



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

Spring 2021



ASR54357

1994 Silver Spirit III

Peter Hyland

Our new President

From the Branch President

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It is with honour that after serving for ten years as Branch Secretary, and as Branch Treasurer concurrently for two of those years, that I have now been elected Branch President. I have indeed inherited BIG shoes to fill by following in the steps of Martin Bennett, Ian Irwin and Chris O'Rourke, but I will try hard!

I look forward to my new role within our small, but diverse Branch and I will always be open to your new ideas and suggestions as to how we might build on our past achievements and to continue to have activities and outings that are relevant and enjoyable. Like all Branches, I see attracting new members as a goal, but I am realistic enough to acknowledge the inherent limitations – I'm still trying to encourage my 40-year-old son to join us!

Just as an introductory personal background note – I was born here in Canberra (when there were more sheep than people!), raised and educated here and after leaving Lyneham High School, I joined the Department of External (now Foreign) Affairs. During my eighteen years there I was posted overseas to Italy, Malaysia, Tanzania and Fiji. The following thirteen years saw me in an Estate Management role – looking after the Government's overseas property assets (our Embassy and staff buildings etc.). Following a Howard Government's decision, my role was terminated and I (we) were retrenched in 2001.

I was then employed by the New Zealand High Commission here in Canberra for twelve years as its Finance and Administration Manager – yes, working for the same Queen, but different country! So I clocked up 43 years in Her Majesty's service.

Since retirement in 2013, I've been back in the Public Service working part-time at Old Parliament House – basically as a Visitor's facilitator – which has been most enjoyable and rewarding – hence my role as Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce in the front cover photograph; I have now completed 51 years' service for H.M. Queen Elizabeth II.

As you are now aware, our A.C.T. Branch will be hosting the March 2022 Federal Rally – “Celebrating the Centenary of the 20 Horsepower”. Much of the groundwork has already been confirmed but later this year, the Rally Committee will be seeking your voluntary assistance with organising various activities and undertaking minor roles during the Rally itself. So, we have some enjoyable times ahead and I look forward to your participation in them.

As a new President it is with pleasure that on behalf of the Committee that I welcome a new local Canberra member, Peter Dechaineux who owns a grey 1950 Bentley Mk VI (B311FU). Welcome to our Branch, Peter, and we look forward to meeting you and viewing your car on a future Branch outing.

Peter Hyland



Left: The Rt Hon. Stanley Melbourne Bruce, Prime Minister of Australia 1923-29 with his 1924 20 Horsepower, GH67. In its later life, the Maddox cabriolet coachwork was converted to a fixed-roof saloon.



Front Cover: Our new President Peter Hyland outside his workplace Old Parliament House, Canberra, dressed as 1920s Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce who was himself a Rolls-Royce owner (see above). The front cover car is of course Peter's 1994 Silver Spirit III, ASR54357.

From the Editor

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It is with considerable pleasure that I can announce in these pages having handed the Branch President's baton to Peter Hyland, who was elected President at the recent Annual General Meeting of the Branch. Peter has served many years as our highly-efficient Secretary, even serving as Secretary and Treasurer simultaneously for a time. We all owe Peter a great debt of gratitude and I wish him all the very best in his new role.

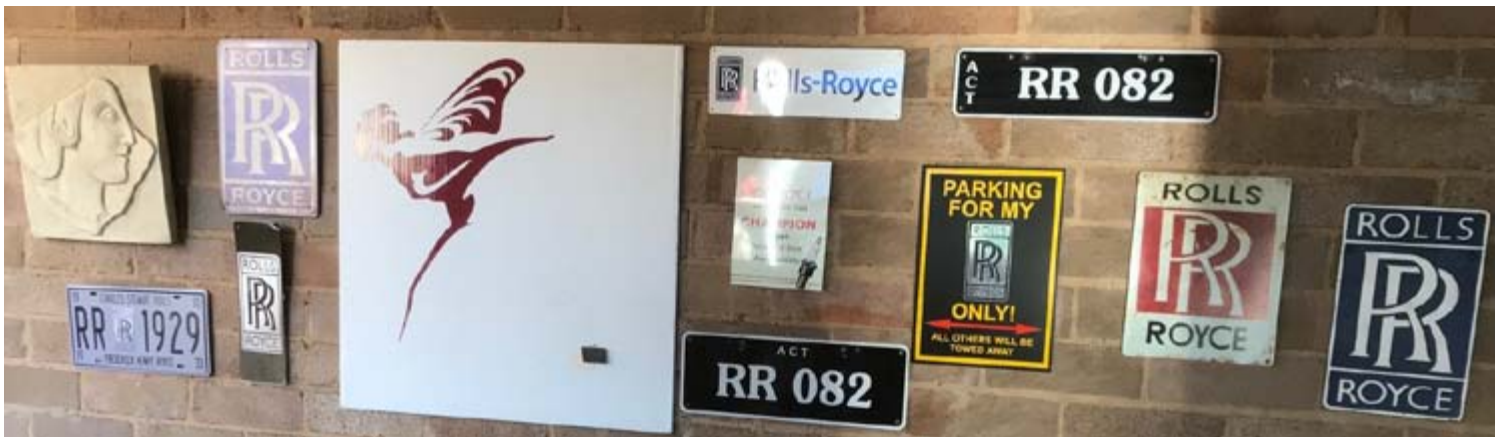
For my own part I enjoyed being your President for three years, despite the challenges of doing so during the Covid emergency and all of the consequent limitations placed on our activities. At the AGM I was elected Secretary, but had made clear my hope that somebody else would step into that important post which cannot be simply left vacant. It has also been decided that all Branch members will now receive both the electronic and printed hard-copy versions of *The Capital Letter*, with all now paying the same membership subscription.

Meanwhile, in the broader Club, the resumption of Federal Rallies and the conspicuous success of Model Register activities have provided a boost to our Club nationally, further cementing it in the face of the Covid challenges referred to above. Our small Branch is providing a vital role in this revival, not least as the host of next year's Federal Rally in Canberra, from 3rd to 7th March. With all of that in mind, your Rally Committee has made adjustments to some of the functions during the Rally, particularly affecting the Formal Dinner & Presentation of Trophies which is now to be held in the splendid, hallowed surroundings of the Members' Dining Room of Old Parliament House in order to provide a truly superb culmination to the Rally. Also, in order to provide participants with a conveniently seamless departure at the end of the Rally, we are taking a leaf out of this year's Geelong Federal Rally book by holding the Farewell Breakfast 'in-house' at Rally HQ.

It is my melancholy duty to report the passing of our Branch member Christopher White. Chris, who lived in Apollo Bay, Victoria, was a great enthusiast of the Rolls-Royce 20 Horsepower. He was the author of two recent articles in *The Capital Letter* on his Twenty GPK1. Our sincere condolences to his wife Rita and family.

Martin Bennett

Below: New Branch President Peter Hyland's garage wall leaves little room for doubt about marque loyalty!



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 and/or text message but in the event of any doubt please contact the Secretary or President to confirm – contact details on the back cover of each edition of *The Capital Letter*. For the time being, until Covid restrictions are eased, only the 2022 Federal Rally is notified here.

2022

MARCH

Thursday 3rd to Monday 7th March: The 64th Annual Federal Rally of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia, Canberra, A.C.T., hosted by the Australian Capital Territory Branch. Rally Headquarters: Rydges Capital Hill, Forrest.



Above: Branch member Steve Stuckey's 2013 Jaguar XF saloon.

Goulburn Waterworks Steam Museum with the Jaguar Drivers' Club of Canberra

Sunday 30th May

Below: Locals Bryce & Marcia Ronning only had a few hundred metres to drive their 1949 Silver Wraith Hooper touring limousine WFC67.





Above: Your Editor's 1960 Bentley S2 B25CT, also glimpsed around half a century ago on pages 13 & 18.

Below: Michael Walsh's 1977 Silver Shadow II, SRH31700, at our lunch location.





Above: David & Linda Neely drove down from Sydney to be with us – an easy assignment for their 1995 Silver Spirit ASF13836.

Below: 1986 Silver Spirit ASG15221, owned by Tim & Linda Collins who are also locals who only needed to drive a few hundred metres to get here.





Above: Our then Secretary's – now President's – 1994 Silver Spirit III, ASR54357.

Below: We don't see Silver Seraphs very often, though one of our members, Mike Mulvihill has one of these remarkably handsome cars and brought it along to this event. It is AAC01243, of 1998.



Burke's Law



In his mis-spent youth your Editor was, as now, not much of a TV watcher, but never missed an episode of *Burke's Law*. This series, dating from 1963-65, starred Gene Barry as Amos Burke, Captain of the Los Angeles Police Homicide Division and a millionaire Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud owner. It was worth watching just for the beautiful car and the opening sequence theme music – not to mention the bevy of pretty girls – all in glorious black & white!

In this age of the internet all of the episodes may be watched again. It is now realised that I had somewhat misidentified the car at the time, believing it to be a very early Silver Cloud I. My evidence for that was the absence of folding armrests in the middle of the front seat, the absence being clearly visible in the interior sequences with Captain Burke's driver Henry at the wheel. However, what I hadn't realised is that those interior takes were not shot in the car at all, but in a studio set, and I had not reckoned on the shortcomings of some of the set details. On more than one occasion we see Henry supposedly driving the car down the road with the studio set version of the gear range selector clearly seen in its 'R' (reverse) position!

It turns out that the car was in fact a 1962 Silver Cloud II, in Shell Grey. Later episodes (in colour) used a different Silver Cloud II in Black over Sand but I never saw that or the later spin-off entitled *Amos Burke, Secret Agent*.

Incidentally, the folding front seat armrests were introduced on the Silver Cloud I standard saloon from chassis number SXA137 and the Bentley S1 from B210BA, around March 1956.

Martin Bennett



Top & left: *The Silver Cloud II in Captain Burke's home driveway, and the Captain followed by his driver Henry hurrying out to the car after being called to a new crime scene.*



Left: *Henry is apparently driving Captain Burke's two detective assistants to the scene of a crime, but I say "apparently" because this is in fact a studio set and not the actual car. The studio set version of the gear range selector may be seen in its Reverse position! Also visible is the stitching in the upholstery where the tops of the centre folding armrests would be if this was the actual car.*

The Annual General Meeting of the Branch

4th August



Below: Some of the members at the Annual General Meeting – from left to right: Ian Irwin, Ian Oliver, Tim Collins and our newly-elected President Peter Hyland.



Above: A couple of shady characters were noticed.





Above: This is the result of Bill Maunsell's restoration of 89HC, pictured here for auction with Shannons in 2015. [Courtesy Shannons Auction]

Would You Believe a “110 Miles Per Hour” 1925 Rolls-Royce?

1925 Rolls-Royce Phantom I, 89HC

By David Neely

Readers of the Brisbane *Sunday Mail* on 17th March 1935 would have come across an article with the title, “Luxury Car ‘Phantom’ Rolls in Brisbane Cost Was £4,400”. It went on to say it was owned by Mr. R. C. Cleland. The car was 1925 Phantom I, chassis 89HC. Cleland had driven it from Sydney in a travelling time of 18½ hours. It attracted groups of admiring onlookers when it was parked near the Brisbane General Post Office the previous day.

The *Sunday Mail* continued: “The car, a 1933 model (Author’s note: when the chassis came to Australia), is luxuriously equipped. It is fitted with a wireless set, which has a range of 2,000 miles, and was built to order for the owner. It has special petrol tanks, with a capacity of 70 gallons, an oil reserve reservoir, and three carburetors. The six-cylinder engine has dual ignition.”

Originally a Barker limousine in England, 89HC was import-

ed, probably by the Palfreyman syndicate, as a chassis in the early 1930s and the Melbourne firm of Martin & King built a two-door sports saloon for Cleland.

The *Sunday Mail* in 1935 added: “According to Mr. Cleland, the car averages five miles a gallon in city traffic and 10 miles on flat country. There are four forward gears, with overdrive, and one reverse.” The description continued, “The camping body can be converted to coupé or single-seater in a few minutes. The car is fitted to contain all sporting equipment and utensils and luncheon tables are built in. In addition cocktail cubicles are fitted. The ‘Phantom’ has numerous electrical traffic devices, including traffic hand in front, arrow at the rear, pilot lights on the near side, and courtesy lights on the running board. In all the car has 26 lights and 21 fuses.”

Finally, the *Sunday Mail* recorded an astonishing claim of a top speed: “Mr. Cleland said that his car has reached a speed



Above: 1925 Phantom I, 89HC, a Martin & King two-door sports saloon, in Brisbane on 16th March 1935. Robert Cleland, standing on the right, drove the car from Sydney to Brisbane. [‘Sunday Mail’ (Brisbane), 17 March 1935]

of 102 m.p.h. Its weight is three tons and the annual fee £21. The cost of the car was in the vicinity of £4,400.” £4,400 in 1935 equates to a 2020 value of \$439,000.

Before the trip to Brisbane 89HC made an appearance at a meeting of the Empire Speedway at the Royal Agricultural Ground in Sydney on 9th March 1935. Bert Ward, who at this time was in partnership with Alf Appleby as the Sydney Rolls-Royce agents, Appleby & Ward, drove 89HC around the track on that occasion. Ward wrote of this experience in the August 1975 edition of *PRAECLARUM*: “It was a very interesting car, but would not guarantee the top speed he quoted”. In the programme note, Cleland had claimed: “110 miles per hour on flat country”.

Cleland’s ownership of 89HC was short-lived. In August 1936 an action was taken for repossession by Prudence Trust & Finance Co. Ltd. Cleland had borrowed money from them on the surety of the car. Later that year Robert Campbell Cleland (b.1900) was declared bankrupt.

Peter Smith Dawson (1882-1961) owned 89HC around 1937 to 1939. Born in Adelaide Dawson performed in concerts in Australia, England, Ireland, South Africa, India, Burma (now Myanmar) and New Zealand in a career that spanned 60 years. Many songs became personally identified with him, including “The Floral Dance”. Dawson was an internationally famous Australian bass-baritone and songwriter.

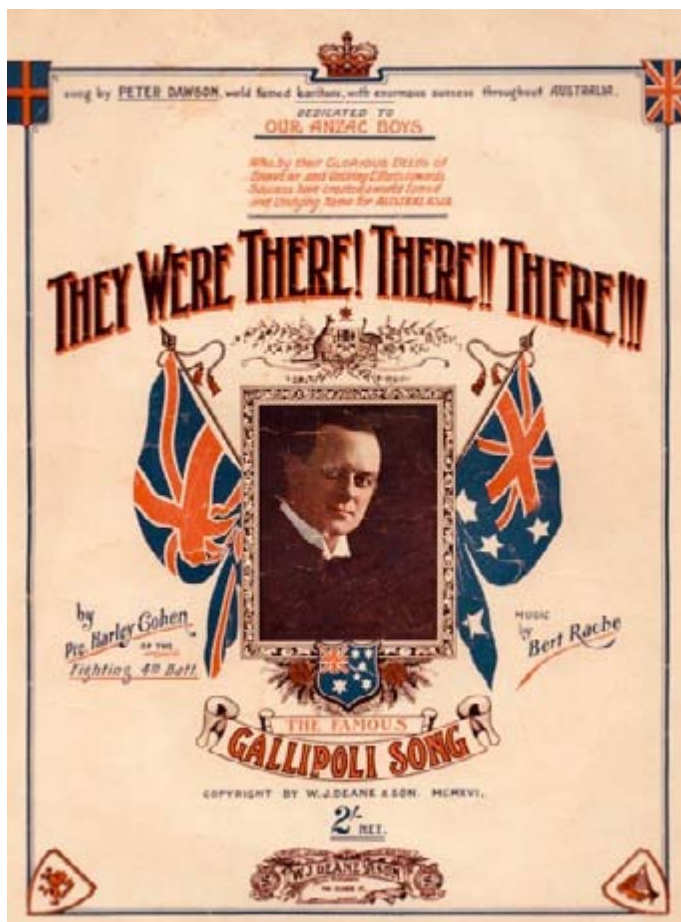
Below: Peter Dawson was the second Australian owner of 89HC. Photographed here in 1936. [Courtesy of the State Library of South Australia]





Above: When owned by W. Harry Beenham, 89HC is pictured here at a rally on 11 April 1961. While showing the ravages of time and travel the Martin & King body is complete. [Courtesy of Bob Tompkins]

Below: In 1939-47 Peter Dawson lived in Sydney. During the war he sang for the troops and on recruiting drives in Australia and New Zealand. [Australian War Memorial RC11166]



In his generation his was a household name along with Don Bradman and Charles Kingsford Smith.

There was now a succession of owners. Next was Miller then Wilson (Christie's Motor Auctions). The car was fitted with a gas-producer during the Second World War. W. Harry Beenham, Wollstonecraft, Sydney, owned 89HC from 1943 to 1984 when it passed to Jack Forest, N.S.W. In 1996 N.S.W. Branch member Bill Maunsell acquired 89HC and undertook its restoration. It was put up for auction with Shannons in 2015. It is currently listed in *Chassis Plate* with Victoria Branch member Alan Maden.

About the extraordinary top speed claimed for 89HC – perhaps Maxwell Smart, the bumbling secret service agent from the 1960s TV series *Get Smart*, would have put it like this:

“Chief, would you believe this 1925 Rolls-Royce can do 110 mph? No? Would you believe 99? No? Would you believe it needs a new speedo?”.





Above: David Neely sent a series of photographs taken in the 1960s and early '70s by Fred English, who at the time was the Victoria Branch Photographer. This one shows your present Editor (left) and friend Graham Bird. The car on the left is Mk VI B325FU (Patrick Fitzherbert). At the front of that line of cars is S2 B25CT (John & Isabelle Salter and now owned by Martin & Manuela Bennett). On the right is Silver Dawn SFC66 (Robert & Marjorie Hawkes and now owned by Ian & Tina Oliver of our Branch). 'Cliff House', Mount Eliza, 11th January 1970.

Nostalgia and history

– those things of the past, and the great work of a present-day member

Below: Martin & Manuela in their 1953 Bentley R-Type B89TO leading 1952 Silver Dawn SFC66 now owned by Ian & Tina Oliver. Photograph taken 4th October 1970 during a two-day Rally to Phillip Island.





Above: Victoria Branch member Robert Hawkes with his Silver Dawn SFC66, which he purchased new in 1952, outside the Grand Hotel, Mildura on 7th June 1968 during the Federal Rally of that year.

Below: SFC66 behind 1952 Bentley Continental BC12A, then owned by Ian Dodd, during a lunch run to Olinda in the Dandenong Ranges. [All Fred English photographs courtesy of the Sir Henry Royce Foundation Australia]





Above: Our final Fred English photo in this series shows Robert & Marjorie Hawkes with SFC66 on 12th June 1971 during the Federal Rally in Shepparton, at which your Editor and Manuela were present. Turning to the 'great work of a present-day member' part of the title of this photographic feature, we see **below** and on the following pages, Tina Oliver's photographs of SFC66 undergoing its high-quality, sympathetic refurbishment in the ownership of Ian & Tina of our Branch.





Above: Branch (and Federal) Treasurer Ian Oliver's 1952 Silver Dawn SFC66, showing the fine finish that has been achieved.

Below: This shot of the new carpet being installed in the Silver Dawn's cabin emphasises the exemplary quality of the work being carried out on this car. Note the brake master cylinder and battery leads visible through the access hatch under the driver's seat, and the heater matrix and fan on the passenger's side.

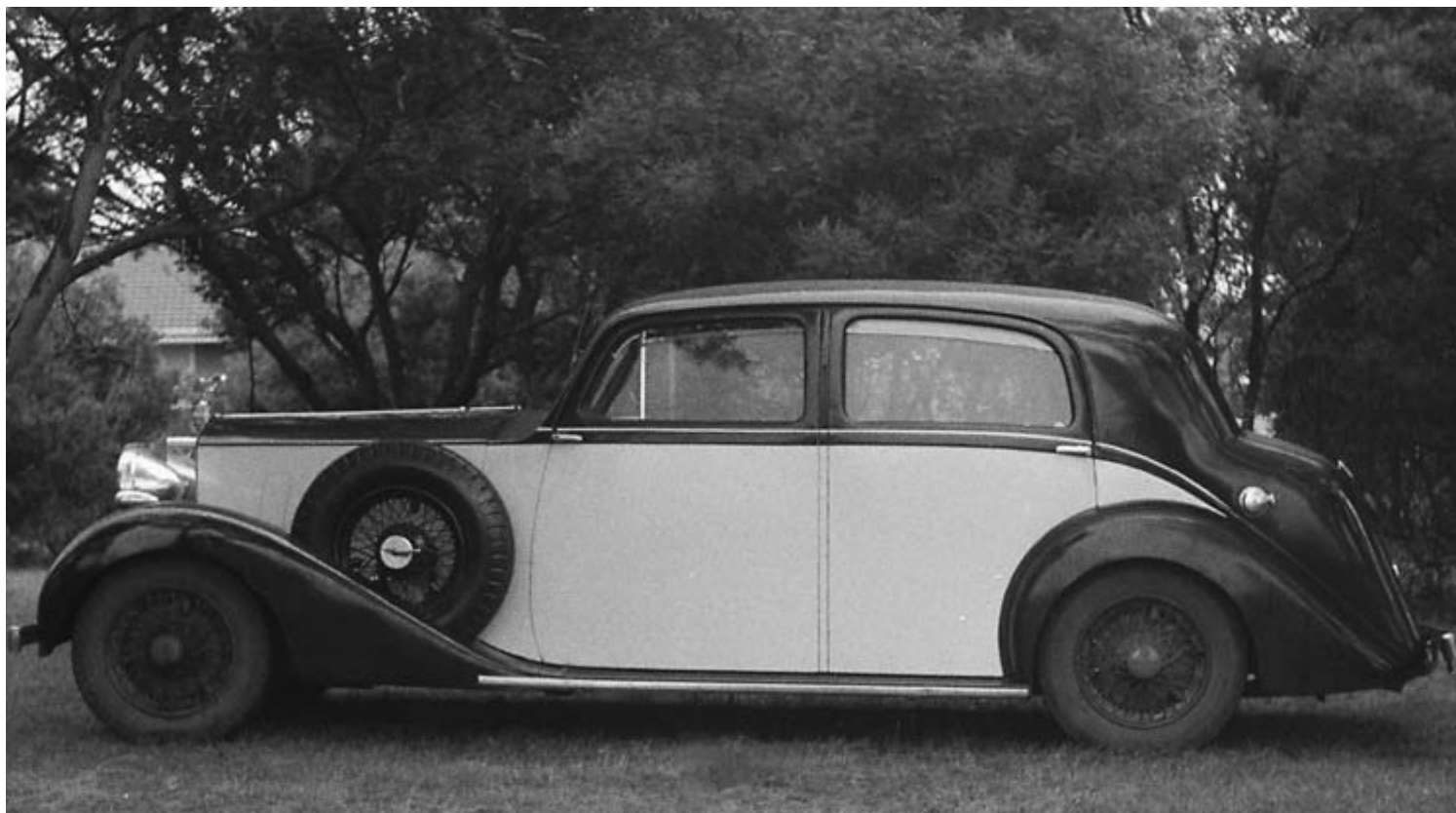




Above: From the rear, SFC66 looks equally beautifully finished, doing our Branch proud.

Below: Everything is neat and tidy in the engine compartment.





Two more photographs sent by David Neely, from that wonderful resource the Fred English photographic archive, taken in December 1969 during the Victoria Branch Concours at which your Editor was present. The car **above** is WRB40, one of two 1938 Wraiths imported new into Australia as chassis and fitted with locally-built coachwork, in this instance by Melbourne coachbuilder Martin & King. This Wraith was briefly an A.C.T. Branch car around the turn of the present century and is now in the N.S.W. Branch. In 1969 it was owned by Brian Wodetski who is seen in the photograph **below** alongside 1960 Bentley S2 B25CT, owned then by John & Isabelle Salter and now by your Editor. Who could deny that all things are connected?!





Above: What might the Bromley Travelodge in the south-eastern outskirts of London have to do with Rolls-Royce or Bentley? The answer lies in what was once on the same site in London Road, Bromley. The photograph *below*, taken just before the second World War, shows that it was in fact the coachworks of James Young Ltd, whose famous coachwork was built there right up to 1968, when the final James Young Phantom V limousines were proudly turned out. After that, the firm closed its doors and the building was for a while a snooker hall, before being demolished. The three 1938 cars in the photo are, from left to right: Phantom III 3DL86, Wraith WXA20 and Bentley 4 1/4-Litre B38MR.





Tailpiece . . .

Mike Mulvihill's 1961 Silver Cloud II SVD313 during the 'Cars & Coffee' morning at Sutton Bakery, 31st March.



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