



News & Record

Issue 83 | Spring 2026





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Front Cover: Tom Harris driving 1937 PIII, 3BT139 Arthur Mulliner Sports Saloon, on Jonathan Wood's Autumn Amble trip in mid-October 2025. The viaduct behind is Welland in Rutland, the longest viaduct across a valley in the UK: 82 arches span 1275 yards (1.1km).

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April 2026
Saturday 25th
Spring Lunch in Strone and Alex's barn - the season opening event - not to be missed. Contact Strone Macpherson:
strone@stronemacpherson.com

June 2026
Thursday 4th to Monday 8th
The Irish Georgian Tour to Devon. Moreland Hall, Dartmoor. Contact Tim Dukes:
tim.dukes@hotmail.co.uk

June - July 2026
Saturday 27th to Thursday 9th
Normandy & Brittany Gardens: some places may become available. Contact Steve Wilks:
rslwilks@gmail.com

September 2026
Tuesday 8th to Saturday 12th
Tour of Leicestershire, Kilworth Park Hotel, Lutterworth. Contact Pete Walton:
waltonpete@hotmail.com

September 2026
Saturday 12th
The 20-Ghost Club Concours at Thurgarton Priory, Nottinghamshire, thanks to Contact Ken Forbes:
kennethforbes@btinternet.com

September 2026
Saturday 26th
Autumn Lunch at Oxfordshire's Hook Norton Brewery little has changed since 1849! Contact Michael Cochrane:
mail@cochranefamily.co.uk

Letters, Emails & Pictures

Ian Murray dropped Sir John Stuttard a line recently:

Morning John, a quick email to let you know that I've bought "Auntie" Jimmy and Janet Valentine's (1929) Phantom I, 10R.

It was through Jimmy that I was introduced to the Club. He made great efforts to introduce me to various Scottish members including the late Maj Lenox Jaimeson who owned Silver Ghost 68RM. At the time, I owned Silver Ghost 82EM which along with 68RM appeared as an armoured car in the *Lawrence of Arabia* film in the 1960s.

Throughout the years, I've come to appreciate the history and long-term ownership of our cars. Four of my cars have previously been owned by either family or friends, and been in single family ownership since the early 1930s. *Auntie* obviously falls into that category, and rather than buying a motorcar it feels more like adopting an elderly relative of a friend no longer with us.

My intention will be to drive *Auntie* from Kings Sutton back to Elgin in mid-April, or as soon as our Highland roads are clear of salt. Thereafter, I think next year, one priority will be to attend the Irish Georgian Tour and hopefully, some other 20-Ghost Club events.

I hope Jimmy would approve, and I think it's brought some comfort to Janet knowing that *Auntie* is just going to be "up the road", albeit 514 miles, which in a prewar Rolls-Royce, is no distance at all!

Best regards, Ian Murray.



Graham Tyson copied me into an interesting note he sent to Bryan McGee.

Dear Bryan

Last year when I was finally at the stage I could register my Delahaye in the UK, I spent around eight months being bounced between HMRC and DVLA. With DVLA I was shunted between various offices ending up at one point dealing with Northern Ireland who gave me a 'special' telephone number they usually do not give out to mere members of the public (allegedly) which, when I called, was answered by a different person in the same department! They had no idea why I had come through to Northern Ireland and directed me back to various people in England.

Johnnie, at Christmas 2025 we revisited Hearthside House in Lincoln, Rhode Island, 'The House that Love Built', and discovered, to our surprise, a copy of *News and Record* on display [Issue 73 P44]. After we first visited a few years ago, I offered to see if the 20-GC might be of some help to discover what happened to the owner's R-R. This resulted in the article I wrote, following Sir John Stuttard's research on 1922 Springfield Silver Ghost 111BG revealing the car was bought by our member Roland Duce. Strange coincidence and proof that the magazine's reach is far! With best wishes, Mary Narvell.

However I have to say that throughout the eight months I found everyone very courteous, very friendly, first name terms at each stage, and very helpful. Some of the people took a genuine interest in the car and even talked to me about their hobbies. I confess it was rather tedious being shunted from pillar to post but at no point did I deal with anyone of the ilk, one has heard about who work for the DVLA, who are dedicated to make lives as difficult as they can. They were all normal people and anxious to help. Even HMRC could not have been more helpful, telling me about a tiny error I had made on the NOVA form and agreeing to amend it for me so they could sign it off.

I contrast my experience with a chap in a different old car club with a 1904 car he was wanting to get registered. He apparently came over as one of the 'don't you know who I am' sort who then berated the person at DVLA for the time the registration was taking. Apparently this took place about five years ago and that the owner can get nowhere as he has been blacklisted by DVLA and thus his car is in limbo, with no registration meaning, of course, it cannot be used. A salutary lesson.

Best regards, Graham.

David Crossley Cooke RIP.

David & Elspeth Crossley Cooke with their 1926 20HP (GOK47) Cockshoot Drop Head Doctor's Coupé

To let members know that long-standing member, and great friend, David Crossley Cooke passed away after a long illness on 24th February. Our condolences to Elspeth.





Rory seated in front. Behind him are Nigel Steel-Scott left and David Davis right.

Rory Poland:

We are sad to report that Rory died at the end of February. He stepped down as chairman of the Australian Chapter in 2023 after almost 30 years of involvement with the 20-Ghost Club. He remained an Honorary Vice-President.

His first veteran car was an American 1912 Flanders purchased in 1958 but later, he and his brother, became custodians of a rebodied 20HP (GH21) which began his passion for Rolls-Royce. In 1985 he purchased 1921 Silver Ghost 8CE from the late Peter Crawford which he restored and rebodied with a Bradbury tourer body. Later he owned 1937 25/30 GR04, a delightful car, with a Martin and King saloon body. This he rebuilt and restored and it subsequently become a serial concours winner.

Rory was a skilful event organiser responsible for famous rallies and meetings with both the 20-Ghost Club and the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia. Some of these events acquired legendary status with lobster luncheons, grand buffets and dinners - a virtual cornucopia of culinary delights not to mention the finest wines.

He nurtured exceptional camaraderie within the 20-Ghost Club during his chairmanship and considerably strengthened the Australian Chapter.

We pass on condolences to Elizabeth and the Poland family.

Hello Johnnie,

I much enjoyed the article on David Redfern's 20HP in Issue 82 [P16 - 1923 20HP, GA23]. David refers to the car's livery as 'Dutch striping' and I believe this term refers to Von Dutch (born Kenny Howard 1929-1992) who was a Los Angeles based motorcycle mechanic and talented artist who developed and cornered the market in vehicle pin-striping and customising in the 1950s and beyond.

Best wishes Peter Brown.



Do you recall Hergé's *Adventures of Tintin*? Steve Wilks is a fan and with the help of ChatGPT and his grandson created this image featuring the Thompson Twins driving Steve's 20/25 (albeit with a suitable colour change)!



Many of you spotted this - with big thanks to cartoonist Peter Schrank and *The Times*.

20-Ghost Club Trophy Winners for 2025

The awards for the 2025 season were presented on the 20th March 2026, after dinner at The Honourable Artillery Company in the presence of HRH The Duke of Gloucester. A full report will come in the next issue but for the time being we are pleased to announce our winners.

With congratulations to them all!

Mileage Trophies

The Alpine Trophy

(Greatest mileage multiplied by the age of car)
Chris Evans in 1925 Silver Ghost 42EU
Chris is a very worthy winner and an article on his exploits from London to Singapore is coming in the next issue.



The Dymock Trophy

(For epic driving)
Chris Evans.
Chris rightly scoops this second award, for the drive mentioned above, plus the 2024 tour from Buenos Aires to New York and also to encourage him to make the Cape Town to London trip in 2027!

The Woodmansee Trophy

(Greatest mileage by a Silver Ghost)
Michael Power.
Michael's story of the Peking to Paris in 58CW is recounted in issue 82 (Part 2 of that story to follow soon).



The Small HP Trophy

(Greatest mileage by a small HP car)
Ian Murray
Ian makes no secret of his passion for everything Rolls-Royce and the everyday use of his 1935 20/25 GUB51 aka Alice means that he easily scoops the Small HP trophy this year.



Driving Trophies

The Harding Rolls Trophy

(Most notable performance in a Club eligible car)
Michael Power in 58CW
A well deserved second trophy for Michael this year!



The Brian Wootton Trophy

(Most help to other participants on tours)
John Horsfield
Have a read of the Horsfield story elsewhere in this issue. The help and calm expertise John provided on the 2025 Baltic Tour was nothing short of magnificent.



Other Trophies

The Stanley Sears Trophy

(Individual meritorious service to the Club)
John Narvell
John's tireless work in re-setting and rebuilding our website has been excellent. A huge effort; and a massive thanks from us all.



The Fergusson Wood Trophy

(Most enthusiastic member)
John and Crispin Menefee
John and Crispin are fairly new members but have absolutely thrown themselves into all aspects of the club to the delight of us all. They have been such great fun on tours in 2025 and thus this trophy is absolutely deserved.



Other Trophies

The Fergusson-Wood (Photographic) Trophy
(Best photograph on a club event)
Steve Wilks
Steve has arranged some very successful tours, he has also hired a professional photographer and stage managed an excellent series of images as a gift for each participant as well as for the club/magazine.



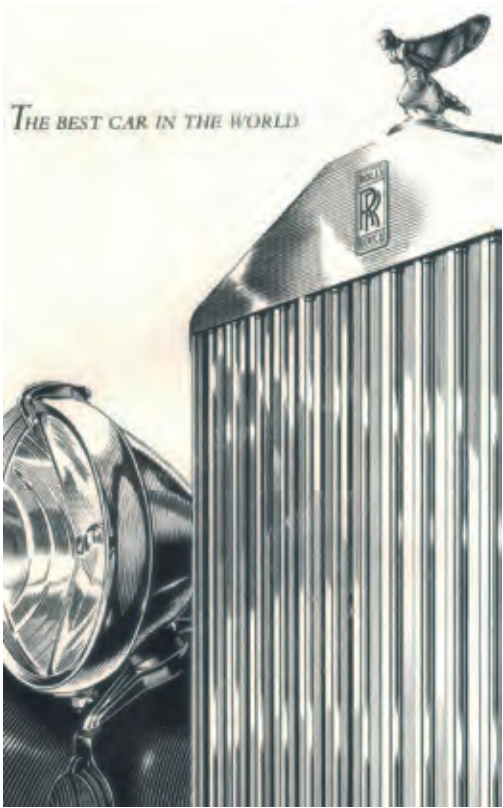
The Harry Watson Trophy
(Best article in N&R)
Philip Hall
Philip is the person behind the long-running *Herodotus* series of articles in the magazine. Every quarter he carefully researches the articles and mentions of R-R within *Autocar* magazine from the same months a century earlier. He has come up with some astonishing finds.



The Phoenix Trophy
(Most interesting and thorough restoration)
Steve Hubbard for the amazing restoration of 1938 25/30 Wraith WXA93.
Congratulations to Steve for seeing through a complete transformation in the car – a truly great achievement.



Inspiring Greatness
(An award presented to the club by Rolls-Royce Motor Cars)
To the great Fokko Keuning for intelligence, wisdom and fun! Fokko (with the Mayor of Raseborg) on the 2025 Baltic Tour!



THE 20-GHOST CLUB LIMITED REGISTERED NUMBER 5224633

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Please see the website for full contact details of our committee, directors and the Australian Chapter

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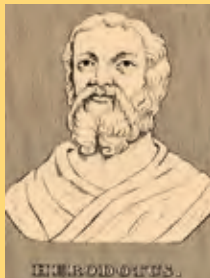
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Just a century ago...

Herodotus casts an eye over R-R related matters within *The Autocar* during January-March 1926.



An Ultra-Refined Six

A test of the latest Rolls-Royce “Twenty” reveals a car which may be said to disarm criticism. Perfection of workmanship is apparent throughout the chassis. The latest model of the 20HP Rolls-Royce is a very considerable improvement on its predecessors. A four-speed gearbox, right-hand gear lever, compensated four-wheel brakes and a number of small details have made the car altogether different from the previous model. It now is much more a smaller edition of the larger car which has made the firm world famous.

Delicacy of control is a notable feature. Gear changing is a pleasure. The car will run at a steady 40mph never giving any sign of labouring. From a general point of view the detail work is beautifully carried out.

Very wisely the car is not designed with a view to high speed, but rather to allow the occupants to forget that there is an engine. At 60mph it is still smooth, and only slightly more noisy.

The brakes are extremely powerful and do not affect the steering.



Luxury in coachwork

The Connaught Company attach body panels to the framework by lapping the metal round the wooden frame and fastening it on the inside resulting in a beautifully smooth exterior. A large glass partition either cuts off the driving compartment from the rest of the car, or when lowered, allows a driver to talk to the other passengers. This is a feature particularly convenient for social occasions, such as using the car for dance or theatre goings where a guest has often, as a matter of necessity, to be carried on the seat beside the chauffeur. The interior finish, particularly the polished wood detail work of the body, is beautifully carried out and the upholstery is deep and comfortable. One of the features of the design is that pillars are curved, not straight, which eliminates the box like severity of outline so often noticed, and imparts an air of dignity and elegance.



The English occupation

Originally published in the Paris magazine, *Le Journal*, *The Autocar* republished W.F.Bradbury's piece about a ‘policeman’ on the Promenade des Anglais, Nice.

This fellow, as stiff as a post, wore a British uniform, cap with chinstrap, close fitting tunic covered with decorations awarded by the King, khaki breeches and leggings. He is very military in appearance and whenever he recognises his high honourable compatriots in one of the passing cars, his heels come together, his chest thrown out and he salutes like an automaton. This “policeman” gives information to Anglo-Saxon motorists, controls traffic, gives signals and above all salutes. Rather surprised by such a sight, for after all the Promenade des Anglais is still in France - I sought information from a French policeman who replied to my enquiries with an accent and a smile. “It appears that he belongs to their Touring Club.” [Presumably the AA] “Who put him there?” I asked. “I do not know, but he is there all day long.” “I suppose he has not the right to summons us.” The policeman replied “not yet.”

Meanwhile, the Englishman, in uniform, in the old French city, full of his own importance and scornful of all that is not Anglo-Saxon, turned to give me a look that indicated I had been staring at him long enough!



DETAILS OF PERFORMANCE
Distance, Revolutions and Fuel.
Rolls-Royce No. 28 R.G.

DETAILS.	1922.	1924.	1925.	TOTAL.
Total Distance Run	15,847	15,615	15,464	46,926
Miles per week of use of car	29.9	29.6	28.9	29.5
Miles per day of use of car	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.2
Miles per gallon of total fuel	11.3	11.1	11.0	11.1
Miles per gallon of motor fuel	11.3	11.1	11.0	11.1
Kilometres per litre of total fuel	18.6	18.0	17.8	18.1
Kilometres per litre of motor fuel	18.6	18.0	17.8	18.1
Total Engine Revolutions	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	3,000,000
Engine revolutions, m.p.h.	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Engine revolutions as percentage of total	100	100	100	100
Actual engine revolutions per mile	63.1	63.4	64.7	63.7
Actual engine revolutions per hour	3,786	3,804	3,882	3,824
Average fuel	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35
Actual top gear ratio	3.71	3.71	3.71	3.71
Total Fuel Used	1,389.5	1,377.7	1,428.8	4,196.0
Cost of fuel - Total	£125.5	£125.5	£125.5	£376.5
Cost of fuel - per gallon	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 3d.	8s. 6d.
Cost of fuel - per mile	7.9s. 6d.	7.9s. 6d.	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.
Cost of fuel - per hour	33s. 6d.	33s. 6d.	33s. 6d.	33s. 6d.
Cost of fuel - per day	£1.10	£1.10	£1.10	£1.10
Cost of fuel - per week	£7.70	£7.70	£7.70	£7.70
Cost of fuel - per month	£23.10	£23.10	£23.10	£23.10
Cost of fuel - per year	£277.20	£277.20	£277.20	£277.20
Cost of fuel - per 100 miles	£8.00	£8.00	£8.00	£8.00
Cost of fuel - per 100 hours	£33.60	£33.60	£33.60	£33.60
Cost of fuel - per 100 days	£11.00	£11.00	£11.00	£11.00
Cost of fuel - per 100 weeks	£77.00	£77.00	£77.00	£77.00
Cost of fuel - per 100 months	£231.00	£231.00	£231.00	£231.00
Cost of fuel - per 100 years	£2,772.00	£2,772.00	£2,772.00	£2,772.00

DETAILS OF EXPENSES.

DETAILS.	1922.	1924.	1925.	TOTAL.
Total Expenditure	£200.00	£200.00	£200.00	£600.00
Per week of use of car	£37.74	£37.74	£37.74	£113.22
Per day of use of car	£5.66	£5.66	£5.66	£16.98
Per hour of use of car	£0.94	£0.94	£0.94	£2.83
Per mile of use of car	£0.71	£0.71	£0.71	£2.13
Per gallon of use of car	£0.94	£0.94	£0.94	£2.83
Per litre of use of car	£0.15	£0.15	£0.15	£0.45
Per 100 miles of use of car	£71.00	£71.00	£71.00	£213.00
Per 100 hours of use of car	£94.00	£94.00	£94.00	£282.00
Per 100 days of use of car	£56.60	£56.60	£56.60	£169.80
Per 100 weeks of use of car	£377.40	£377.40	£377.40	£1,132.20
Per 100 months of use of car	£1,132.20	£1,132.20	£1,132.20	£3,396.60
Per 100 years of use of car	£11,322.00	£11,322.00	£11,322.00	£33,966.00

An owner-driver's figures

The Marquis of Milford Haven wrote to *The Autocar* giving very detailed figures of the cost of running his 1922 40/50 hp Rolls-Royce, chassis 28RG, fitted with a Barker four door all-weather body: “Since taking delivery of my car in November 1922 I have kept a careful and accurate record of the performance and expenditure of money in running it. I venture to send them to you, as, in my humble opinion, they are very representative of the normal performance and cost to be expected of a high-class car when looked after by a keen chauffeur and controlled by a keen owner. The prime consideration in the use of the car has been comfort combined with utility; efficiency and economy have been the second consideration. Practically the whole of the running time of the car has been in the vicinities of London and Southsea with no extended tours.”

The Forbes Report

As the sun finally makes an appearance thoughts turn to using our cars again. John and Mary Narvell have made an early start, currently on a tour of India in their Phantom II in 40 degrees heat. We look forward to reading a report of their exploits soon.

You will find flyers for recently launched events included with this edition so get your name down early to secure a place. Tim Dukes has taken on the Irish Georgian tour (4-8 June) based in Dartmoor this year. Then from 8-12 September Pete and Sue Walton have organised a short tour in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, which finishes after breakfast on Saturday 12th in time for you to attend the club concours. The latter is kindly hosted by Roland Duce at Thurgarton Priory in Nottinghamshire. Alternatively, just come for the day for the concours.

Also on Saturday 26 September, we have the Autumn Lunch and visit to the historic Hook Norton Brewery in North Oxfordshire. Little has changed since the brewery first started in 1849 and they still use dray horses to deliver locally. It promises to be an interesting visit.

Full details are on the website and I encourage those who have not yet looked at the revised website to do so. Event details are posted there first and it is a mine of information: members' contacts, cars and other details. Do not be intimidated! If you click on the 'Forgot Password' button, you will be emailed with new log on details.

As you read this, we will have just enjoyed our Annual Dinner and AGM, with our President in attendance. Thanks to members' contacts, we will once again have been in a distinctive and unique venue, this time at The Honourable Artillery Company in the City, with an escort of Pikemen and Musketeers. An important part of the proceedings is the award of trophies. We had some very worthy winners this year (as reported in this issue). We can be very proud of the achievements of our winners, who lead the way in actually using our cars. It comes to something when driving the Peking to Paris takes second place in the Ghost mileage award! Fortunately, we do have the Large HP mileage trophy as well, so Michael Power did not go away empty-handed.

Our accounts show the club is in a sound financial position, with good reserves and provisions for future expenditure. We use some of our surplus income to subsidise the full colour printing of *News & Record*. Feedback from members is that it is hugely appreciated and enjoyed, thanks to the Editor's efforts.

We look forward to seeing you and your cars on the road at an event this year.

Happy Motoring!

Best wishes
Ken



caption

Just Brill

***Johnnie gets to ride in
Chris and Lesley Mott's Phantom III.***

I don't get to see many Phantom IIIs. There's always a 20/25 or two... the odd 20HP... masses of Silver Ghosts but a Phantom III is the proverbial hen's tooth – especially a darn good looking one. So when, relatively recent new members, Chris and Lesley Mott turned up at Brian and Wendy Fidler's open house last year in a gorgeous claret-red Mulliner Sedan de Ville I simply had to suggest a day when I could pop to see them for a ride/photo-session coupled with the obligatory fish 'n' chip lunch.

Thankfully they seemed very open to this plan and so, in the very last knockings of September, with the final curtain call of 2025's glorious summer sun still beaming (albeit with a slight chill in the PIII's open cockpit) the three of us motored out through the Buckinghamshire countryside headed for the royal hunting forest of Brill.

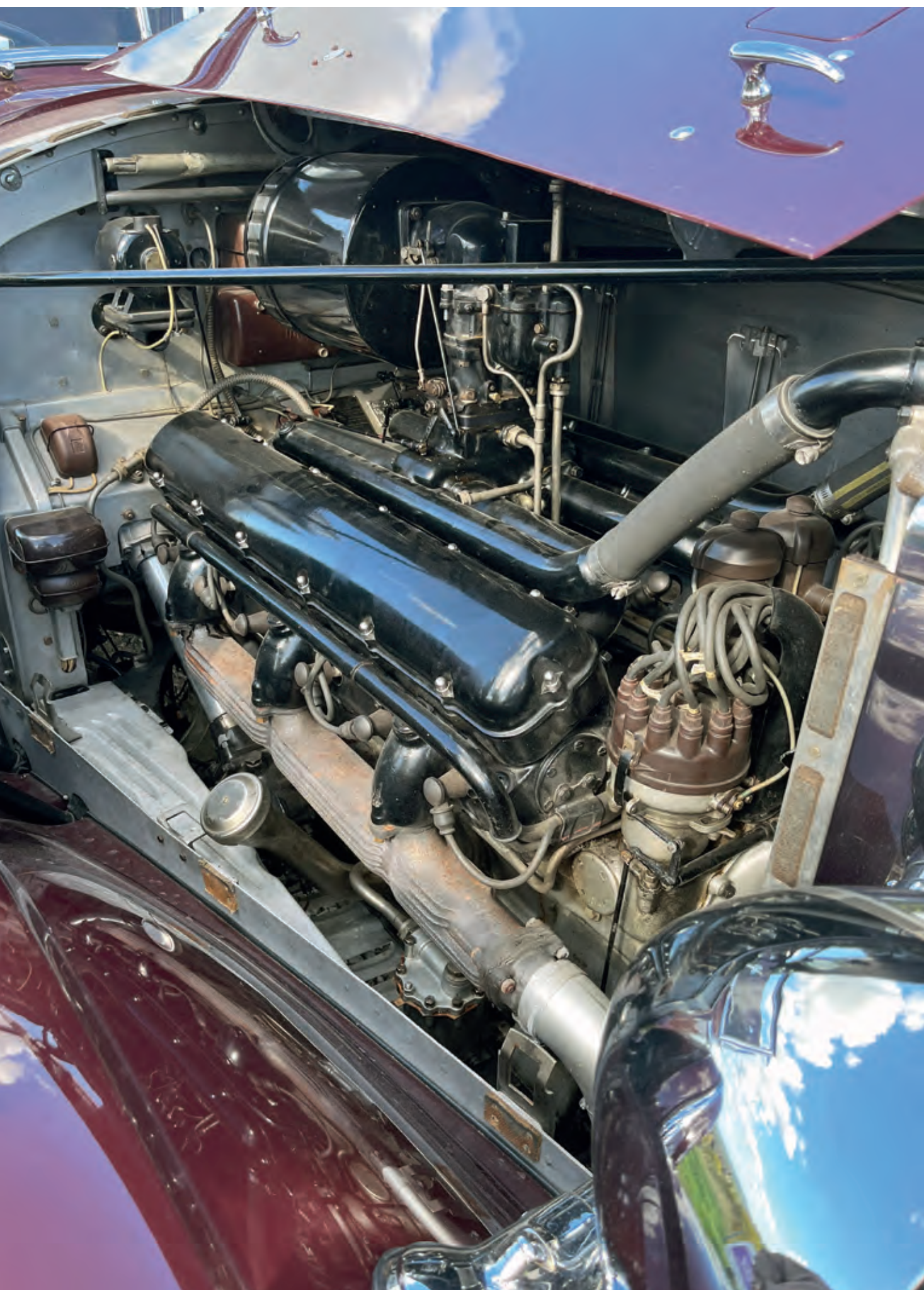
Once a terminus for the Metropolitan Railway (the Duke of Buckingham originally built a tramway there in 1871), Brill is possibly now best known for its fabulous example of a post-windmill dating from 1685. And on our sunny day out the Brill Windmill formed a great backdrop for the 1938 Rolls-Royce Phantom III.

Chris has transport in his blood. Having graduated in engineering as a young man he was persuaded to join the family business running touring coaches alongside his father and brother. The company moved from the old Oxford Bus Depot in Thame during the 1980s to a purpose-built depot in Aylesbury that it occupies today. In the 1990s they were running over 60 vehicles including sleeper coaches for rock bands and road crews. Apparently Bob Geldorf, Iron Maiden, Motorhead and Paul Young were among their clients; Chris has got some stories to tell! Today Chris and Lesley still live in Thame in the house that was attached to the firm's old original bus garage.

I ask about pre-war cars and Chris explained. *'I suppose I saw a Derby Bentley when I was about 12. I immediately knew I wanted one of those. It was only later that I began to look harder at cars with much larger capacity motors they really appealed to my own engineering background.'*

What a day! What a car! 1938 3DL32 HJ Mulliner Sedan de Ville.





The fabled V12 a late D-series model. Alpine Eagle have been great.



Chris has had a series of Derby Bentleys and also owns a lovely example of a Mulliner Bentley S1 Flying Spur but eventually the R-R bug bit – as it always does, in the end, to any person of taste and discernment! *'We had a 25/30 GZR22 which was a nice car and is now owned by [20GC member] Rajiv Kehr in India but I needed something more powerful.'* Explained Chris. *'I bought 3DL32 from Real Car and explained to Lesley that I had always wanted one.'* Lesley hoots with laughter at this point. *'Yes, he did say that although he had never mentioned Phantom IIIs before during our 30-years of marriage!'*

The Phantom is to a superb razor-edge design – Mulliner did a tremendous job - and Jack Barclay sold it to its first owner, a banker, who fairly quickly exported the car to New York. The car came back to London after the war but then was re-exported to the USA in the late 1950s. It went through various long-term owners before coming to Real Car in 2022 by which time it had been painted white.

Since purchase Alpine Eagle have done much of the work needed although with his engineering

background Chris is not frightened of wielding the spanners. As we glide over a speed-hump I comment that the car is extremely smooth on the road. However, Chris feels the ride could be further improved and has just bought some new engine mounts which he will be fitting in the near future. As noted above the paintwork is now restored to the original luxurious shade of claret. *'We found a sizeable chip of the original paint under the dash'* said Chris *'and happily the painters were able to match the colour – so I hope the car now presents in the correct livery.'*

Driving is easy; the steering rake is in the 'F-position' and, although the steering is admittedly fairly heavy, the joy is in the torque of that amazing engine. The late 'D'-series V12 motor on this car did away with the earlier hydraulic tappets in favour of far more reliable solid adjustable tappets. Lesley hasn't driven the Phantom yet but is looking forward to using the car especially given the gears have synchro on 2, 3, & 4; although as we accelerate from 15 to 60mph in top I note that the gearbox is largely redundant.

But the Phantom is no longer Chris's latest acquisition as, quite recently, he returned from a classic car auction with a magnificent Packard 8. *'It's a 1934, 11th Series Packard 8 with a 320-cu inch straight eight side valve engine.'* Chris tells me. *'The body is a four-seater two door drophead by Deitrich.'*

This new American motor (right-hand drive built for the UK) is an utterly amazing car but, on the face of it, perhaps very similar to the Phantom.

'Comparing the two cars is interesting. Both cars have servo assisted braking systems, vacuum on the Packard and mechanical on the Phantom. Both have ride control, mechanically operated on the Packard against the hydraulic system on the Rolls-Royce. And both have one shot lubrication, vacuum operated on the Packard, driver operated on the PIII.'

The Packard is very solidly built; the body is made of steel as against aluminium on the PIII. The steering on the Packard is considerably lighter than the Phantom but a little less precise.

The Packard still has leaf springs all round. They didn't adopt independent front suspension until the mid-thirties and I believe R-R evaluated the Packard design before producing the independent suspension on the PIII and Wraith.'

The Packard is a quality product, well-built but more simple than the PIII – you only need a quick glance that their respective engines to see that. But it runs very smoothly and with its 3-speed gearbox and cruises effortlessly at 65mph.'

'You know the Packard was another car Chris said he had always wanted but had never mentioned!' said Lesley with a wink and broad smile!

My thanks to Chris and Lesley for such a fun day out and for the super ride to Brill in their glorious Phantom III.



I couldn't resist putting in the magnificent Packard mascot. Does anybody know the background to this design?



3DL32 straight after purchase and still in 'wedding' white. Next to it is 25/30 GZR22 (now sold on). In the very background is Chris's Riley Adelphi.



Chris and Lesley and a super day!

Dead and Buried!

Rupert Grey tells of his and Jan's most recent European escapade in GUN 7.





We were at 4000 feet in the Swiss Alps and the snow began to fall. Just before dawn we were woken by the crash of a tree falling on the chalet. The power was off and snow tumbled from the sky in the dull grey dawn.

Alex, aged 3, and I looked out of the window. “Where’s the Rolls?” I asked. “Gone,” replied Alex. It was a mere mound in a white landscape, like a new grave in a churchyard. The snow fell for five more hours. We heard later it was the heaviest snow fall since 1999. Our village was cut off. “No Rolls run to collect fresh croissants”, I told the boys; “In fact no going anywhere in anything!”

Switzerland from Sussex is an agreeable 20-hour drive across the rolling plains of France and avenues of Lombardy poplars. Jan and I broke the journey to drink champagne in Champagne and we sat in Ay town square, surrounded by white houses with white balconies glowing in the evening sun. Early, the following morning, the church bells tolled the hour as we departed. 600 kilometres and 9 hours later we drew up by a timber frame restaurant in a mountain valley and sat outside, vin de valais in hand, to wait for grandsons and their father.

They had arrived in a flurry of excitement. Yes, of course they could steer the Rolls, sit on the bonnet, climb on the roof, hoot the hooter and look at the books in the Rolls Library Box. Max, aged 6, confided that there were two reasons why he loved the Rolls: “it’s old, and has no seatbelts”.

The grandsons and I got to work. Four foot down we found the roof-rack. Well below that a door handle. It was dark down there. Max tried the starter button. “Dead” he announced. Indeed; dead and buried in fact. I had been harbouring dark suspicions about the dynamo since we emerged from the Channel Tunnel on account of a flickering needle. Jim of Twentieth Century Motorcars, who I caught on a day off surfing the rollers on a North Atlantic beach, agreed. We knew of no dynamo-fixers in Switzerland, so the critical question was how far can you get on a fully charged battery? We had some 2,500 kilometres further to go.

The answer, I can reveal, is 600 kilometres in broad daylight with no rain, at least if you have a new heavy-duty Bosch battery. It got us to a small courtyard in the heart of Parma where, importantly, there was an outside socket. The battery was down to 85%. Below 84% it would not start the Rolls from cold.

We stocked up on haunches of Parma Ham, acquired a slicing machine (I have coveted

one for years), proclaimed *The isle is full of noises* from the stage of the Teatro Farnese, built in 1617, and motored to Florence through tunnels under the Apennines. Container trucks thundered past in at close quarters at high speed in quick succession.

We discovered two things: the tunnels, which are miles long, have no breakdown lane. Failing to proceed would probably result in immediate elimination - of both us and the Rolls.

Secondly, when you clip an Italian’s wing mirror it is not a case of exchanging addresses and sorting it out later. It is, he un-politely made clear in a lay-by between tunnels, cash on the spot. The slight problem was that we weren’t aware we had done it nor, if we had, that it was our fault. After a lively discussion we settled on a 100 Euros and went on our way feeling mildly relieved and faintly irritated.

Alexander Grey Thompson, Bartholomew Grey Thompson and Maximilian Grey Thompson in GUN7 in the village of Vex in Switzerland.





Things looked up when we reached a friend's house on top of a high hill outside Florence. Old stones worn by years of use, faded bricks, broad and thin like those of ancient Rome, so that we half expected Quinctius Cincinattus to walk in, bronzed and victorious and from his last Etruscan war in the C5th BC, possibly followed by Harold Acton, 1930's aristocrat and aesthete, after dining with Bright Young Things. He was a friend of Frank the American, the current owner's grandfather whose wife, a Rothschild, bought the house for a song in a Florentine bar just after the war while touring Europe in an Armstrong Siddeley.

After a few days talking and reading, we motored south via Siena to Il Giglio, a family hotel in Montalcino where the 'private and secure car park' turned out to be a magical tall-grass olive grove on a terrace carved into a steep-sided mountain at the back of the hotel. Mario, bearded and benign and of the owning family, bought us a glass of local wine which we drank as the sun fell down the sky.

Not far from there is Potentino, a castle built on Etruscan foundations in a valley of vines. On the way we were flagged down by five excited American ladies in broad hats and classy clothes. We rolled down the window. "You must be Rupert and Jan" they cried, barely audible above our squeaking brakes. "Potentino is that way", pointing to a narrow road which wound through a long green valley of wild forest, inviting meadows and tidy vineyards.

As we drew up in the Rolls, Charlotte the Châtelaine descended the steep ramparts of the castle on a 4WD mobility scooter and gave us a warm welcome. I recognised her at once. In my journal for 2006, when we were last in these parts, I described her as an authentic bohemian aristocrat presiding over a castle which bestrode the landscape. Nothing has changed, save that Charlotte is mellower, the castle more magnificent, the furniture – giant in scale like the castle they occupy – more at home and the vines more mature.



Potentino vineyards
Italy you can just make
out the Rolls in the
distance below the
large cypress tree.



Diana and Christopher Grey in 1950 somewhere near Guildford.

Within a few minutes of our arrival, a bottle of the wine from the vines was placed on the courtyard table and three other redoubtable women joined us: a novelist, a portrait artist and a young woman of strong countenance who was Charlotte's 'Right Hand Person'. "The reason I invited you", Charlotte announced, with what I hoped was a twinkle in her eye, "is because you have Graham's caravan. The mythical caravan!". Graham was Graham Greene junior, Charlotte's step-father. And, with a flourish, she produced a picture of it on her phone.

I first saw the caravan, I explained to the Redoubtables, in a field by a wood in Surrey when I was about 3. By then it belonged to my parents and until I was 10 it was my second home. When my parents bought a remote cottage on the Sussex Downs it came with us and became my bedroom. Later, as I absorbed *The Wind in the Willows* and Kim and other books from the twilight of Empire, the caravan became a symbol of freedom, independence and adventure. As Mr Toad once put it "There's real life for you, embodied in that little cart. The open road, the dusty highway, the hedgerows, the rolling downs. Here today, and up and off to somewhere else tomorrow - a horizon that is always changing".

Like a good many Rolls-Royces the caravan has a story. After 60 odd years as a home for travellers it had been bought by Helga Greene, a Guinness I still have her receipt, signed with a cross by the gypsy vendor and dated 12 January 1949 (£60 for caravan and contents). Helga was my godmother. It passed to her son Graham, known as Graham C to distinguish him from his Uncle Graham the novelist, who travelled in it to Wales when he left Eton hauled by a cantankerous carthorse called Molly. He went on to publish Ian Fleming, Chair the British Museum, marry Sally Eaton (whose father owned a 1933 Thrupp & Maberly Sedan) and, later on, restore Italian castles with his step-daughter Charlotte.

In the meantime the caravan had passed to my parents, who took it on the road for a post-war honeymoon with the same cantakerous horse, and hosted parties for Bohemian friends from London.

Potentino, with its 17 palatial bedrooms, is one of the finest castles in Italy. Under Charlotte it is leading the search for a sustainable future combined with a way of life which has flourished in these valleys

since Etruscan times. The valley is unique in its biodiversity, and Charlotte and her team run programmes, from archaeology to vineyards and wild life; people learn to cook, to make bread, to write, to paint, to judge wine. Writers and artists reside there, festivals happen and the castle walls are a backdrop for theatre and music.

That night we dined with the American ladies, of whom there turned out to be seventeen, on a 20-foot walnut table below a barrel-vaulted ceiling. A golden bust of Goldfinger, presented to Graham C when it was published in 1959, stood on the dresser sporting a homburg hat. Charlotte presided. After dinner Jan and I proposed a toast to caravans and castles and a family connection which started when my Aunt met Helga in 1937 at the Opera House in Vienna.

We slept in a room embedded in the castle walls. The windows opened onto a valley of vines. In the morning our kitchen was bathed in light. Fresh goose-eggs, rustic loaves wrapped in brown paper and ground coffee were on the table. It opened on to a courtyard of rough-hewn steps, worn flagstones and weather-beaten doors. We took breakfast and departed for Civitavecchia in the late afternoon where we took ship to Barcelona.

24 hours later, lost in dark Barcelonian dockyards, we were rescued by Boris; A NASA scientist and Genevan professor, who has a flat in Raval, the roughest part of the city, home to the world's finest pick-pockets. It was a hive of activity; a gathering point for digital nomads who kept fit by working out on 'Muscle Beach' nearby, where muscular youths hang from bars and stand upside-down on the sand. This was a new and optimistic Europe, where threatening geopolitical shifts and corrupt politicians did not interfere with the excitement of the moment. We dined with them looking down on a maze of narrow streets packed with lively Spaniards and noisy tapas bars.

For four days we motored across Spain, following rough country roads beside the Pyrenees. We stayed in a medieval hill-top town and drove over the pass into France which we last crossed some 48 years earlier on our honeymoon while touring Europe in our Austin 7, and slept in a tiny cottage surrounded by snow-capped peaks which we shared with a cat with no tail, and listened to Pope Leo's maiden speech beside a roaring fire.

And finally, to home, we embarked from Bilbao, with GUN 7 parked at the bow in case we needed a downhill run in Portsmouth. Needless to say she sprang into life at a flick of the button.



“Have you ever driven a Ghost before?”

Andrew Prestwich on the lure of a larger horse-power R-R and his family’s love for old cars.

My son has driven as many Silver Ghosts as I have: one. And he hasn’t driven mine yet, mainly because he only passed his driving test in 2025 and has been away at university since.

He drove a Ghost on the same day that I drove a 20HP Rolls-Royce for the first time – at Burghley on 22nd June 2019, the RREC’s Annual Rally. I knew that Mermie Karger would be allowing drives in her 1913 Saoutchik-bodied tourer, chassis 2442 and I rather fancied driving a pre-war Ghost.

“Have you ever driven a Ghost before?” asked Mermie.

“Yes.”

“Well then, you can’t drive it. But he can,” she said, pointing at Charlie.

“But he’s only twelve.”

“That doesn’t matter.”

Thus did Charles Prestwich join the ranks of what is surely a pretty short list – people whose first experience of driving is in a Silver Ghost. Perhaps it was his destiny. He wasn’t quite three-months old when we went to P&A Wood’s celebration of the centenary of the Silver Ghost. Heather was feeding Charlie in the rain when a kind lady asked if she would like to shelter in the back of her husband’s Ghost which turned out to be Colin Lambourne’s open drive limousine. Thus did my son add his name to another pretty short list – babies who have been breast-fed in a Silver Ghost.

Twelve years on, after Charlie had driven Mermie’s car with aplomb (OK, there was one moment when she had her head in her hands), I made a pig’s ear of driving a 20HP limousine that was nearby. I didn’t much like it when compared with my own Ghost. I made allowances for the bumpy grass surface but I found that the car bounced about. I was hoping for a much better experience in a 20HP when I drove my father’s 1929 three-quarter coupé a couple of years later. Chassis GFN44 with coachwork by Page & Hunt seemed a little better on the road than the limousine had been on grass. But it was gutless.



Old and new at Crich Tramway. A young Charlie stands on the running board of 1922 Springfield Silver Ghost 312KG.

My Ghost, 312KG, is a Springfield chassis with an engine that was rebuilt over the winter of 2011/12 with slightly raised compression pistons. So it pulls even better than it did when I bought the car in 2009. The rebuild was only necessary because of excessive oil consumption due to worn and scarred cylinders. I still wonder if we did the right thing in removing another layer of originality from a car that already had a replacement body but I daresay that it would have needed doing at some point. I'm not able to compare it with other Ghosts but everything that I read and hear tells me that the Ghost engine is universally regarded as more than adequately powerful.

When 312KG was rebodied in 1973/74, a couple of leaves were removed from the springs to account for the lighter coachwork that was being fitted. I find that the resultant springing is perfect – albeit, as you know, I really don't have much experience in these matters.

The car feels sure-footed and confident on the road – though I don't drive fast, particularly not in bends and especially not in the wet, partly due to having only rear-wheel brakes. There is undoubtedly a majestic sensation when on the road, though she and I both look diminished when I struggle to persuade her to start. Cold start – no problem. Warmish start – no problem. Hot start – fiasco. For this reason, I tend to fill the petrol tank by using jerry cans in the garage.



Andrew and Heather Prestwich.

*2007 at the P&A Wood SG Centenary.
Heather and baby Charlie shelter in Colin Lambourne's open drive limousine.*



312KG was the right car, at the right price, at almost the right time. I had longed for a Ghost since childhood – my father had 20HPs but they didn't cut the aesthetic mustard for an eight-year-old. The most attractive Ghosts to my eyes were the London-Edinburgh cars which, of course, remained permanently outside my price range but an acceptable copy on a later chassis made 312KG a perfect compromise of car and cash. The timing wasn't perfect in that I was still at work and had family responsibilities to boot. But my father was still active and I needed him to teach me about the car and to cover for me when I wasn't available to do the preparation necessary in the day or two prior to a weekend run. In the end, we spent many happy hours together in the garage – particularly in the first period of my early retirement. In retrospect, that made the timing of the purchase pretty much perfect, too.

I'd always promised myself that we would do long tours but that hasn't happened yet. Dad and I took part in the club's London to Edinburgh run in 2011 (but not all of it – we joined at lunchtime on the first full day) and then, as the saying goes, life got in the way. My son dragged me into the murky world of kids' football and, later, professional club academy football, all of which led to me writing a book, *PREZ*, which is a critique of youth sport as seen through the eyes of a lawyer. I then found by mere chance that my publisher, Troubador, had published a novel, *A Memory of Lies*, by one Johnnie Gallop. Surely it was the same bloke who edits our club magazine: there couldn't be two people with that name and spelling, could there? Comparing the author's online photograph with pictures in *News & Record* revealed that our editor is indeed an accomplished writer, a discovery that has led to many pseudo-literary conversations via email and telephone and in the flesh. (Guess what – there's a green 1930s Rolls-Royce in Johnnie's novel and it's called Peabody!)



For my parents, it was the other way around: Covid got in the way of life. They never recovered from lockdown which left them with diminished mobility and a fear of going out. Father died in 2025, mother is now in a care home and the 20HP languishes in their garage. I haven't got the time, at the moment, to run two vintage cars.

During the months of house clearance, whilst going through my father's affairs, I came across a pristine poster. It was rolled up with other old motoring papers from the 1970s. I took it home and opened it - principally to roll it tighter to fit it into a tube. It turned out to be a promotional print issued by Rolls-Royce USA in 1970 leveraging the heritage of their older models. But one car in particular caught my eye. The 20HP model pictured by R-R Inc. in 1970 was unquestionably the very car that my father had bought from The Real Car Company in 2017. Because of the context of the memorabilia with which it was found (all of it from the 1970s, some of which I remember seeing as a boy), I'm fairly sure that he'd simply kept all this stuff without ever knowing that that piece of paper featured a car that, years later, he would buy. God bless the man who never throws anything away!

So, how can I be sure that it is my father's car? The image shows a central headlight which doesn't exist on the car in my parents' garage. But the monogram on the door does, the horn does and the lamp at the top of the windscreen does. Yet on the poster, the wire from the lamp passes through a hole in the scuttle bodywork. On my father's car, the wire remains inside the bodywork and there is no hole. However, the yellow of the scuttle panel has faded differently from the rest of the car - that panel has been repaired and resprayed. My dad had wondered why. Now I know.

Andrew's father's car - 1929 20HP GFN44 (image: Real Car Company).

Do refer to the back cover of this issue to see the poster found by Andrew which shows this very car!



Mermie carefully teaches Charlie how to pilot her 1913 SG 2442 at Burghley in 2019.



Andrew and his father at Burghley in 2016 (photo Colin Hughes).

I am certain, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the 20HP on the poster is his car; especially because that Page & Hunt bodywork is rare. And the Veteran Car Club badge is still on the badge bar. But I'll never know whether Dad ever realised.

Undoubtedly our finest achievement with the 20HP and the Ghost has been enthusing the next generation: my son has a love of old cars, especially Rolls-Royce. He even writes race reports for the Vintage Sports-Car Club. I only regret not having given him a middle name: Henry would have sat happily next to Charles. And, yes, he does have his eyes on my father's 20HP which would make an excellent car for a beginner even though it is to my eyes an old man's car. All that I have to do now is to find somewhere to keep it. Oh, and I haven't consulted my wife yet...

PREZ by Andrew Prestwich is published by Troubador on 28th May but available to pre-order - just search: Troubador *PREZ*. It is well worth a read - football - politics in sport - litigation and education, Andrew has some brilliant anecdotes!

A Memory of Lies is available on Amazon but send me an email if you would like a copy: jgallop66@gmail.com

A New York State of Mind

Mary Narvell reports on a road trip in Yasmine the Narvell's 1939 Wraith, WEC27.

Visiting America in 1946, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss commented on the “endearingly infantile traits of American culture.” He noted “the adulation to the point of addiction Americans display for baseball” and remarked on their “naïve fascination and childlike enthusiasm for toy-like cars”. While a classic Rolls-Royce could never be confused with a toy in stature or engineered performance, we found on a recent American tour in our 1939 Wraith that adulation and enthusiasm for her were abundantly on display. Yasmine was greeted everywhere on our over 1000-mile journey with passionate interest bordering on zeal.

As our itinerary included privileged enclaves of the rich and famous - the Long Island New York Hamptons, Hudson River Valley estates, the horse country of Saratoga Springs, and a fabled Adirondack camp - we were surprised to encounter such innocent zest. One would have thought luxury vehicles were a yawn in the land of the Roosevelts and Rockefellers, the Spielbergs and Stallones. But perhaps it is testament to the allure of a classic Rolls that even the jaded found themselves gaping. Had Yasmine ears, she would have been deafened by the cacophony of horn blows and exclamations of “Wow.” We had to agree with Lévi-Strauss that our American countrymen are sweetly, touchingly generous in voicing gleeful approbation.



1939 WEC27 has a svelte 4-light James Young body which was only completed after war had broken out – hence the car was not registered until 1944.

Readers of *News & Record* will know that, even with an experienced mechanic riding shotgun on tours, I am not a relaxed passenger. My confidence in her driver does not mitigate my anxiety that Yasmine will suffer a “failure to proceed.” But there is something about the worship with which Rolls-Royces are met that can be an effective tranquiliser. Leaning into the reverential curiosity of those who interrupted our journey, both navigator and driver glowed with pride as we shared the story of our Wraith and her itinerary.

20-Ghost Club members appreciate that not every comment our cars engender is exalting. It is never easy to stay serene when asked, by the however charmingly ignorant, “*Are you the original owner?*” Nor does it boost a lady’s ego to stand next to the car and hear “*What a beauty!*” knowing from hard experience you are not the subject of the sentence or the object of the admiration. But the sheer joy with which people wish to be educated as to the provenance, history and engineering of our cars is somehow the antivenom to these stings.

Yasmine’s trip began with a five-ferry day as she traversed Long Island Sound from New London,

Connecticut and criss-crossed several bays of Long Island to reach its tip at Montauk Point. While her striking yellow coachwork always ensures she is visible a good way off, similar clarity is not common on the New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island coasts. We were therefore thrilled to enjoy a rare 20-plus mile visibility making far away landmarks identifiable. These included Watch Hill, Rhode Island where we summer and locals worry whether Taylor Swift will hold her wedding at her beachside mansion there.

The Hamptons are known worldwide as a bastion of money, old and new. F Scott Fitzgerald’s Jay Gatsby longingly gazes across at old money East Egg from his new money West Egg perch (names the author substituted for the Hamptons). Both Fitzgerald and his protagonist had experienced that “the rich are different than you and me,” a distinction easy to appreciate as we cruised past monolithic oceanside mansions competing for prominence. Yet even in this rarified conclave of exclusivity, Yasmine thrilled passersby. A local journalist was so keen to “meet” the car, he tracked us for four miles before flagging us down, getting the interview, and producing a piece for the East Hampton Press.



Skirting Manhattan, we crossed the Mario Cuomo Bridge to begin our Hudson Valley journey that would be blessed with glorious weather and vistas ablaze with autumn foliage. Yasmine's yellow was perfectly complemented by russet maple trees and orange pumpkins everywhere on our northerly route. The area is blessed with spectacular and expansive views of the Catskill Mountains across the riverbed and nowhere is this more evident than at Olana where the most accomplished of the Hudson River School artists, Frederick Church, created a living masterpiece of landscape overlooked by his Moorish mansion. There and at many a property where Yasmine squired us, tour guides were frustrated when their audiences were quickly distracted by her elegant coachwork and surprised by her quiet "Wraithlike" approach. The inevitable requests for photos, questions about gas mileage, and fascination with the right-hand wheel ensued as she charmed more conquests.

Among the smitten were friends celebrating a big birthday at Oheka Castle. Spying them draping over Yasmine's bonnet for selfies, we offered to capture the occasion in a group photo. Yasmine didn't dim alongside the buffed and polished New York ladies. Later she gleamed at a roadside diner shining like American kitsch.

Our next stop was Saratoga Springs upstate. Before American Gilded Age families congregated in Newport, Rhode Island to display their wealth in cottages and carriages, they ventured to this spa town enshrined in horse racing history for its fabled track. Elegantly bedecked mothers hoping to snare wealthy bachelors for their debutante daughters delicately fanned themselves on shaded hotel terraces while their financier husbands gambled on horseflesh. So promenading is standard fare in this town. No surprise that Yasmine caught many an admiring enquiry in front of the old Adelphi Hotel where the usual definition of horsepower was four-footed even if pulling equally splendid coachwork.



The delighted ladies of the big birthday bash at Oheka Castle.



The landscape beauty for which America is known exploded in our last stop in the Adirondack mountain range – Lake Placid. The region is home to many rustic camps where millionaires played at roughing it in vast timber framed lodges. Today for a hefty fee, tourists lounging in Adirondack chairs and sleeping in beds made of tree branches can imitate the Rockefellers and Vanderbilts. After the many miles she had carried us, Yasmine relaxed in a space of honour before the lodge door if occasionally disturbed by curious covetous glances. One guest, spying her Rhode Island registration, asked “Surely, she must have a new engine to have come all that way? And how did she get here from England?” Claude Lévi-Strauss, here we go again!

A great family firm

Johnnie meets up with two generations of Horsfields to learn about the firm that bears their name.

Many members know John Horsfield well as he is the third generation to run the eponymous family business, in Halifax, on a site originally bought by his grandfather Hermon back in 1948. Over the last 77 years Horsfields have become known as a coachbuilding firm, restoring bodywork and re-creating new coachwork for Rolls-Royce and Bentley chassis. More recently, John has been creating open sports car style specials on to MK VI and S-Type Bentley chassis as well as garnering a great reputation in the repair and restoration of all ages of Rolls-Royce and Bentley motor cars.

I took a train north to meet John and learn more about the business and its history.

As I stepped out of the station so John swung into the car park in a very well-used but totally original Bentley MK VI with unique Mulliner Coachwork. 'This is a very early 1946 car - in fact the second production car built after WW2!' John tells me as we zoom off to the workshops. These are located on the site of an old 19th century brewery nestled into the side of a hill, overlooking the town of Halifax, with the valley below and dales beyond. It's quite a spot, with an awesome view out, but I'm immediately taken by the numerous pre-war R-Rs around and about in all states of repair.

John and his father Derek with 1929 Twenty GLN7 with H Horsfield Tourer coachwork..





1924 Model T Ford truck in the firm's storage barn (the spelling of haulage on the door is an original typo!).

John points to a Phantom 1 which was recently purchased at an auction in the USA by an Indian customer. *'I've got quite a bit to do on that before it's shipped off to Mumbai.'* he smiles. As we walk into the workshop we are confronted by a new Jaguar. *'Yes sorry about this!'* he laughs *'a friend has asked me to take a look at the electric seat mechanism.'* He waves across to the driver's seat which is on the bench with more electrical gubbins spilling out of it than the average Elon Musk moon rocket. *'It's been a challenge, but I think we have sorted the trouble.'* Quite impressive – and not just about very old cars at Horsfields then!

It's at this point that Derek Horsfield arrives and introduces himself. Derek was ten when his father, Hermon, moved from being a local farmer to doing up cars and selling them on. It wasn't restoration so much back then - more just getting cars to run again after the long lay-up of the war and selling them to people who were hungry to go places once more.

After setting up his motor business, it wasn't until 1956 that Hermon bought his first Rolls-Royce. At the time Derek was studying physics at University College London and cycling to lectures from his digs south of the river. One day, as he crossed

London Bridge, he was knocked off his bike. No bones broken but Derek's mother, Connie, was worried and to please his wife Hermon decided that Derek needed a decent car for the commute. Nothing too new or flashy but something reliable. And so, a 1930 20/25 Rippon Limousine was purchased at auction for £75 and prepared for the rigors of London. With his new mode of transport Derek was not only safer, he also had a spacious accommodation for his tennis team's away matches, and his newly formed jazz band complete with double bass! Derek was king of the road - but even more importantly the Horsfield family had set off on a path of specialism which was to see them right for the next 70 years - and beyond.

The Horsfield workshop is a real treasure-trove of parts, cars and just about every engineering tool and machine imaginable. There is even an aeroplane, a 1948 Auster of wartime reconnaissance design, hanging in the rafters; brought there some thirty years ago by an early apprentice who actually ended becoming a local dentist.

By the 1970s Hermon and Derek had found a good trade by taking on derelict Rolls-Royce motor cars, very often old hearses or vehicles with missing bodywork. With a team of skilled craftsmen, Horsfields were able to bring life back to many vehicles otherwise destined for the scrapyard. Customers favoured barrel sided open tourer coachwork along the lines of an early Barker design and it was realised there was a steady demand. There are believed to be 51 Rolls-Royce chassis bearing this Horsfield Tourer coachwork, popular for wedding transport duties especially as the cars were known to be very reliable.

Derek explained that another local coachbuilding concern was Woodhall Nicholson who made a name by taking Rolls-Royce motor cars and converting them into hearses [see N&R issues 79 and 80 *Death and Transfiguration* for more info]. *'They rather looked down on us.'* Derek told me *'but when we began to buy up their old hearses and convert them back to tourers, so the cars turned full circle and more mutual respect was given.'*

But by the 1980s it wasn't clear whether the third generation was going to be interested in joining the family firm. John explained his own background *'Well, as a child of the "Space Race Era" from an early*



Examining the Marshal Mannerheim 1915 Silver Ghost 27CB on the Baltic Tour in 2025.



Bentley MkVI 1948 Sports Special by Horsfield.



A warm welcome at the station! 1946 Bentley MkVI, B4AK with H J Mulliner Coachwork. Potentially the earliest Bentley production vehicle post-war.



A (very) 1970s Horsfields of Halifax Wedding Car advert showing 1928 Phantom 86EH with Horsfield tourer coachwork.

age, I wanted to become an astronaut. It was clear that astronauts were selected from military test-pilot programmes and so after college I joined the RAF. They sent me off to Biggin Hill who agreed I had the aptitude but, at that time, the Cold War budget was more about providing nuclear missiles than air defence. They suggested that with my engineering background I recruit as an engineering apprentice, and that I might later be called into the pilot programme. Three years later I was a qualified Airframes and Jet Propulsion Specialist working with 617 Squadron Tornado (of Dambuster fame). It was another three years before the call to become a flight engineer on Hercules transport planes. After two years of ground school and simulators with limited operational flying my terms of service came to an end. I had no ambition to sign up with the military for life so left the RAF but it was now the late 1980s; there was a recession and very few airline pilot jobs available. I switched back to engineering - working on all sorts of planes and engines from Spitfire Merlins to advanced Turboprop Jets.' As he tells me this I'm suddenly reminded of that Jaguar electric seat on the workshop bench - that's where the know-how came from.

'I decided to do some travelling and ended up in Indonesia. I thought I might settle on the magical island of Bali and one day was invited to climb Mount Batur, a volcano in the north. On the upper slopes, lush forest and paddy give way to open rolling hillside. The locals had delineated the lush green fields by lining them with black volcanic rock and, rather bizarrely, it reminded me of the Yorkshire Dales; and I realised I was homesick! That's when I returned to Halifax. By then Dad was on his own and needed the help. The skilled men were retiring and there were few younger



John working on 1934 20/25 GLB14 Woodall Nicholson tourer..

recruits with an interest in pre-war cars. I joined my father in partnership and re-energised the coach-building side adding sports body designs for post-war chassis to the repertoire. We have worked well together over the last 35 years to maintain this business with its ancient skills against the modern world demands!'

Recently Ken Forbes found his way to Horsfields and suggested to John that he might become tour engineer on our long overseas tours. John was very much up for this challenge and he and his artist and teacher wife Sarah joined the Baltic Tour in June/July. See the full tour report in issue 81. Everyone on that tour thoroughly enjoyed John and Sarah's company and several members were

extremely glad of his engineering prowess which meant that a handful of cars completed the full tour rather than being forced to return home on trailers.

Whilst I was there somebody just turned up and brought in a carburettor off a 'Series 1' Land Rover and asked John to fix it. John spent a while studying it and smiled *'I think we ought to be able to sort that out - I never make promises - but I can often find a sensible solution to an otherwise tricky problem.'*

Family firm Horsfields is always open for business. Why not give John a ring on 07792 326210 or email: info@vintagerolls.co.uk

The Last Word

On your right is a pretty damp Phantom II and a very wet Johnnie and Bella! 2026 started with some quite wet months and it was chucking it down when Bella and I went up to Jonathan Wood's workshop to take out 82UK for its first spin since acquisition in 2018. That 'two-year restoration' has taken rather longer than expected and as we set off into the Essex countryside on that rainy day the weather certainly wasn't going to dampen our spirits!

We were smiling when we left and grinning from ear to ear by the time we returned.

As many of you know I'm a devotee of the 'Twenty' but I have to say that a mighty 40/50 needs to be experienced. As you can see from the image – there are still a few small bits and bobs to do but Bella and I are hopeful that an (unpainted) PII might be in our garage by the summer. Please keep your fingers crossed for us!

In other news you will notice that our 'new members' page has fallen out of this issue. Sorry about that, but I was running short on space and wanted to include our trophy winners. There will be a bumper report on new members next time.

Also some of you have spotted our adverts in the VSCC magazine and also in *The Automobile*. We are a small and exclusive club of enthusiasts and friends and determined to remain so. Joining the 20-Ghosters remains a matter of friendly interview and subsequent approval by the board but it is good to get our name out there a bit more.

Do you know somebody who should join our ranks? They might already be members of other clubs but not ours. It's true that we are principally a touring club and that our tours won't suit everybody, so just because somebody owns one of our cars doesn't mean we are necessarily right for them – but surely we ought to be having a conversation?

So please give it some thought and see whether there is a friend with one of our cars (or who should own one of our cars) that you could recommend. A bottle of fizz goes to any member making a successful recommendation – perhaps with the idea it gets popped open at a picnic together!

Please keep the stories, emails and photos coming in, they are all really appreciated and everything gets used. Thanks for your company as ever, see you next time.

Johnnie



The ROLLS-ROYCE Story

First Silver Shindig to Silver Shindies, the Baby-Playa trio is **REKINDLING** support for more than its 100,000 of its own universal appeal to teenage heartthrobs and their screaming screaming for perfection. This is why Harry Payne has Silver Shindies as "the one band in the world with a young crowd to bring the stadium a full."

Only the standard Baby-Playa phenomenon has Silver Shindies as Payne and a devoted group of "quality" multiethnic babies who are "the only ones" wearing the early bird in a Baby Shindies' black-and-white shirt with an ivory bird, and baby's cut-out on the chest, with a white all-american flag.

Baby Shindies, the band, is the only Baby Shindies.

