



News & Record

Issue 84 | Summer 2026





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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
Roland Duce. Contact Ken
Forbes:
kennethforbes@btinternet.com

September 2026

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

June 2027

Wednesday 2nd to Friday 18th
Tour of Saxony and Bohemia to
be run twice! This will be the
first run.

October 2027

Wednesday 15th to Friday 1st
November
Tour of Saxony and Bohemia
the second run.
Contact Sir John Stuttard:
johnstuttard@btinternet.com

Letters, Emails & Pictures

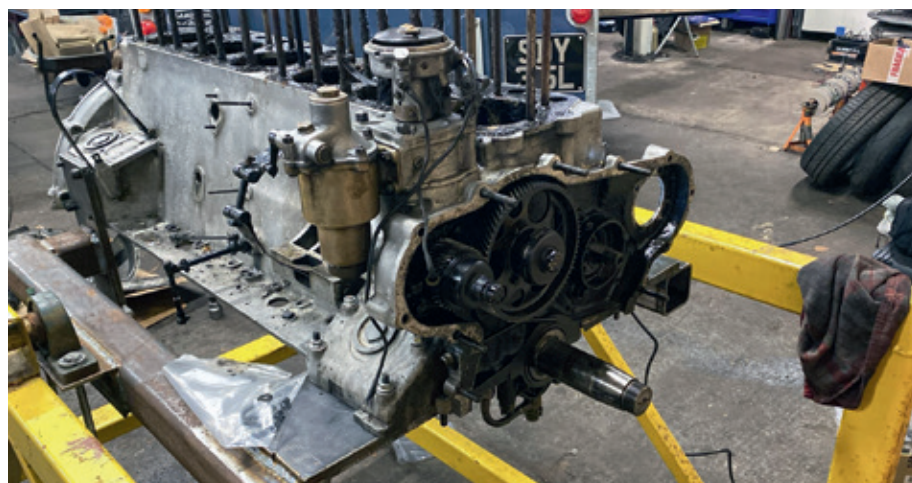
New member Neil Ross and I have been corresponding and I thought I would include a little of his recent message:

Dear Johnnie

As you know we purchased 1925 Phantom I 59LC recently and we are currently at the start of the process of rebuilding the engine. Although we were told the car had run well in the past we knew it had not been driven for many years. Unfortunately, just prior to purchase, the engine had been started and moved and we feel this might have caused damage. It appears that one of the valves was stuck and when the engine started it bent one of the push rods which also cracked the copper pipe it sat in. We found that coolant had, very recently, started to leak into the engine sump. We have therefore now fully stripped the engine and also have decided to replace the pistons as two had hairline cracks. We have found a specialist company who we have commissioned to make the pistons out of specialist alloys.

The rest of the car is in great condition, but we are taking the opportunity to undertake a full rewire.

Best wishes, Neil Ross



Nick Naismith has produced an article about his 1911 Silver Ghost 1606 which spent time in Australia and was recently displayed at the RAC in Pall Mall to commemorate the centenary of Claude Johnson's death. Space is limited in this issue so I hope to run that piece in the autumn but, for now, I thought this picture of Jonathan Wood very carefully installing Nick's Ghost in the RAC's rotunda was great!



Good King Wenceslaus looked out...

Sir John Stuttard on the 2027 Tour of Saxony and Bohemia. Still space for one or two more cars. Can you join us?

...on the Feast of Stephen, of course, when the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even. Except, he was never a king but a duke who lived in Bohemia in the 10th century. He was brutally assassinated by his own brother and, as a martyr, was posthumously granted the title of King by the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto The Great. But where on earth is Bohemia – or for that matter, Saxony?

20-Ghost Club members who join the 2027 tour of the Czech Republic will find out more about King Wenceslaus and the history of Saxony and Bohemia as well as enjoying stunning countryside. These days, joining a 20-Ghost Club tour is a journey of discovery about history, delightful restaurants, and having fun with friends, with hardly a passing reference to the difficulty of changing down a gear on a Ghost or the clutch slipping on a 20/25.

Starting near the medieval city of Nuremberg, staying at ancient castles, discovering the light and affordable Czech wines, we will enjoy exclusive private tours and travel through a most beautiful part of Europe. In the Czech Republic there is a castle or a palace in almost every village. At the end of a 16-night tour, there will be a three-night stay in Prague, a most perfectly preserved city, with its blend of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Art Nouveau buildings – and, of course, its food.

The demand for this tour has been such that it will be run twice: Wednesday 2nd to Friday 18th June 2027 and Wednesday 15th to Friday 1st October 2027. We have 18 or 19 cars/couples on each tour and can probably squeeze in one or two more couples who want to enjoy another stunning Continental European tour.

Anyone who is interested can find more information on the club’s website, where there is a flyer, or by contacting me: johnstuttard@btinternet.com.



WHC31 gets a sneak preview of Strakonice Castle in South Bohemia, c/o AI

Dear Johnnie

I was pleased to read Ian Murray’s letter regarding his purchase of ‘Auntie,’ Jimmy and Janet Valentine’s PI, because we have bought ‘Niece’ aka ‘Doris’ their 1909 Darracq 14/16 model.

The plan is that my son George and I will take the Darracq to VCC events in the UK and over to France for Club des Teuf-Teuf (VCC of France). We have a small ‘beaver tail’ transporter, which has proved a really easy vehicle to use in terms of loading and moving cars.

Jimmy was a great friend and Janet plans to stay with us and be taken on jolly jaunts in the Darracq around the Cornish lanes. As with Ian, I know that Jimmy would approve of Doris’s new home and hopefully Janet will be happy knowing that she will not lose contact with the car.

Regards Graham Tyson

Just a note to say that Graham Tyson has been made a 20-Ghost Club Honorary Member in view of his very long service as our membership secretary - extremely well deserved; I know that every member will be delighted!



.....



1937 Rolls Royce 25/30 GRP4 ‘Emily’ for sale

Henry Fitzhugh rang me to mention that he and Rosemary have decided to part with one of their cars. Members will, I’m sure, be well aware of ‘Emily’ which has been extensively toured with the club and independently by the Fitzhughs over many years - all over Europe. Henry tells me that the car is in all round super condition. It’s in the late 1930s svelte ‘airline’ style, and on the inside has the rare disappearing division which Henry has written about in these pages in the past.

The car is listed on the Vintage & Prestige site vandp.net at £65,000 - do go and take a look as the car is very worthy of consideration.

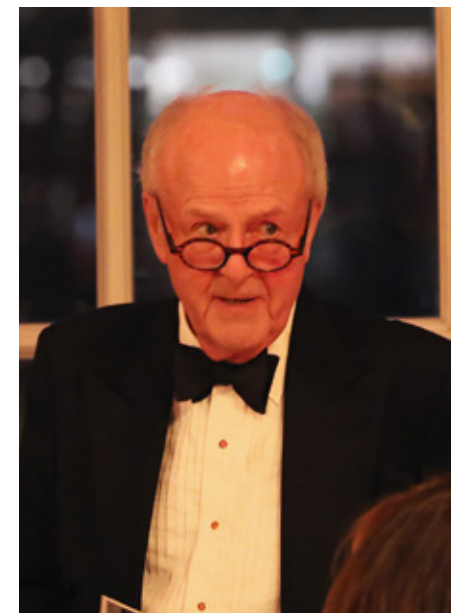
The 20-Ghost Club 2026 AGM and dinner at The Honourable Artillery Company London.

Murray Grant organised the most fun and memorable evening for us at the HAC on Friday 20th March. Our President, His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester, attended and, as usual, was hugely sociable, knowledgeable and witty.

On arrival we were greeted by the Yeomen (and a Yeowoman...) and later in the evening there appeared to be a degree of cross-dressing going on between some of our members and the HAC's finest – to hoots of laughter from all.

The food was wonderful, the speeches educational, heartfelt and funny, and our award winners received well-earned applause.

It really was a truly excellent evening – thank you Murray and to all involved.



New Members



Rowan & Rebacca Moss,
Ramsgate, Kent.
1922 20HP 45G8 in restoration, & 1923 20HP GA35
Park Ward Saloon.



Eric Hoedt,
Gross Umstadt, Germany.
1922 SG 70YG Binder Victoria Coupe, 1929 PII 81XJ
Barker Sedan de Ville, & 1937 PIII 3BU174 Barker
Landaulette.



Peter Brown,
Templecombe, Somerset.
1938 25/30, GZR1, HJ Mulliner saloon.



Kyohei Wakabayashi,
Kazo-City, Japan.
1929 20HP Barker Tourer GTM27.

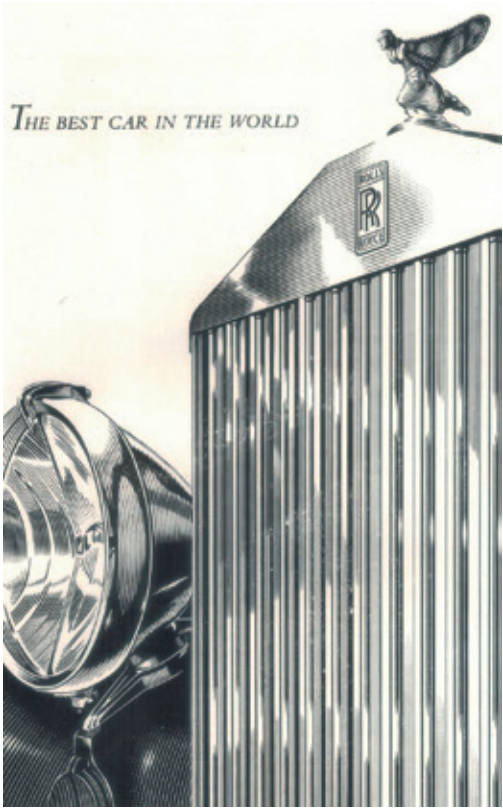


Kevin & Nuala Cunningham,
Galway, Ireland.
1929 PI 42KR Barker limousine.



Derek Smith,
Cooling, Kent.
1921 SG 2UG Open drive Landaulette, 1923
20HP 60H4 Open drive Landaulette, 1923
20HP 61H0 Pullman Limousine, 1935 20/25
Sedan de Ville. Derek also runs a small
engineering company manufacturing 20HP
cylinder blocks.

Do you know anybody who owns one of
'our' cars? Do give me a call or drop me
and email to propose them!
jgallop66@gmail.com 07930 531231



THE 20-GHOST CLUB LIMITED REGISTERED NUMBER 5224633

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OTHER UK DIRECTORS: Murray Grant; Strone Macpherson; Tim Maltin; Doug Magee;
Hamish McNaught, Nick Naismith; Steve Wilks; Louise Wood

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

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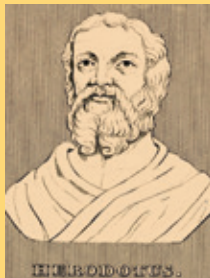
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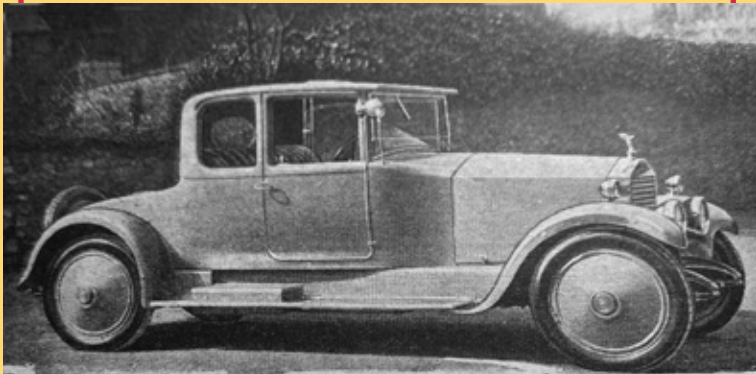
Just a century ago...

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



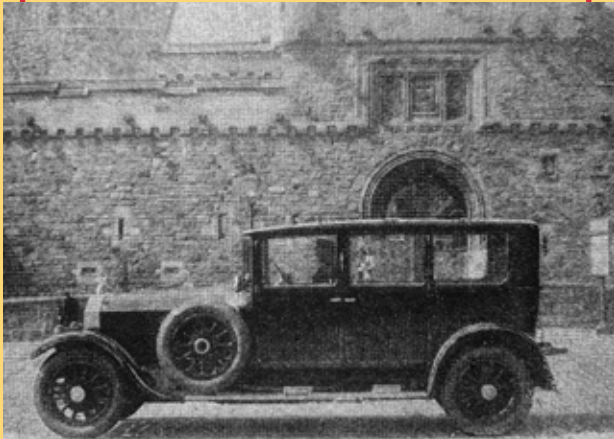
Very Smart

The slightly tumble-in sides, front and rear, of this very attractive 20 hp Rolls-Royce saloon-coupé, the coachwork of which Mann, Egerton & Co Ltd. are responsible. The bodywork is remarkable for the clever manner in which the aluminium panels have been beaten out.



Promotions

Mr W M Cowan, who has been associated with the Rolls-Royce Company since its inception, has been appointed general London manager to the company, and Mr A F Sidgreaves, who has been export manager to the company for six years is now the general sales manager.



Dignified 40/50 hp Rolls-Royce
Croall and Croall of Edinburgh are responsible for this handsome four-door enclosed body on a 40/50 hp Rolls-Royce chassis, which has been supplied to Sir Alexander Grant. The car, which is painted royal blue, is seen before the entrance to Edinburgh Castle.

An important appointment

General congratulations will be extended to Mr Basil Johnson who has just been appointed managing director of Rolls-Royce Limited as successor to his brother Mr Claude Johnson, whose death was recorded in April.

Worthy of its company

An MG super sports saloonette seen between an open 40/50 hp Rolls-Royce and a 20 hp enclosed car of the same make, forms an extremely attractive companion to the larger vehicles. This fine fleet is the property of Mr T Ayrton Stafford of Moseley Hall, Knutsford, Cheshire.



Claude Johnson

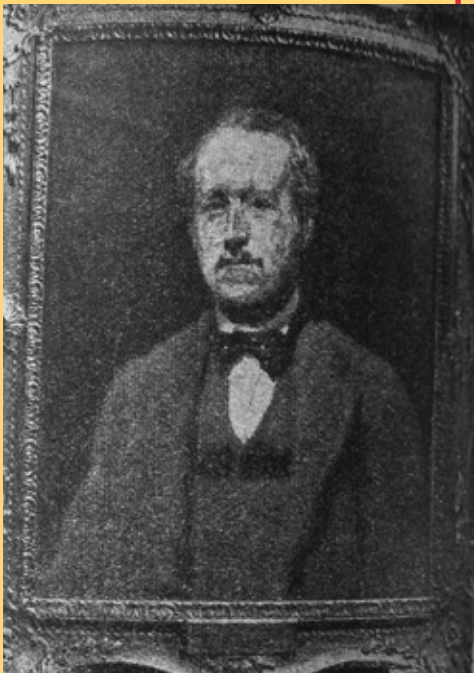
Lord Montagu of Beaulieu writes in affectionate memory of an old friend. With the death of C J, as his friends called him affectionately, has passed away one of those who helped to lay well and truly the foundation of that wonderful new method of transport, the motor vehicle. His was the organising brain which from 1898 to 1903 was the life of the original Automobile Club, and after that the business side of the Rolls-Royce Company. The success of the RAC, as it is today, and the worldwide fame of the finest motorcar are testimonies to his abilities. He made the 1000 miles trial in 1900 a revelation of the capabilities of the motor car to the official world, to local authorities and to the public. In 1903 he made all the arrangements for the Gordon Bennett race in Ireland. The first regulations for racing, for hill climbs and every kind of test were the result of his brain work during the first eight or ten years of the motoring movement.

When the Great War came he saw quite soon the possibilities of aviation, and the RR aeroplane engine soon forged its way to the front despite very severe competition at home and abroad. C J and Royce, the business brain and the mechanical genius, were a combination hard to beat in this and other matters.

C J was a man of wide interests. He delighted in the pictures of his friend Ambrose McEvoy and he loved music.

The American Rolls-Royce Company, now a prosperous concern after early troubles, owes much of its success to him. A painting of the late Mr Claude Johnson hangs at the Royal Automobile Club.

Now as a friend, I write of a man whose going leaves a blank in one's life.



The Forbes Report

Temperatures of 30C in the UK this week have certainly put us in the mood for Steve Wilks's tour of castles and gardens in France next month. It is such a joy to be out in the sunshine enjoying the simple pleasures vintage motoring offers. Amongst other things, my main improvement to the car over the winter was a new set of Blockley straight sided tyres. So far I am most impressed with the improvement in ride and handling compared to my old Goodyears (and the cost compared to new Goodyears!).

At the end of April we were invited by Rolls-Royce Motor Cars to hold our Board meeting at Goodwood and have a factory tour. It was a special occasion with nearly all the Directors present with their club cars lined up in the courtyard. There was a constant stream of RRMC employees admiring the cars and asking about their bespoke features – see pic opposite! With so much of their own work now focused on bespoke options, it was equally intriguing for us to see the detailed one-off work they are capable of today.

It is our custom to invite the CEO to be an Honorary member of the club, whilst in office. Chris Brownridge was very pleased to accept and made time to meet us and view the cars. He took no persuading to accept Nick Naismith's offer of a ride in his 1911 Ghost and then drove himself out on the Goodwood circuit. He described it as the highlight of his week.

The Spring Lunch at Strone and Alex's barn was close by the next day, with the usual full house of members enjoying champagne and chatting in the sunshine. Thanks to them both for once again hosting a quintessentially perfect 20-Ghost Club event.

The Irish Georgian tour in Devon is also fully subscribed and continues the special relationship both clubs enjoy. The mixture of old cars and old houses works so well.

I know September is quite a long way off, but we do need more commitments for the Annual Concours at Roland's and the Autumn Lunch at Hook Norton Brewery. Details are on the website and in the Calendar in this edition. It helps organisers greatly if we know how many to cater for, so please get your applications in.

Enjoy everything the summer has to offer the vintage motorist!

Best wishes 



Ready for anything!

Part 2

In Issue 82 Michael Power told of his decision to purchase a Silver Ghost (namely 1920 58CW) and ready it for The Peking to Paris. Now, on to the massive trial itself!

As explained in Part 1 my good pal and co-driver Nigel piloted the Ghost solo for two weeks across the length of China, whilst I had been called home only to find my Chinese visa did not allow me re-entry to that country. When I finally rejoined in Almaty Kazakhstan he arrived with the Ghost in first class order. An amazing testimony to both him and the car. It could only get worse now that I had turned up!

During a particularly long day an old wound opened up in the car's radiator and it began leaking. We got in late to Kylorda where Nigel charmed the tour mechanics whilst I removed the radiator as quickly as I could. Epoxy resin was applied to the dodgy area and we crossed our fingers.

But the next day was another long one. Sadly our 'crossed fingers' had been insufficient to stop the leak and we were running as tail end Charlies together with the other Rolls-Royce on the tour. With a 100km of dirt road to go to get to the desert camp there was an appalling noise as the exhaust downpipe disconnected itself. Fortunately, the wonderful Welsh 'sweeper team' of mechanics had a supply of metal scraps and threaded rod and we designed a bracket to hold the joint together.





Now we set off at a pace which felt too fast; the water leak was getting worse despite the best efforts and Radweld applied by the side of the road, but we were losing daylight and still 2-3 hours from camp.

We finally arrived at the camp site located in the dried-up Aral Sea very late and exhausted. Nevertheless, there was work to be done and the tour mechanics volunteered that, if I took the radiator off, then they would give it another dose of glass fibre. This time it held. Moreover we had finished the real rough stuff. Quick point on tyre pressures which we had reduced from 55psi to about 40 to allow a bit of give. Amazingly they had held up with no punctures and weren't too worn down.

The following day the steering became heavy and vague. Lots of worrying ideas came to mind as we drove along but, on analysis having jacked up the front of car, we found that the steering arm had loosened - so we just tightened the nuts. And arriving at the port of Aktan for the crossing to Baku in Azerbaijan the car seemed in reasonably good shape.

In Baku I thought it time for another oil change (we had done one in Almaty) but this time I wanted to drop the sump plate and see what was going on inside. I scraped the sludge into a receptacle, diluted it with petrol and passed the fluid through a cloth. I examined the residue carefully looking for bits of white metal or other nastiness. All there seemed to be were bits of carbon which had presumably built up in certain places and then broken off; pistons perhaps? The oil pressure had been rock solid on 18psi unless labouring up a hill. So I was generally pleased and relieved. We also did all the other necessary maintenance tasks, sphere oil, clutch oil, carden shaft oil, king pin oil, and a myriad of grease cups to replenish.

We set off into Azerbaijan feeling content. Baku is 28 metres BELOW sea level on the Caspian Sea, which is really a lake because it doesn't drain or connect to an ocean. After Baku we spent a lot of time at high altitudes in Azerbaijan, Georgia and particularly Turkey where we experienced summits of 2500m.

In Turkey we experienced poor running and frequently going to five cylinders or less. We changed the coil, cleaned the points and replaced the condenser but no marked improvement and also discovered that the magneto was not working properly. Eventually we twigged that the mixture was too rich at high altitude and ended up running with the mixture control on maximum weakness. This cured the misfiring and running on five cylinders but we did feel that we were struggling up hills. Then we discovered that everyone else was too!

Research shows that one loses 3% power for every 1000 feet climbed. Therefore when climbing a mountain pass at 2500m the engine is producing 25% less power. That's a challenge for a heavy car and an engine producing perhaps 55bhp at sea level.

In Ankara we had a challenging evening in the hotel's underground car park adjusting foot brakes (rear wheel brakes only) and replacing the magneto - never quite as straightforward as one feels it should be. Undoing magneto drive coupling - is it left or right hand thread? Front is right, back is left. But back is tight so it takes confidence to give some sharp taps to free the coupling. Then the advance and retard lever is in a different position which all needs adjustment. Then the magnetos are different heights so the fixing bracket needs adjustment. Then it can go together. Mercifully timing worked perfectly having initially placed engine at top dead centre on compression stroke for number one cylinder.

From Istanbul to Sofia in Bulgaria the car ran well with no issues. Good oil pressure and no overheating despite a new, but minor, radiator leak on the top edge. In Sofia we carried out routine servicing and essential bodywork repairs. The brackets supporting the rear wings had been sheared off by the wheels on full spring deflection. Separately the bonnet hinges were breaking off. Coach screws anchored the wings and a hinge repair was made with reinforcing metal and rivets. The team in a 3 Litre Bentley lent Nigel glue allowing him to bond the top of the radiator.

We survived all the way to Europe on the original four tyres. Only then did we feel the need to change one which had developed a split in the side wall following a nasty pot hole.



The makeshift bonnet hinge repair.



Co-driver, Nigel Parsons, applies Superglue to the top of the radiator to stop a minor leak.

Our Mazda MX5 seats were a great success (the original bench had been carefully set aside before the trip). Comfortable and easily adjusted, they enabled us to do long days in the saddle without any back pains - in my case- which is quite remarkable.

New bump stops fitted by P&A Wood prior to the tour worked well and prevented any broken springs. Nevertheless, on full deflection, the rear wheels broke the mudguard mountings. We should have raised the mudguards by about two inches.

We had fitted an elaborate, but elegant, air-filter kit from the USA. It was expensive and hard to fit, but worked well, and stopped sand from ruining the engine. Three Porsches, two Chevrolets and a Datsun required new engines in Baku.

Our overdrive was a great success and gave us longer legs but we remained one of the slowest cars which made long days even longer.

The rally organisers require you to carry sufficient fuel to do at least 250 miles. The Ghost has an 18-gallon tank and does about 10 mpg normally, which on challenging roads reduces noticeably.

Michael carefully polishing his Silver Ghost!



Thus an additional tank was installed in place of the rear seat with its own separate electric pump and fuel line to the carburettor. A two-way tap gave us two separate fuel supplies. The extra fuel tank was essential but not plain sailing. The problem was that the carburettor was designed to accept petrol at a far lower pressure (between 1 and 4psi) than was delivered by the SU pump in the reserve tank. The latter caused petrol to overflow and we added weight to the cut off needle in the float chamber to alleviate this.

Nigel commented that he thought the car ran better on the reserve tank than the original one. The reason could be that the lower pressure of the original system caused the float chamber to have too little fuel in it.

But the point is that 'improvements' do, often, have consequences - usually unintended.

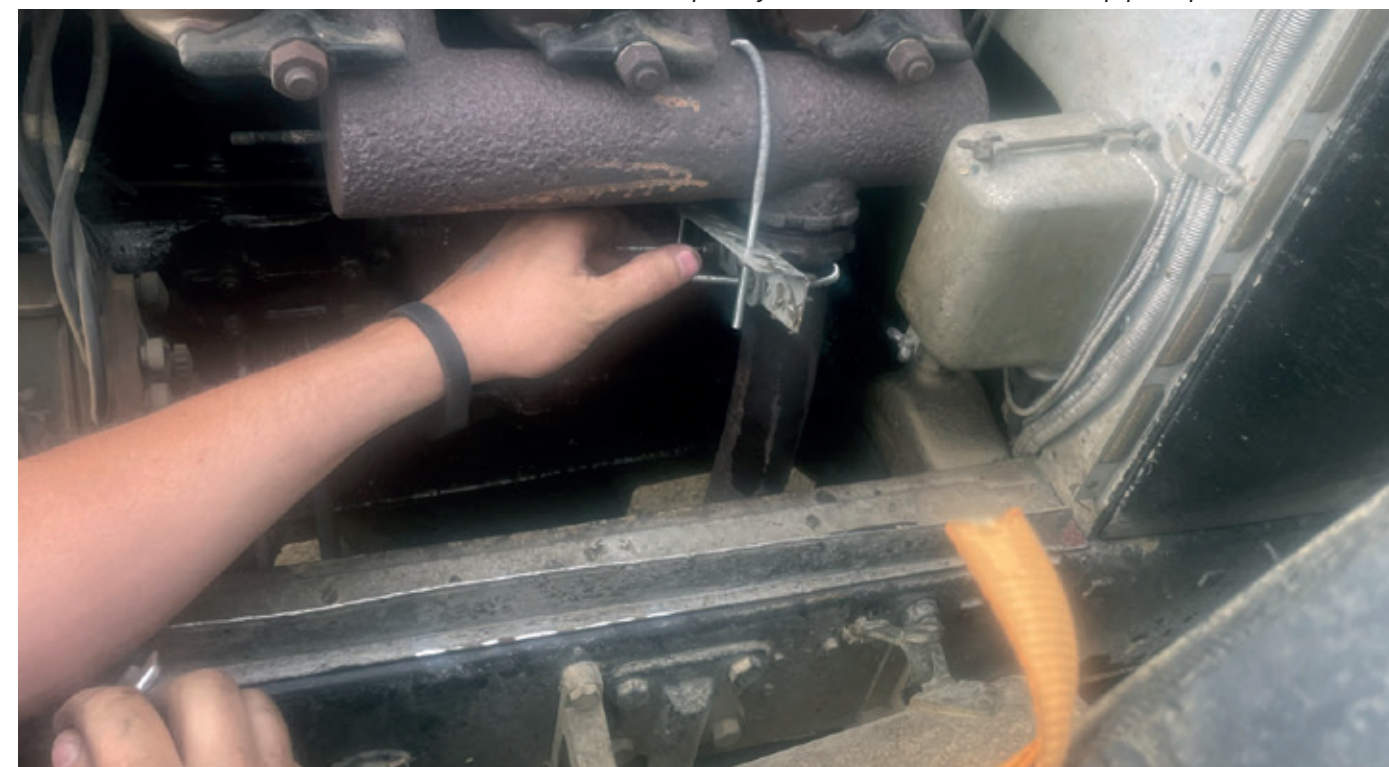
But others had much more extreme problems. Many had fitted bigger wheels and tyres with tougher shock absorbers but this caused their suspension wishbones to fail. A Volvo and a Datsun arrived at the Caspian Sea on breakdown trucks as a result.



The Ghost is brilliantly designed and made the reputation of Rolls-Royce. Without the amendments we would not have been able to cover the mileages. We would have run out of fuel, or run out of time from going too slowly. So the modifications were necessary and worked well, even though some of them created further issues.

A Silver Ghost is a fantastic machine, wonderfully conceived where every part seems to be as strong and resilient as it needs to be. Whilst, perhaps, never intended to be used and abused in the way demanded on the Peking to Paris I can assure you that a Silver Ghost is fully up for the challenge. Are you, as driver? Why not give it a go!

The Welsh team of mechanics on the tour created this temporary fix to hold the exhaust downpipe in place.



London to Singapore in a Ghost? Absolutely!

*Worthy winner of the 2025
Woodmansee Award for the highest
mileage in a Ghost, Chris Evans
give us a little of the background.*

Quite how I got to the start of an unsupported 20,000 kilometre drive from London to Singapore in 2025 owes little to organisational excellence and a lot to fate.

In 2009, Charles Bishop came up with the idea of doing the Peking to Paris rally. After several weeks of excitement, his better half Nellie decided she really should be his co-driver. By then, I was smitten with the idea so roped in my brother-in-law Mark Seymour and we bought a 1928 Model A Ford.

On the first day we met Richard Cunningham (Ham) and later Nigel Gambier who were both competing in Lagondas. All of us were caught up in long days of madness driving through the Gobi Desert and then trying to patch up the cars overnight and on our few rest days.





This picture is a little out of place, but Johnnie went to see Chris in Clapham, South London, for a pizza lunch. Chris had not started 42EU since its return from the trip!

But we had enjoyed it and, much as we liked the Model A Ford, I noted the reliability of the Silver Ghosts which eventually led to my purchase of 1925 42EU as a bare chassis from Real Car Company. With much mechanical work completed, and a body specifically designed by me to deal with the rigours and requirements of long touring, we went on to complete many other 'off-the-peg' rallies. After some years, however, we began to feel that these organised excursions were becoming rather formulaic, rather full of plonkers and slightly expensive.

Ham and Nigel then came up with a grand vision, oh dear... What about doing three trips ourselves, unsupported from Cape Horn to New York, London to Singapore and London to Cape Town? Bonkers! But momentum took over and the combined organisational powers of Nigel and Ham found us flying to Argentina in 2023 with onward flights to Ushuaia where our cars were being delivered. Three weeks later we were still in Buenos Aires and the cars were locked in the port having never made the

ship to Ushuaia – not so easy this plan! We eventually got the cars back and managed to complete the trip in just over three months with many adventures along the way.

For trip two, we set off on a sunny morning in 2025 from London via the tunnel to France, this time with the addition of Charles and Nellie Bishop in their 1925 Vauxhall 30/98 making us a four car team. Our method, honed in South America was to have a rough route planned with a town destination each day but with no accommodation booked. We all had various guests who would join us along the way but told them all to book no flights and await instructions; which is vital as you never know what will happen with old cars. We always try to keep our options open with regard to navigation chaos, interesting diversions, and unexpected joys to be found on the road.

On a typical day we would stop for petrol around noon, assess the likely end point for that evening and see what was available via Airbnb, Booking.com or other guides. You

will be surprised to learn that we always found a bed for the night and on many occasions stayed in some really lovely places - as well as some rather odd ones too! A cold beer, some food, a bed and a shower are the only real requirements after all.

We progressed in glorious sunshine through France, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Turkey without major border problems but then things became more complicated. At the Georgian border we lost Nigel and the Bishops who were turned back for failing to bring the correct paperwork which had to be flown in by Nigel's son before they could catch up two days later. The border between Georgia and Azerbaijan is closed but Ham's diplomatic skills came into play and a well-connected friend managed to get us through. Then we hit the obstacle of getting across the Caspian Sea to Turkmenistan; this, we had been told, would be impossible and, indeed, when we turned up at the port in Baku we were told to come back in three days when maybe there would be a boat we could board. Luckily we had met a guy in the Azerbaijan government who had put us on his Instagram the previous day. We carefully showed his social media posts to the port officials who waved us





漫泽塘

through. Success! But then we had to spend the next two days in security, customs and sitting on a stationary ferry, stuck in harbour due to engine failure. Eventually we set off with forty, rather surly, Russian truckers.

Turkmenistan is completely bizarre in every way. As an example, it is illegal to drive a car in the capital which is not white or silver, the punishment is a fine and three month impounding for your car. After another full day negotiating passage through the port we were told that right hand drive cars were not allowed on the road (a new law that week!) We trucked the cars across the country for two days at a cost of under \$200 and proceeded into Uzbekistan, a lovely country of friendly hardworking souls.

Kyrgyzstan is wild and beautiful with some great gravel roads. We traversed some

big mountains with snow at 3,700 meters, stayed in Yurts and were welcomed by everyone.

Into China, where we were required to have a tourist guide and met Eric and his driver Mr Gow at the border who stayed with us for a month as we travelled east nearly as far as Chengdu. The scale and beauty of China is really something to see, the infrastructure they are building is off the scale, roads, rail, solar and wind farms all stun the senses with their sheer size. We were welcomed everywhere and caused quite a stir becoming inadvertent TikTok stars as people chased us down the motorways taking videos of us, one post described us as *"Like sunburnt Grandparents."*

From China into Laos then on through Thailand and Malaysia we made it to Singapore after three and a half months on the road.



As for the cars, Nigel's 1933 M45 Lagonda blew a head gasket on day one and had to be trucked back to the UK where a new head was skimmed, rebuilt, refitted and tested in twenty four hours by David Ayre (Lagonda and Invicta specialist in Thatcham). Nigel then drove eight hundred kilometres straight to catch us up in Italy. After that his car didn't miss a beat.

Ham's Lagonda, also an M45 from 1933, was faultless until Malaysia when a very ominous knock first appeared, but he nursed it for the last two weeks at forty miles an hour. On return home the big end was found to be the issue and only had a few miles left in it.

Charles and Nellie Bishop's 1925 Vauxhall 30/98 proved very reliable - only a radiator leak needed fixing and occasional timing issues to be tweaked.



And as for 1925 Silver Ghost 42EU, with its rather unconventional body, well she just started up every morning right as rain, day after day. 12,500 miles. She used a fair bit of oil and spluttered a bit in the mountains but never let me down. I got her back home and popped her away in the garage. I didn't use her again until Johnnie came to visit some months later. She fired straight up, and we pootled off through south London to Clapham for some lunch.

“A magnificently unhinged enterprise!”

Mary Narvell reports on a fabulous tour of India in ‘Hyacinth’ their 1931 Phantom II, 67GX.

An early indication that the notion to drive our 1931 Phantom II Continental, Hyacinth, through Rajasthan was crazy was when the petrol attendant tried to fill the luggage trunk with fuel. Another clue: the multiplicity of my screams across our twenty-two-day journey “Look out for the cow!” (Bull, goat, camel or peacock could substitute as the hazard.) Over the course of 2500 kilometres, I often recalled my naiveté at John’s exclamation we were going to India. I believed this logically meant being escorted in a private hire car. This had been ideal on our previous eight visits so why switch? But I hadn’t factored in the magic potion squiring a vintage Rolls-Royce could have on one dreaming of Maharajahs – forget that they enjoyed chauffeurs. The perfect way to describe our odyssey was the reaction of Indian collector Rajiv Kehr: “What a magnificently unhinged enterprise.” I couldn’t agree more.

Our route began in Delhi progressing through Jaipur, Samode, Rathambore, Udaipur, Narlai, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Mandawa and back to Delhi. We were accompanied by five modern cars with souped up engines and racing harnesses. These Porsches and Land Rovers, veterans of the host company Bespoke Rallies, were primed for an adventurous itinerary clocking kilometres across rough roads, the more rugged the better. They were not disappointed as they sped past hazards in rural villages where few could recognise the marque of vehicles not a Tata. However, the arrival of our vintage Rolls literally stopped traffic. Never was this more evident than at the frequent petrol stops where, as if by smoke signals, villagers were summoned to join the gaping attendants keen to have their photo by the majestic grille. I shall remember into my not so far dotage the pidgin English conversation with one overwhelmed station owner sharing his pictures of New Jersey relatives on learning we are American. Our rarified cars are oddly a great equaliser bridging cultures and thousands of miles as if nothing really separates people at all.

Hyacinth enjoys respectful Hindu greeting Namaste, Taj Fateh Prakash Palace.





A necessary road rule was Bovine Etiquette. Holy as they are, cows and bulls exude serene confidence having supremacy imprinted in their psyche. Drivers respect this superiority never beeping to rush the beasts' sluggish slumber. When encountered lazing across a lane you need to pass, there is nothing but to wait for the animals' progress at their will and timing. They move; you follow – no overtaking allowed. Deemed sacred, they are not fazed by a Rolls-Royce, however elsewhere revered.

Our trip was scheduled around Holi, the festival of Spring. Celebrations where multi-hued powders are smeared on anyone within arm's reach capture the colours for which India is renowned. We therefore found ourselves in virginal white tunics one minute only to become a human kaleidoscope the next. Under showers of orange marigold petals, the Hindu colour of enlightenment, we danced alongside revellers symbolically celebrating the marriage of Krishna. Hyacinth partook, too, proudly sporting a blessing on her bonnet bestowed by a high priest at the rally start. I prayed the benediction held.

Long before partition, powerful Maharajahs ruled their princely states enjoying landed wealthy privilege. Revelling in the high life, these playboy princes indulged in polo playing, showering themselves and their Maharanis in jewels, and collecting a few Rolls-Royces at their palaces.

A thumb's up from slow-moving traffic.



Hyacinth sports Marigold garland = The Cycle of Life.

Today, some of these sumptuous residences are heritage hotels, the most famous in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur. As a sister Rolls, Hyacinth's arrival was a royal occasion finding herself under canopies with red carpets unfurled. Intricate tableaux made of tiny multi-coloured rice grains spelled Welcome. Drones buzzed overhead and local journalists recorded her as a regal guest, even as she will not pardon one reporter for aging her by a year and altering our surname to Navel. While discordant trumpet salutes would not echo Louis Armstrong, these greetings were marvellous. Turbaned attendants clasped hands before opening Hyacinth's doors ushering us into properties where flower petals descended as we bowed heads for a traditional Hindu forehead blessing. A Phantom II Continental adds panache to most backdrops, but she competed for grandeur, style, elegance and class with every location she reached.

Unsurprisingly, Hyacinth's chauffeur and "navigator" were invited to see Maharajahs' car collections where their vintage Rolls-Royces took pride of place. Sporting registrations such as Jodhpur One or Udaipur, brilliant and faded specimens were garaged. Freshly returned from Pebble Beach was the Maharajah of Jodhpur's gleaming turquoise 1935 Phantom II Continental with rear wheel spats. Not so fortunate was the Udaipur Rolls, its paint disintegrating from a century of sun and mechanics stymied by a broken auto vac. They were therefore awestruck to see Hyacinth's in good working order quizzing John for advice as if he were Carl Ford! The pre-trip prep of a master mechanic cannot be overstated even with the excellence of the Rolls' engine. Hyacinth proudly outperformed the modern cars who all required repairs.

Curious bystanders peer in awe





Hyacinth progresses out of Samode Palace.



The author coloured in Holi Powders.

Our intrepid rally adventurers may have found it no adjustment to exchange the bumpy ride of their sport vehicles for Rajasthan's liver jostling road surfaces. Not discounting the prowess of a bullock cart pulling us to a candlelit evening by a stepwell, or camel transport in Jaisalmer, I regularly praised the upgraded springs and dampers of our Phantom for taking special care of our hind quarters. The refined engineering of the Continental proved its worth illustrating how this motoring marvel conquered so many far-flung posts of the Empire.

Familiar scenes outside Hyacinth's windows were Rajasthani women astoundingly carrying all manner of items on their heads, and goats guided by a herder hard at work. Yet, by contrast, our arrival in cosseted luxury sparked no envy but only keen enthusiasm in villagers stunned to see a vintage Rolls-Royce in their rural outposts. Families crammed into tuk-tuks craned beaming faces out of crowded openings to catch a view and wave. Moped beeps and multi toned truck klaxons blared furiously along our route. iPhones were brandished as we were encouraged to slow down for Hyacinth's passage to be recorded. And when stationary, her windows were quickly surrounded by curiosity seekers keen to peer inside as if she were a visiting spaceship. Halted for close to an hour in searing heat in a traffic jam of incomprehensible congestion, we heard a man exclaim "I had to meet the foolish rich man who would bring this car here. I guess it is true a rich man is soon parted from his money or his wits but in your case, it must be both."

Traffic jams were not our friends for reasons other than such rare encounters. Punishing temps, no lane adherence, and numerous axle threatening potholes made driving a challenge for my chauffeur whose cool skill left me awestruck. While the precision of the highly tuned Phantom II engine never overheated, (iPhones and tempers regularly did!), vapour locks were an occasional occurrence when mid-day temps soared to 40 degrees. Only once did our lady require special pampering after close to 441 kms left her sputtering as she tried to resume progress out of congestion. Pulling to a layby for her to cool, John nearly boiled over at the mechanics' suggestion they disassemble the auto vac. His vehement refusal to do nothing more than cool it with wet rags did not need a Hindi translation. (The left-over cloths I used to regulate John's rising temps!) Waiting for a breeze, I remembered the trick of many veteran Rolls-Royce drivers who prop open their bonnets to facilitate cool air flow across the engine. Presto, the ubiquitous tools in the 20-Ghost Club member road kit – the handy cable ties – appeared and we fashioned a solution to the technicians' amazement.

Having conquered the myriad demands the byways and, to be fair, some Indian highways presented, Hyacinth arrived at a splendid reception in Delhi organised in her honour. Several collectors assembled to meet the car that had completed that "magnificently unhinged enterprise". Our host Rajiv Kehr's gracious hospitality was in the grandest of Indian traditions. The glory of the evening made the rigours of the trip evaporate just as had Hyacinth's fuel in those occasional vapour locks.

Prominently displayed in the Imperial Hotel's drive, Hyacinth perfectly complemented the 1931 birth year of the famous hostelry. Many having heard of her remarkable exploits approached us to marvel at her prowess and verify the tale of her journey. Washing off the Rajasthani dust from her coachwork, I was approached by a man exclaiming "*you must be the only person in India who washes your own Rolls-Royce!*" We would continue onto Agra in a hire car to gaze again on the wondrous Taj Mahal we had first visited 30 years ago. Having learned the monument extolled Shah Jahan's beloved Mumtaz, meaning "highest exalted one", I had promptly decreed John reserve this moniker for me. (To this day, Mumtaz is my email notation in his phone). I now believe Hyacinth should assume this regal sobriquet. After conquering Rajasthan with remarkably never a failure to proceed and enchanting all as she did so, nothing less seems fit or proper for our much beloved and highly exalted 1931 Phantom II Continental.



Guests of honour at the Maharana of Udaipur Car Museum

Preening in a prime parking spot.



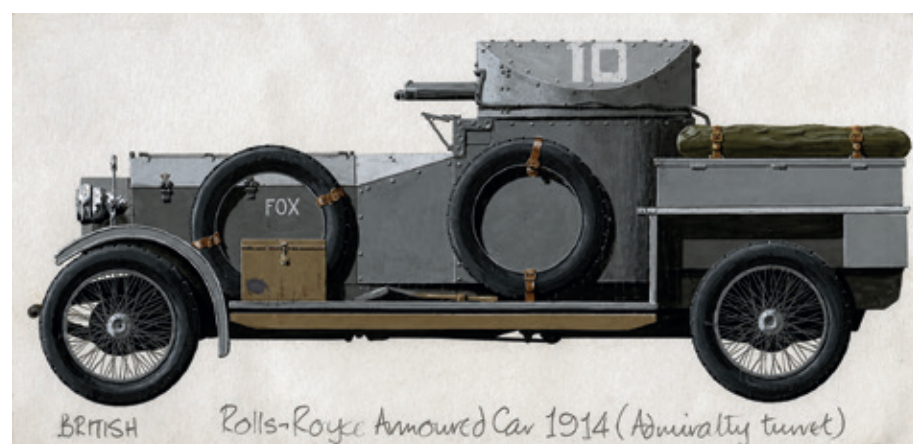
Stop Press – March 1916

His Grace rescues British hostages from Libyan desert

Sir John Stuttard reports!

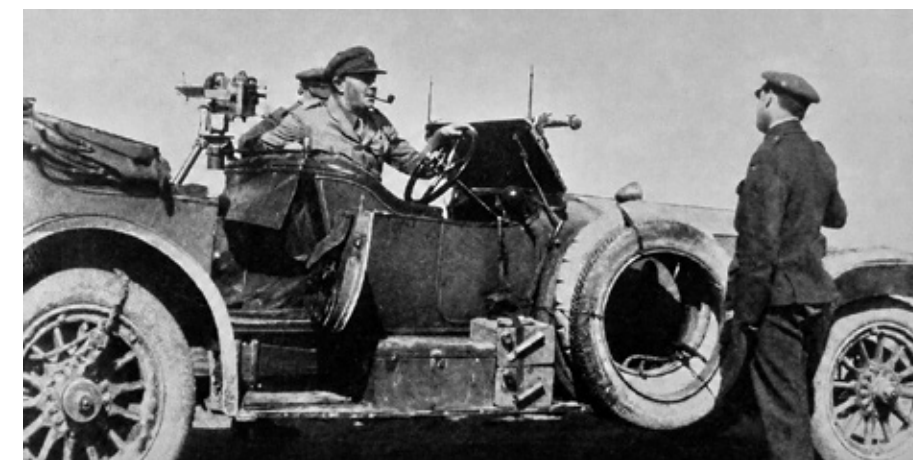
The Kaiser's Army invaded Belgium on 4th August 1914. Three days later, the War Office asked the Royal Automobile Club to assemble an initial group of '25 suitable members and their private cars to serve General Headquarters (GHQ).' They were needed to transport senior military officers and convey vital messages to the front, as the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), who were deployed to France, lacked dedicated staff cars and experienced drivers. Wealthy members responded. The RAC Volunteer Force and the RAC Corps of Volunteer Motor Drivers were founded.

Meantime Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, intervened and ordered 'many cars to be armoured.' British car manufacturers, including Rolls-Royce, were asked to make design proposals and the Admiralty Air Department initiated the construction of 60 armoured cars, 18 of them on Rolls-Royce chassis. The Royal Naval Armoured Car Division (RNACD) was established on 3rd September 1914.



The country's wealthiest man, Hugh Grosvenor, His Grace the Duke of Westminster (1879-1953), known as Bend'Or, went one step further. Together with his friends, he financed his personal fighting force which became No 2 Armoured Car Squadron comprising 12 armoured cars, based on Rolls-Royce chassis. They left for France in March 1915, with the Duke leading in his 1914 Silver Ghost (46MA).

To begin with, the armoured car squadrons performed a valuable role in Belgium and France. However, the construction of trenches hindered the manoeuvrability of armoured cars, and, at times, thick mud made them inoperable. So, other theatres of War were found where they could be more effective. Initially many of the armoured cars were sent to Gallipoli which proved to be disastrous, but they found their metier in The Middle East, based in Alexandria. They included Westminster's No 2 Squadron which was to win its battle honours in the Western Desert, rather than on the Western Front, as part of the Senussi Campaign, now a rarely mentioned piece of British military history.



1914 Silver Ghost (46MA) with His Grace The Duke of Westminster at the wheel.

To set the scene, soon after the outbreak of War, a ship known as SS *Hibernia* which served the Holyhead to Ireland ferry route, was requisitioned by the Admiralty as an Armed Boarding Steamer and given her new name, *HMS Tara*. She was quickly armed with three 6-pounder guns and transferred to the Mediterranean. On 5th November 1915 she was patrolling off the coast of Sollum in Egypt, close to the Libyan border. Around 10.00 in the morning, the ship's lookouts were shocked to see a torpedo heading their way. The helmsman attempted to avoid the torpedo, but due to her slow speed, the ship could not come around in time. The torpedo launched by the German submarine U-35 struck the ship amidships on the starboard side. Twelve crew members, mostly from the engine room, were lost during the ship's sinking.



SS *Hibernia* before being requisitioned and renamed. Credit: Holyhead Maritime Museum.

The remaining 92 survivors took to the lifeboats which were then towed to Port Bardia by the U-Boat and handed over as prisoners to Senussi tribesmen who could not be persuaded, even with an offer of money, to return them. (The British were fighting a campaign at that time against the Senussi who had been encouraged by the Ottoman Empire, Germany's ally). The sailors were then marched, mostly barefooted, across some 60 miles of Libyan desert to Bir Hakeim (aka Hacheim or El Hakkim, shown with a red dot in the map below) by the Senussi, who treated the sailors badly. Dysentery, fever and near starvation reduced them to a pitiful state. They suffered great hardship for four months whilst held captive by their Senussi guards at a remote desert wadi.

Emboldened by the sinking of the *Tara*, proving in their minds that the Royal Navy no longer 'ruled the waves', and by the British losses at Gallipoli, the Senussi decided it was time to invade Egypt. They imagined that they would be welcomed by the local people who would then drive out the British. They took Sollum and had some success travelling eastwards towards Alexandria. At this stage, in January 1916, reinforcements began to arrive to support the British forces. These included armoured cars drawn from No 3 and 4 squadrons and were soon joined by No 2 squadron, comprising 12 armoured cars and support trucks under the command of the 2nd Duke of Westminster.

The effectiveness of the armoured cars helped the British recapture Sollum. The Duke was then given orders to assist in destroying the Senussi field army by following it west into Libya. Once across the frontier, the going was found to be excellent and the cars were able to maintain a very high average speed. The Senussi found it very difficult to destroy objects moving so fast and weaving and fanning about the battlefield. In the event, the engagement at Bir Aziez was to prove a milestone in the history of armoured warfare – an entire army had been defeated by just 34 men protected by armour plate and superior mobility.

Meanwhile, there was intelligence that the hostages from the *Tara* had been identified at a desert location, Bir Hakeim, 120 miles from Sollum and quite a distance inland from Tobruk. The Duke offered to lead a rescue attempt of the *Tara* prisoners with his squadron. A column of 45 vehicles, a battery of four armoured cars, including Blast (later to join TE Lawrence) and Bulldog, Ford tenders loaded with petrol, water, and provisions, plus motor ambulances, was assembled and left Sollum on St Patrick's Day, 17th March 1916.

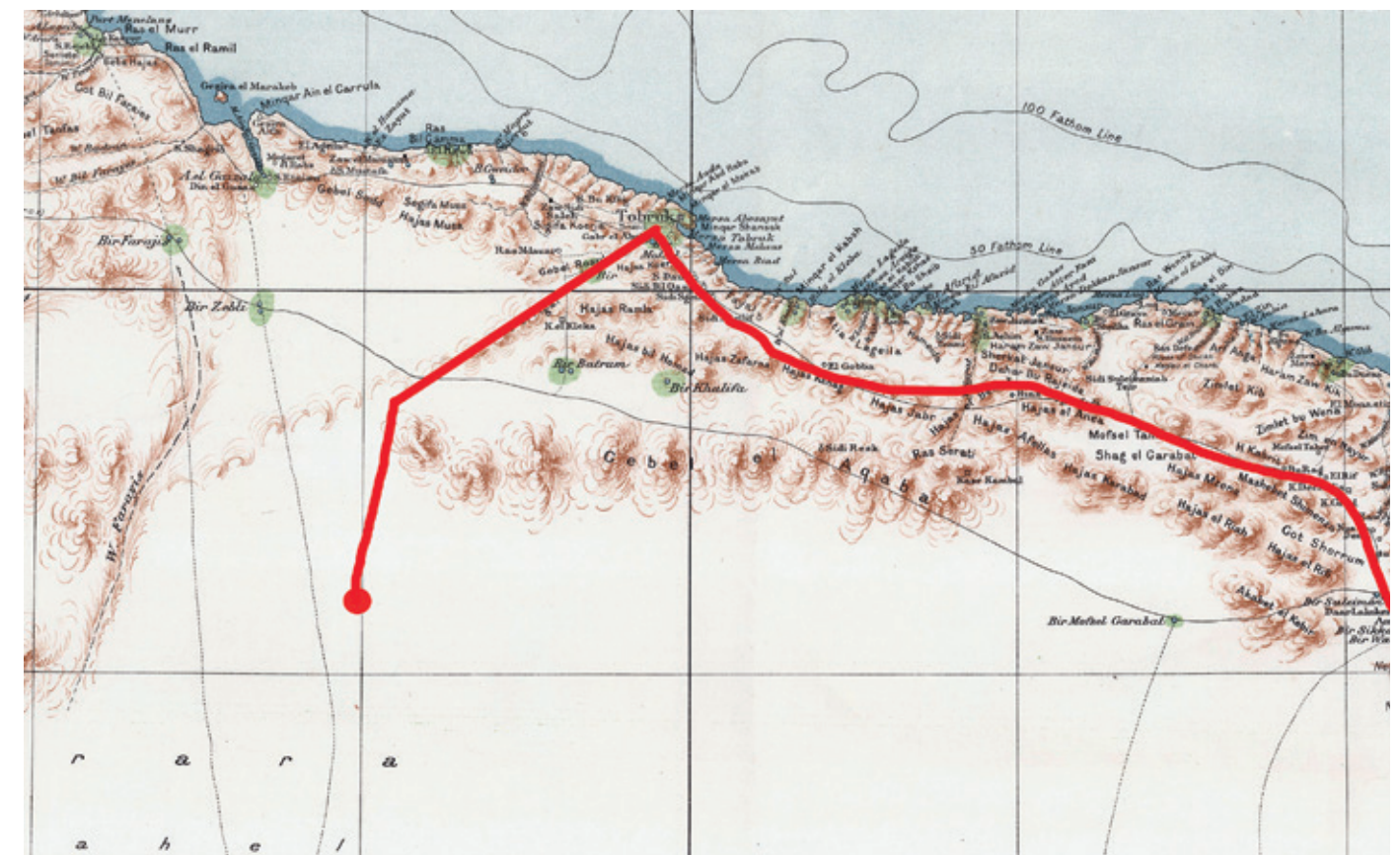
The conditions were often wet, as shown below in the photo, in which one can also glimpse a sight of the Duke's staff car at the rear.



The Duke of Westminster's Squadron. Credit: The Rolls-Royce Armoured Car edited by Eliot Levin.

The Light Armoured Car Brigade drove west to Tobruk and then south across the desert. The formidable column reached the Bir Hakeim wadi and rescued the sailors from SS *Tara* and also other men from the horse transport ship *HMT Moorina*, which had been torpedoed at the same time.

The relief route driven by the Duke's Squadron. Credit: The War Office, via Wikimedia.



The survivors were then taken to hospital in Alexandria, after which they were repatriated to their homes, in Holyhead and on the island of Anglesey, located off the northwest coast of Wales.

*The rescued crew, after recuperation, in hospital in Alexandria.
Credit:
The People's Collection, Wales.*

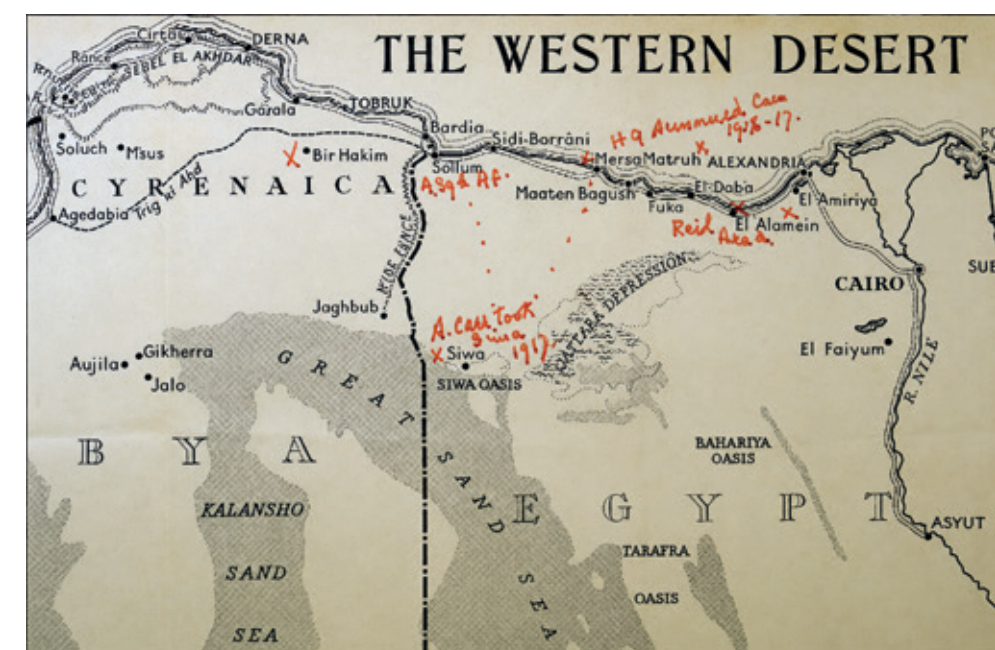


The successful action of the Duke of Westminster's squadron made a big impact on the military campaign against the Senussi. The enemy's activities in Libya and the Western Desert were curtailed. But they continued to the east, in Upper Egypt, where they believed that they were completely secure in the vastness of the Qattara Depression in which the oases were 1,000 feet below sea level and could only be reached by descending a long and difficult escarpment. No army had ever penetrated so far into the desert but Rolls-Royce motor cars with their powerful engines and strong chassis were to prove the deciding factor.

For this gallantry and service in the field, the Duke was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). He had taken his unit into an unknown desert to effect a most daring rescue, which hit the headlines everywhere and would go down in military history as an outstanding achievement. The officers, NCOs and men under his command had performed their duties with equal skill, and courage, and they too would be recommended to the proper quarter for suitable recognition. In early February 1917, a strong force of armoured cars was sent from Mersa Matruh, on the coast, to Siwa, 200 miles inland. The Duke's squadron was part of this contingent. In fighting over two days, the Senussi forces were routed, and the Grand Senussi fled back into Libya. The Senussi signed a peace treaty with Britain and Italy in April 1917.



The Senussi campaign of 1916. Credit: John Fasal.



The Duke of Westminster's own map showing his own squadron's movements and battles in the Senussi Campaign. Credit: The Duke's own collection, via the biography Hugh Richard Arthur Grosvenor, 2nd Duke of Westminster (1879-1953), known as 'Bend'Or': A Reappraisal by Christina Dykes.

The above campaign and the part played by Rolls-Royce motor cars has been taken from a book *Rolls-Royce in Egypt* currently being written by Sir John Stuttard following research by Sir John and some well known honorary members of The 20-Ghost Club who are researchers and authors. The book of over 350 pages, with many illustrations, will describe over 110 Rolls-Royce chassis and will be published later this year. The descriptions include cars owned by the Khedive, Sultans and Kings of Egypt as well as used by Field Marshal Allenby and Lawrence of Arabia in the First World War and includes the history of the much admired Bovington Tank Museum's armoured car.

The Power and the Glory

Peter Brown on mascots and the real Flying Lady.



John Bull meets Uncle Sam. Photographic foreshortening gives the edge to the English car but in fact the Packard Super Eight is wider, longer, taller, and heavier than its British counterpart.

Johnnie's piece on Chris Mott's Phantom III and his beautiful Packard Eight provoked interest. One might be surprised at the number of 20-Ghost Club members who own Packards alongside their Rolls-Royce motor cars, the marque representing the best of American automotive engineering in the 1920s and 30s. The only US company trusted to build Rolls-Royce Merlin aero engines during World War II was the Packard Motor Car Company in Detroit whose high standards of build quality were accepted as matching those at Derby.

The Beaux-Arts style, popularised in fin-de-siècle Paris, was enthusiastically adopted in the USA. The genre's opulent use of classical forms, columns, acanthus leaves, mythological figures, et al, welding the grandeur that was Rome and the glory that was Greece to the cold steel of the American technological revolution, is seen in abundance on such architectural gems as the Union Station in Washington DC and the Grand Central Terminal in New York. Packard offered a choice of radiator mascots drawing on this design movement as it morphed into Art Deco during the late 1920s and into the 1930s.

Factory stock cars were fitted with a plain 'bail' cap, bail being the half hoop of wire that secured the hinged cap to the radiator neck, and was the equivalent of the Rolls-Royce town cap. On most car models of the day basic caps originally incorporated a thermometer, usually a Boyce MotoMeter, for monitoring thermosyphonic cooling systems but by 1930 the widespread use of the water pump had rendered this device largely redundant, replaced by the water temperature gauge, which had migrated to the interior of the car as a standard dashboard instrument. The functional cap was replaced by decorative ornaments that unscrewed to access the radiator filler neck. By 1945 even these had become obsolete when the radiator cap was relocated under the bonnet. Packard offered three decorative options: the Goddess of Speed (as pictured on Chris Mott's car), the Adonis, and the Pelican.



Packard styling was more restrained than many of its contemporaries and the two cars share design cues in good taste. The Detroit product was fashioned in house; the Rolls' body is by H J Mulliner.

Joseph E Corker designed the Goddess holding a wheel in 1924, patented it in 1927, and it was a Packard accessory until 1950. Based on Nike, the Greek deity representing speed, victory and strength, the mascot was updated in 1937 by Werner Gubitz, again in 1939 by John D Wilson and finally in 1946 by Howard Yeager, all in-house stylists at the Detroit works. Nike was referred to officially in Packard sales literature as 'The Flying Lady' and, very rudely by US motor traders, as 'the donut (sic) chaser'. The Packard Museum in New Zealand tells us that *All Packards were delivered with a plain cap and the new owner could purchase whatever ornament desired. The price ranged from \$10.00 to \$20.00. Introduced in 1924: Packard Deluxe Emblem was nicknamed the 'Flying Lady' because she had wings.*

Several years ago a certain R-R periodical (not the 20GC N&R!) advertised an 'exclusive' wristwatch. This somewhat tacky timepiece was evidently the remaindered remnants of a run that had not sold and was being recycled with a cheap white ink overprint on the face, purportedly celebrating '100 years of the Flying Lady'. However the term 'Flying Lady' was never used by Rolls-Royce or its agents, even colloquially. The first occurrence seems to have been the title of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club magazine, founded in 1951 in Pennsylvania and called so still today.

Packard made two other mascot styles: the Adonis, a sitting youth leaning backwards, designed by Edward McCarten, and used from 1929 to 1932, and the famous pelican, from the Packard family's coat of arms. The pelican was introduced in 1932 for 'senior' cars only (the Super Eight and Twelve). However, in 1938 the company's publicity office decided that Cormorant sounded more dignified than Pelican. Customers were unhappy and eventually, in 1949, Packard issued a memorandum confirming the official name as Pelican.

American car makers were keen to promote their names with complex but fabricated coats of arms drawn from British and European heraldry, in the belief that such a 'car crest' imbued the brand with luxury, prestige and history. Cadillac, for example, used the family arms of Antoine de la Mothe, sieur de Cadillac, the French explorer who founded Detroit in 1701, as its emblem, complete with rows of ducks and a coronet.

Many other motoring mascots have featured dynamic females, including, of course, our own dearly beloved Spirit of Ecstasy modelled by Charles Sykes on the svelte curves of Eleanor Velasco Thornton. Was this the face that launched a thousand ships? No, it wasn't, but her iconic statue has bestridden more than 100,000 Rolls-Royce radiator grilles since 1911. Always highly defensive on use of its trademarks, Rolls-Royce came to blows in 1967 with a flamboyant and highly successful Somerset meat processor who, in place of the factory-supplied ornament, adorned the Pantheon of his new Silver Shadow with a winged sausage in solid silver. The company was not amused and threatened to void the guarantee if the offending object were not removed. The tale made the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* and the owner backed down.



The Packard Pelican radiator cap was an optional extra but widely favoured.

Claude Johnson, revered as ‘the hyphen in Rolls-Royce’, despite his dissolute life, had engineered adoption of the company’s official mascot specifically to stop owners from personalising their cars with a variety of, often unsuitable, talismans. Early motoring days saw car radiators hung with teddy bears, gargoyles, policemen dolls, Mr Punch effigies, and many other, somewhat silly, emblems. As the idea gained popularity so the accessory market took off. Any number of animals, human figures, mythological creatures, geometric shapes, and abstract forms could be had in nickel or brass, sometimes chrome plated, glass, lignite, resin, or even marble. Location was not confined to the top of the radiator and some mascots were displayed on the scuttle vent or even at the centre of the roof above the windscreen. In Britain the law was duly updated to acknowledge safety considerations and, strictly speaking, non-standard mascots risked prosecution. Through the 1950s Rootes Group flagship, the Humber Super Snipe, featured on its bonnet a chromed snipe equipped with a sharp stiletto. The beak was outlawed in 1960 on grounds that collision with a pedestrian could mean instant evisceration. Many Humbers were duly emasculated. Today rubber beaks are available for aficionados of the marque.



Packard mascot options for the six years up to wartime shutdown.



Chris Mott's Packard 8 (see Issue 83, P20). In fact 1935 was the final year of the Packard perpendicular radiator grille, here topped with the Flying Lady mascot. Rolls-Royce did not incline their grilles until 1975 (on the Camargue, designed by foreigners).

In America, Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, and Nash used winged females to decorate their ‘hoods’ throughout the 1930s and artists such as René Lalique, Louis Lejeune and François Bazin (their factories all still in business today), cornered the market in exotic, and expensive, bonnet ornaments as after-market accessories, but Packard was the first to use the term ‘Flying Lady’.

Literature records the radiator mascot. Visiting Birmingham in 1938, Irish poet Louis MacNeice wrote:

Smoke from the train-gulf hid by hoardings blunders upward, the brakes of cars
Pipe as the policeman pivoting round raises his flat hand, bars
With his figure of a monolith Pharoah the queue of fidgety machines
(Chromium dogs on the bonnet, faces behind the Triplex screens)
Behind him the streets run away between the proud glass of shops,
Cubical scent-bottles artificial legs arctic foxes and electric mops,
But beyond this centre the slumward vista thins like a diagram:
There, unvisited, are Vulcan's forges who doesn't care a tinker's damn

The Last Word

It was only after putting this issue together that I realised the highly exotic, daring and intrepid nature of its content! The tales told in these pages highlight, the 'go anywhere' nature of our cars as well as the delight of the onlookers and passers-by. A huge thanks to all the contributors here and a massive congratulations to the drivers and their cars.

In other news, our Phantom II is on the road! It even has an MoT. I am astonished by the power. Of course, I knew the large HP cars have more torque but frankly I didn't expect the moon-shot approach to the road that the Phantom delivers. The pull in every gear no matter the road conditions is (an overused word so I apologise) awesome.

You really feel that if the world stopped turning then you could kick start it just by spinning the rear wheels of this glorious motorcar.

But there is much refinement work to be done. There are no interior trim panels and behind the cockpit there is very little in the way of floor so the entire car is one enormous speaker box.

I've fitted Excelsior Radial tyres which give super grip but make the Phantom a pain to park - I'm not strong enough to turn the steering wheel. We had always thought to fit power steering as first suggested by the late, and much missed, Roy O'Sullivan. He had seen a discreet hydraulic system fitted to another Phantom II. We bought parts designed for a 1960s Mustang but, sadly, couldn't make it work. At parking speed the engine just doesn't turn fast enough to pump enough fluid into the system to make it operate.

And so thoughts of electric power steering are running through my mind (the Dutch company EZ seem to be the market leaders) but the issue is that they have to cut into the steering column and add a 'carbuncle' (the electric motor). What do readers think? Has anybody got firsthand experience?

Anyway, I have even had my first FTP which was the result of a dodgy starter button refusing to make contact in the blistering heat we had in late May. Happily a combination of the marvellous Jonathan Wood on video-call and a willing AA roadside mechanic got me on the move again.

Johnnie



