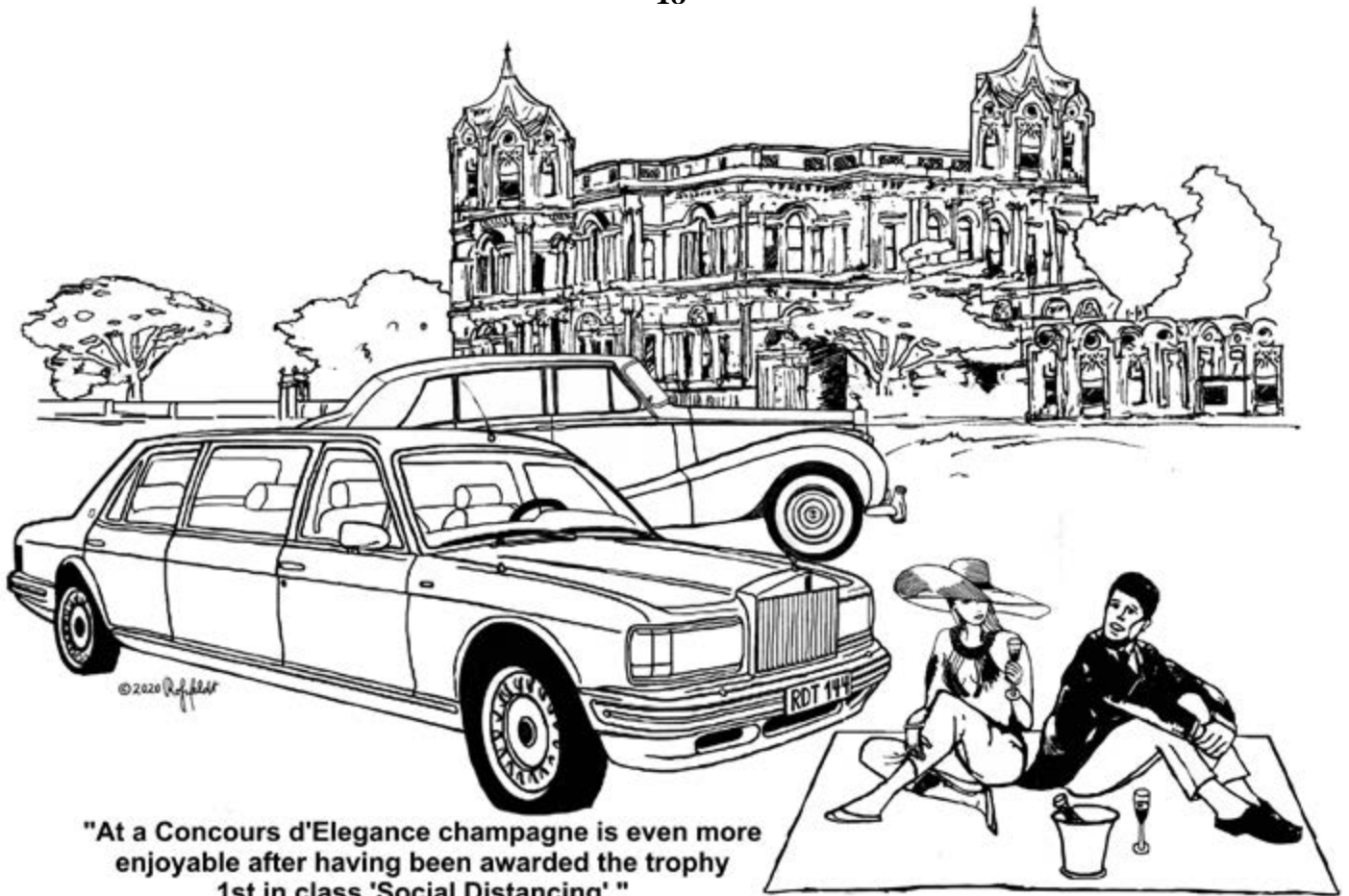
Below: Your Editor's 1950 Silver Wraith WHD101 was taking part in its last A.C.T. Branch event.





Above: Bryce Ronning brought his 1949 Silver Wraith Hooper touring limousine, WFC67 – one of the best-known cars in our Branch. From the same period in Company history (**Below**) is Branch Treasurer Ian Oliver's 1951 Bentley Mk VI, B163MD.





Above: A topical cartoon from the talented pen of Klaus-Josef Roßfeldt (Germany).

Below: Ian Irwin sent this period photograph of 1937 Bentley 4¹/₄-Litre Gurney Nutting sedanca coupé B166KT, which was owned new by Sir William Brass MP who previously owned a Phantom I which came to Australia and which Ian was researching when he found this photo. Note the war-time headlamp masks, which only allowed a slit of light to escape, and the white-painted front bumper and running board edge also in compliance with black-out regulations.





Above: On the way to Garrath Will's Rolls-Royce & Bentley workshop in Moss Vale recently, your Editor encountered this lovely 1958 Bentley Continental, BC43DJ, on the road. Upon arrival at Garrath's, there it was. It is of course an S1 Continental H.J. Mulliner 'Flying Spur' saloon. Consulting the most recent edition of Chassis Plate, it was found that there are none of these in the Club.

Below: This 1953 Bentley R-Type Continental is believed to be BC9B, the subject of an article Making it last in the 18 May 1967 edition of The Autocar by its original owner Michael Collier who described visiting the H.J. Mulliner & Co. works during the build process of the coachwork, only to find milk bottles standing about on the car during the craftsmen's tea-break. Royce always said that an untidy bench was a sign of a disorderly mind, but perhaps there were fewer such inhibitions in the coachbuilding trade! Nevertheless, the first model Bentley Continental is one of the finest and most sought-after cars of all time – capable of 100 mph in third gear – and when Mr Collier wrote his cheque in 1953 he might have been a little startled had he realised that one day the car's value in Pounds Sterling would one day be so huge!



Tailpiece . . .



The front cover car on our last edition was this superb Bentley Continental R Mulliner Park Ward coupé BBW63021, this time showing off the pretty three-quarter rear view of these timelessly elegant cars. Photograph by the Editor.



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