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## Classic collections

A few weeks ago, before this issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* was completed and sent to print, we posted a photograph on our Facebook page offering a 'sneak peek' at one of the features we're running. The image showed an impressive line-up of Silver Clouds, part of what we described as one of the world's "most complete private collections of Rolls-Royce motor cars". And the response online was astonishing, with so many of our Facebook followers showing amazement that such a large collection exists in private hands.

As you'll see when you read this issue, we've devoted five pages to this unique collection, which is housed in the grounds of a beautifully restored 14th century castle in northern Spain. We're indebted to readers Simon and Andrew Buck-Honour for providing us with the feature and fantastic photographs from what was obviously a memorable day spent at Torre Loizaga. The story behind the collection starts on Page 34 – and I've a feeling it's likely to lead to plenty more readers paying the venue a visit this summer.

This issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* brings another eclectic line-up of feature cars, of course, including two more variations on the Silver Cloud and S-series theme: a stunning Silver Cloud II Drophead Coupé by H.J. Mulliner and a suitably uprated Bentley S1 that's been prepared specifically for the Peking to Paris 2019 historic rally. It's hard to imagine two more contrasting members of the same basic family, each one with a fascinating story behind it.

We also take a look at the brace of two-door fixed-head saloons offered by Rolls-Royce in the 1970s, with Rob Hawkins getting behind the wheel of a relatively early Corniche and Sam Skelton explaining the story behind the still controversial Camargue. And as part of our continued Bentley coverage during the marque's centenary year, Jeremy Satherley takes us through the early post-independence years of 1931-on, with Bentley by then under Rolls-Royce control – and destined for an inevitable change of product direction.

As ever, it's been great fun putting together this issue, and I'm indebted to everyone who has been in touch recently to say how much they're enjoying the magazine. Don't forget to keep your comments and suggestions coming, and we'll publish as many as possible in a future issue.

## Paul Guinness

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## HOMAGE TO HISTORY

To help celebrate its centenary in 2019, Bentley has announced the Continental GT

Number 9 Edition by Mulliner, said to be inspired by the firm's illustrious motorsport history and incorporating a number of distinctive features. Just 100 examples of this special edition will be built throughout the year.

The Number 9 Edition by Mulliner pays homage to Sir Henry 'Tim' Birkin and the 'Blower' Bentley – No.9 – that he raced at the 1930 Le Mans 24 Hours. Birkin commissioned

the production of a series of supercharged 4½ Litre Bentleys, with power boosted from around 110 to 175bhp in the process.

Bentley's latest limited edition is distinguished by its No.9 badging and its matching front grille graphic. Customers have the option of either Viridian Green or Beluga Black paintwork with 21-inch ten-spoke wheels also in these colours. Inside there's a choice of Cumbrian Green or Beluga heritage hides, with increased gloss levels to the seats, inner door panel and other areas. Debossed 'B' logos

feature on the seat headrests and door panels, as they did the door pads of the 1930 'Blower'.

Each Number 9 Edition by Mulliner also features a wood insert from the seat of Birkin's iconic Le Mans race car, which was removed during its renovation. This backlit piece is set in resin and situated in the middle of the centre dial of the dashboard's rotating display, adding a piece of history to each example. Each of the 100 cars also features 18K gold plated organ stops inspired by those in the No.9 'Blower', as well as '1 of 100' tread plates. ■

## RREC ANNUAL GATHERING

The countdown is on for the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club's Annual Rally, which this year takes place over the long weekend of June 21st-23rd at the familiar venue of Burghley House, near Stamford in Lincolnshire. And as usual, it looks set to be the largest dedicated Rolls-Royce event of the year.

Six decades on from the very first RREC Annual Rally, this spectacular show has become a must-visit destination for Rolls-Royce enthusiasts from all around the world, and now attracts upwards of 4000 visitors – all of them

there to soak up the atmosphere and to admire more than a thousand vehicles, many of them taking part in the ever-competitive Concours d'Elegance.

As usual, the gates of Burghley House will open to visitors on the Friday, giving early attendees a chance to enjoy the many trade stands – and to buy those all-important spares and accessories – before the major crowds arrive over the weekend. For more details of the RREC's Annual Rally 2019, go online to [www.rrec.org.uk](http://www.rrec.org.uk) or call the club on 01327 811788.



# BENTLEY CELEBRATIONS

As part of the marque's centenary celebrations, the Bentley Drivers' Club has adopted the '1001 Bentleys at Blenheim' tagline for its biggest event of 2019 – the aim being to make this the world's largest ever

Bentley gathering. It is being held in association with Salon Privé – one of Britain's most prestigious classic vehicle events – and takes place over the weekend of September 7th and 8th.

The weekend will see the third

running of the Masters Series at Salon Privé, which this year is entirely dedicated to Bentley. Although there will inevitably be a competitive element to the day, it will also be a celebration of the marque, with an impressive display of fifty Bentleys, from the earliest through to the very latest models. Trophies will be awarded, with the much-coveted Owners' Choice being presented at the Saturday evening Gala Dinner within the sumptuous surroundings of Blenheim Palace.

Owners of exceptional Bentley models are invited to enter their cars for both days of Salon Privé's Bentley celebration weekend. Models already submitted for entry include a 1929 Speed Six Gurney Nutting Weymann Saloon, a 1938 Sports Saloon by Park Ward and a 1950 MkVI Drophead Foursome Coupe by E.D. Abbott – one of just 16 ever built. More details of the Bentley Drivers Club's centenary celebrations can be found on page 74.



## ROLLS-ROYCE RALLY CARS

A fantastic line-up of Bentleys is a regular occurrence on long-distance endurance rallies but Rally Round's Tran-Himalayan Adventure – which starts in Chengdu, China on April 20th – sees them unusually outnumbered by Rolls-Royces. With a limited entry list due to the difficulty of the event and its altitude (reaching 5800 metres about sea level when driving the plateau of the Himalayas), David and Julia Little's well-campaigned 1925 Super Sports is the only representative of the Bentley marque.

Chris Evans and Mark Seymour's 1925 Rolls-Royce 40/50 Silver Ghost – one of the oldest cars on the rally – will be joined by Mark Robinson and Yvonne Fuller's 1937 25/30 Coupe (pictured), which has tackled this terrain before on Rally Round's Thunder Dragon event of 2015. James Hall-Smith and Ed Talbot's 1938 25/30 completes the Rolls-Royce trio that will drive through China, Tibet and Nepal, via the 'roof of the world', and finish in Kathmandu on May 9th. You can find out more and follow the event at [www.rallyround.co.uk](http://www.rallyround.co.uk).



# NEC SEASON OPENER

Getting the UK's 2019 season off to a strong start in March was the annual Classic Car & Restoration Show, held as usual at Birmingham's NEC – breaking last year's record by attracting almost 29,000 visitors. With more than 1300 cars on display – many of which could be found on the 170 car club stands – as well as the usual weekend-long sale hosted by Classic Car Auctions, there was plenty to interest the Rolls-Royce and Bentley enthusiast.

The RREC had a well-attended stand at the show, welcoming members old and new as well as featuring a trio of fascinating cars. Most modern of the three was a 1979 Silver Wraith II, a 214,000-

mile example described as a 'driving restoration project'. This was kept company by a 1930 Woodhall Nicholson-bodied Phantom II (a barn-find car that has since been recommissioned) and a 1925 Phantom – an ongoing project with special two-seater 'boat tail' bodywork.

The Classic Car Auctions sale attracted plenty of serious bidders throughout the weekend, with no shortage of vehicles changing hands. A recently recommissioned and MoT'd Corniche Convertible from 1985 seemed good value (despite needing a little work) at its sale price of £24,975, while a superb 1979 Silver Shadow II – a 56,000-mile example with a full

history file – achieved a final sale price of £19,425. A fan of more modern classics made an excellent purchase, meanwhile, snapping up a 2005 Bentley Continental GT (a 69,000-mile car in excellent order) for just £16,650.

A particularly interesting lot was a 1948 Bentley MkVI lightweight saloon with all-aluminium bodywork by H.J. Mulliner, a tidy survivor that sold for £24,667. Meanwhile, for the Bentley enthusiast looking for a reasonably straightforward restoration project, a 1956 S1 with Standard Steel bodywork seemed excellent value at £12,210 – as did a 1991 Bentley Turbo R LWB, an 87,000-mile car that ended up changing hands for £8436.



The RREC stand featured this Silver Wraith II



Special 'boat tail' bodywork for this Phantom I



This S1 project changed hands for just over £12,000



Corniche Convertible sold for just shy of £25,000



£16,650 seemed reasonable for this Continental GT





**The Mulliner-bodied  
MkVI dated from 1948**



**The silver-coloured  
Silver Shadow II  
achieved £19,425**



**The Phantom II on  
the RREC stand  
was a barn find**



**LWB Turbo R was snapped  
up for less than £8500**

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# PHANTOM PROTOGRAPHY

An owner-driven standard-wheelbase Rolls-Royce Phantom recently became the subject of a project by automotive culture photographer Mark Riccioni, who took up the challenge to work with the car in a variety of different urban situations throughout London.

Riccioni visited a series of locations in the city, the end result being a special 'Phantom Off-Duty' exhibition at Rolls-Royce's Berkeley Square dealership in early March. Torsten Müller Ötvös, chief executive officer of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, said: "I am delighted that Mark Riccioni has so effectively captured the spirit in which this motor car was commissioned and that we are able to share these images with the public." ■



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# CORNICHE

# *Style*





## Despite being overshadowed by its soft-top cousin, the two-door fixed-head Corniche is far from second best – as we discover after a day behind the wheel of this early example

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB HAWKINS

Look up the word *corniche* in a dictionary and you'll find it usually refers to a road that travels close to a cliff edge – a definition that seems somewhat apt when considering the Rolls-Royce Corniche, the first model launched after the collapse of its maker in 1971. Indeed, Rolls-Royce Motors was still in the hands of the receivers at the time of the Corniche's debut, which meant that life at the Crewe factory was probably almost like being on a cliff edge. Could the newly created car division – now known as Rolls-Royce Motors – survive, let alone prosper in the years ahead?

Let's not forget, of course, that problems with Rolls-Royce's aviation division were what had caused the collapse of the firm on February 1st, 1971; and although there was inevitably a knock-on effect in terms of public image, the subsequent separation of the car-building side helped to minimise this. The fact that the new Corniche was ready to be unveiled in 1971 meant excellent timing; demand for the company's cars remained strong, and so the high-priced Corniche was soon helping Rolls-Royce Motors to become a profitable car manufacturer in its own right.

Although obviously a derivation of the previous Silver Shadow-based two-door Mulliner Park Ward duo, the Corniche was announced as a new model, again available in a choice of two-door hardtop or convertible guises – although only the latter went on to enjoy an astonishingly long career, with the final example being produced in 1995.

The fixed-head Corniche disappeared in early 1981, which meant just a ten-year run and – as a consequence – a touch of extra rarity today. Indeed, just 1108 hardtop Rolls-Royce Corniches were produced during that decade, as well as a further 63 Bentley versions. Production of the Corniche appears to have been a logistical challenge, with the bodies being manufactured by Rolls-

Royce's in-house coachbuilding arm of Mulliner Park Ward – based at Willesden, London – before being transported to Crewe for completion of the build.

Early-model fixed-head Corniches are now a relatively rare sight (certainly compared with their Silver Shadow cousins of similar vintage), and so when the Yorkshire-based Classic and Sportscar Centre offered me a chance to get behind the wheel of the example you see here, I could hardly refuse – especially as this car's price tag of £39,995 makes it one of the most affordable entry points into Corniche ownership.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Looking over the Rolls-Royce's Midnight Blue exterior, with the winter sun sinking deep into it and providing detailed reflections of anything nearby, it's obvious that this is a colour prone to attracting dust and road dirt. And so it proved to be, forcing us to apologise to the workshop team at the Classic and Sportscar Centre when we returned the car after several runs along a nearby country lane, only to ask them to then prepare it for some car-to-car photography. Happily, it does look superb when clean – and I was looking forward to my first encounter with an early Corniche.

Compared with a Silver Shadow, the Corniche's doors are (obviously) significantly longer, swinging wide open to provide a hint of the access situation for the rear seats. A hard-to-miss push button on the outer top corner of each front seat suggests some means of tilting its top half, although it needs a good push down with your thumb and a gentle push of the seat back to allow it to hinge forward. Sure enough, there's then room to clamber into the rear – although if you need more space you can simply switch on the ignition and operate the door-mounted electric mechanism »



## “The fixed-head Corniche disappeared in 1981, which meant just a ten-year run – and a touch of extra rarity today”

to slide the whole seat forwards.

In this particular car, the leather is impressively well-preserved, with only a few creases suggesting age-related patina to the dark blue hide. The carpets also appear to be original and genuine, and there’s a plaque on the top of each sill to identify the Corniche’s association with the London-based

coachbuilder. The first impression is of upmarket opulence, with the car being a visual testimony to the coachbuilding skills of Mulliner Park Ward.

Sitting inside the Corniche is familiar territory for anyone used to Rolls-Royces of the early 1970s. There’s an array of clearly labelled switches arranged across the dashboard,

including one for the cruise control which can be switched on and, when necessary, engaged and resumed. (Switching off involves pressing the brake pedal or flicking the appropriate toggle switch.) There are also controls for switching on a parking light, illuminating either the left- or right-hand depending on which side of the road



By two-door standards, access to the rear seat is straightforward



Corniche quality and attention to detail



The leather in this 1974 Corniche is well-preserved

the car is on. And, of course, the neat arrangement of Rolls-Royce labelled instruments is housed in a walnut-veneered dashboard of the highest quality, with 83,351 miles showing on the odometer as we clamber aboard.

## ON THE ROAD

A twist of the ignition key in the centre of the dashboard sees the V8 fire into life; and as I make sure my foot is on the brake pedal, the light-to-use column-mounted gear selector is set to 'D' and we're ready to go. There's no sign of lurching or creeping as I release the umbrella-type handbrake lever, and as I press down on the accelerator our progress is calm and relaxed. On paper, this Corniche could reach 60mph from stationary in around ten seconds when new, though we won't be trying any such antics on this particular drive.

The gear changes are almost seamless as we work up some speed, although the power-assisted steering takes some practice for a first-timer. It initially feels vague and far too light, with seemingly too much rotational play; but then it becomes apparent that I need to relax, avoid over-correcting and let it do its job. I soon begin to tune into what the steering is doing, appreciating that it was designed in an era when light controls were a sign of luxury and high-quality engineering. »



The early Corniche featured a bespoke dashboard design





Compared with a modern classic of similar luxury status, this Corniche demands a much more delicate touch.

All this talk of delicacy is soon forgotten, however, when I decide to properly test the brakes, which prove reassuringly competent at bringing this hefty machine to a halt. Less frantic braking is also effective, without the feeling of fighting against the engine and the automatic gear selection. And, of course, the Corniche's ride quality should also come in for praise, with the self-levelling rear suspension set-up helping to ensure refinement at all times, although the car's handling

## **“Sitting inside the Corniche is familiar territory for anyone who has driven a Silver Shadow from this era”**

– especially when cornering at speeds – requires special consideration.

Combine such soft handling with the ultra-light steering mentioned earlier and it almost feels like you're manoeuvring a barge through a gentle corner of a canal; it's controllable, but naturally not as positive and responsive as a modern vehicle. All of this, however, is something that

the Corniche (and original-spec Silver Shadow) owner soon gets used to. Indeed, after just a few hours of piloting this Corniche around some of the twisting B-roads ideally located close to the Classic and Sportscar Centre's headquarters in Malton, North Yorkshire, I find myself enjoying what was a fresh and relaxing experience.

The overall dimensions of the car can take some getting used to, however, particularly the marginally wider rear track, which can easily be forgotten if you use only the front wings for guidance. Those slightly curvaceous and bulbous rear arches don't protrude far, but it's enough to clip a kerb if you're too accurate with the front.

As with any Rolls-Royce, the Corniche can suffer from a number of major and expensive problems when neglected, with corrosion being near the top of that list. The example we're driving here, however, appears to have no such issues, having received some bodywork restoration – as well as a glass-out respray – four years ago. New inner







The Corniche used a slightly more powerful version of the 6.75-litre V8

and outer wheelarches were fitted, along with front and rear valances, prior to that respray – with the end result being a bill for £20,000. There are also receipts within the history file for re-chroming, fitting new front brake discs, renewing some suspension bushes and steering components, a few oil seals (gearbox and diff), as well as replacing several dashboard instruments and one of the electric window motors. A modern update to the interior is an aftermarket Pioneer stereo head unit with retractable screen, which includes satellite navigation and Bluetooth connectivity.

That's not all, as there are also receipts dating back to 2002 totalling £45,000, covering a list of work that includes an engine rebuild, plus new accumulators, hydraulic pumps, gearbox oil cooler pipes, an alternator and overhauled brake calipers, as well as new rear discs and flexi-hoses. The engine rebuild paperwork lists replacing the seals for the liners, which is perhaps reassuring considering the aluminium engine block uses cast-iron cylinder liners that are wet-mounted (cooled), so they can be removed and refitted to ensure they sit sufficiently proud to the top of the engine block and help to seal the two cylinder heads with the aid of the head gaskets. There are also receipts to »

## CREATING THE CORNICHE

Although there was little to differentiate the new Corniche from the extant Silver Shadow two-door saloon and drophead by Mulliner Park Ward, it was treated as a new model by Rolls-Royce Motors. Exterior differences between the Corniche and its forebears were minor; a slightly different radiator grille, rectangular reversing lamps, fog lamps, special wheel trims and a different dashboard formed the bulk of the cosmetic changes, while the engine was subtly reworked to produce 'adequate plus 10%' power.

There was no need for major change thanks to the already handsome looks of the MPW cars, with Coke-bottle hips and an angled rear giving them more panache than a standard Silver Shadow saloon. Styled by John Blatchley, the shape was clearly derived from that of the Silver Shadow but reintroduced elements of historic Rolls-Royce design.

Running gear was also carried across from the standard saloon, which in the case of the Corniche meant a 6.75-litre L-series V8, SU-fed

and driving a GM400 three-speed automatic gearbox at launch. And, of course, the Corniche also shared the suspension of the equivalent-era saloon, with independent coil springs with oleopneumatic self-levelling at the back, powered hydraulic brakes and power assisted steering.

The individual models of Corniche can't be tracked alongside the saloons, because upgrades and changes to nomenclature were made at different times. The biggest visual upgrade came in 1977, with the Corniche gaining the same 'rubber bumper' look as the new Silver Shadow II, as well as a new lower spoiler, new dashboard and (particularly welcome) rack and pinion steering. The Corniche was not rebranded at this time, despite the amount of advertisements which today refer to these cars as Corniche II.

After the successful launch of the Silver Spirit in late 1980, Rolls-Royce ceased production of the Corniche fixed-head model the following March, bringing to an end one of the company's most exclusive offerings.

## “As with any Rolls-Royce, the Corniche can suffer from a number of major and expensive problems”

show that the aluminium cylinder heads were re-faced, something that should be at least checked prior to refitting to ensure they are sufficiently flat.

This particular Corniche also comes with its original factory specification sheets, handbooks and manuals, as well as a service history booklet that starts at 42,680 miles in 1988. The car was originally sold by Lex Mead of Manchester and delivered on January 31st, 1974, with its first owner choosing a list of extra-cost options that included plain Sundym glass throughout, head restraints all round and black lambswool rugs.

At the end of my day at the wheel

of this relatively early Corniche, I came away with enormous respect for what is one of the rarer members of the Silver Shadow-based family. The level of finish achieved by Mulliner Park Ward in the early '70s still impresses, with this example having also benefited from some fairly recent restoration work in order to maintain its excellent condition.

You could, of course, spend substantially less than this car's near-£40,000 asking price on a similarly well-preserved Silver Shadow; but for those who crave real exclusivity, a fixed-head version of the Corniche still manages to offer decent value for money. It may be overshadowed by its

convertible sibling in terms of ultimate desirability, but the money saved by opting for the fixed-head Corniche surely makes this a seriously tempting choice – with the added appeal of it being one of the rarer models produced by Rolls-Royce in the 1970s. ■

### THANK YOU

We're grateful to the Classic and Sportscar Centre for supplying the Corniche featured here. For more details of the company's current stock, visit [www.classicandsportscar.ltd.uk](http://www.classicandsportscar.ltd.uk) or call +44 (0)1944 758000.



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# PRODUCT NEWS

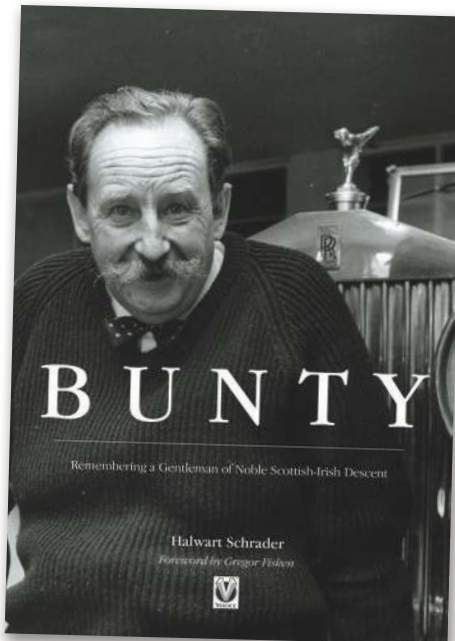
We catch up with the latest must-haves aimed at today's classic Rolls-Royce and Bentley owner

## REMEMBERING 'BUNTY'

This new 216-page paperback from Veloce is a fascinating biography of David Scott-Moncrieff, better known to his friends as 'Bunty', described as a "colourful, larger-than-life personality, enthusiastic car expert, charming entertainer and passionate vintage car addict". His favourite marque was Rolls-Royce, and for some time 'Bunty' claimed to be the world's number one when it came to selling used examples.

'Bunty' owned various world-famous race cars, an array of worn-out Rolls-Royce hearses (always awaiting a rebuild) and a plethora of other classics, all of which are featured in the book – along with anecdotes from some of his many friends and admirers. Author Halwart Schrader knew 'Bunty' well, and manages to keep the reader highly entertained with tales of the man's motoring adventures – and particularly his involvement in the world of used Rolls-Royces throughout the 1960s and '70s.

*Bunty: Remembering a Gentleman of*



*Noble Scottish-Irish Descent* is available now (quote ISBN number 978-1-787113-48-0 when ordering) priced at £19.99. For more details, go to [www.veloce.co.uk](http://www.veloce.co.uk).

## TRADITIONAL TOOLS

Gunson has launched a new range of slot-headed, wooden-handled screwdrivers that are sure to appeal to classic car owners who enjoy working with traditional looking tools. The oval section handle is said to give each screwdriver the natural feel of an older tool, and there's a choice of four different drivers in the range: 160mm long with a 9mm tip; 200mm long with a 9.5mm tip; 250mm long with a 100mm tip; and



300mm long with a 10.5mm tip.

The tips are finely ground and tapered for maximum strength. The blades extend the length of the drivers, meaning they can be lightly encouraged with a mallet or small hammer with no danger of any splintering. Prices range from £12.80 to £15.24 each, and you can find out more at [www.gunson.co.uk](http://www.gunson.co.uk).



## COMMEMORATIVE WATCH

Continuing the successful relationship between Bentley Motors and Breitling is this brand new timepiece – the Bentley Centenary Limited Edition. Created as part of the Breitling Premier collection, the watch has been designed to commemorate the car manufacturer's 100th anniversary.

Produced in a choice of 18K red gold or stainless steel versions, the Bentley Centenary Limited Edition features a unique wooden brown burl elm dial with black sub-dials. The movement is visible through a transparent case back featuring the Bentley logo. The 18K red gold version is engraved with a 'ONE OF 200' inscription, while the steel version is inscribed 'ONE OF 1000' as confirmation of their limited-edition status.

Prices for the watch range from £7950 for the stainless-steel case with Bentley-inspired leather strap and pin buckle, through to £22,500 for the 18K red gold case with leather strap and 18K red gold pin buckle.

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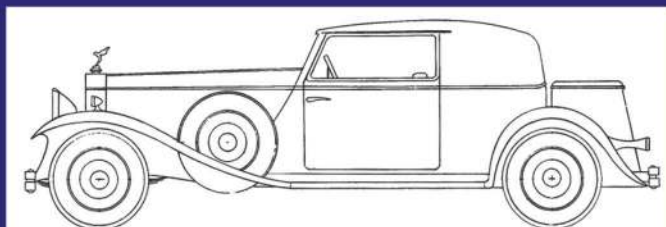
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# MARKET WATCH

We take a look at some of the most tempting cars for sale and report on others that have sold – with this issue's section being dominated by an array of Bentleys thanks to the marque's impending centenary



## PRE-WAR PERFECTION

A pre-war classic that's recently come to market is this 1936 Bentley 4¼ Litre Vanden Plas Open Tourer (chassis number B200GA), a superb looking survivor finished in British Racing Green with a matching green interior. The car boasts a number of distinctive period features, including a polished aluminium dashboard and cut-away rear wheel spats, and comes with full weather equipment. It is described by Vintage & Prestige (the specialist company selling it) as a "splendid example of a type favoured by the motoring elite of its day".

The Bentley was first registered to Sir Norman Watson in June 1936, since when it has enjoyed an interesting

and varied history. It is believed that a subsequent owner – the late Ivor Silverstone – commenced its restoration in around 1969, with a replacement Vanden Plas-style body being fitted, thought to be from another Open Tourer. Vintage & Prestige explain more about the bodywork: "It has many similarities to an original car we sold previously, lending credence to the supposition that this is indeed a Vanden Plas body from another car. It should be noted that it is not a Malcolm Campbell-designed Tourer; although very similar, the front wings are different. It has the rare pontoon-style wings and is essentially identical to the Vanden Plas Earl's Court Motor Show car."

The previous owner of the Bentley apparently purchased it at Bonhams' Olympia sale in December 2009, when Ivor Silverstone's private collection was offered for sale. Since then, CXR 5 has been mechanically maintained by Tony Fabian of Blackmore Engineering (with receipts available to show work carried out) and has benefited from the fitment of a Payne overdrive, enabling it to be driven comfortably at 70mph – at which speed the engine is said to be operating at a leisurely 2500rpm.

This impressive looking and very useable Bentley Open Tourer is now available at an asking price of £185,000. For more information, go online to [www.vandp.net](http://www.vandp.net) or call 01375 379719.



# BENTLEY AUCTION RESULTS

To help commemorate the centenary of Bentley in 2019, H&H Classic Auctions has released details of some of the marque's most notable auction results – including the varied selection shown here. The highest price achieved was for a 1929 4½ Litre Tourer (registration number GU 1927) originally registered to Bentley Motors for use by Woolf Barnato. This historically significant machine went on to beat its high-end sale estimate when it sold for £855,000 in October 2018.

From the same era but rather more affordable was a 1927 3 Litre Tourer (GD 7745), one of just 513 Speed Models built, which beat all expectations by achieving £212,800 in December 2014. Also beating its estimate (just last year) was a 1950 MkVI Park Ward Drophead Coupe, a superbly restored example of a car thought to be one of only four produced – which helps to explain its auction sale price of almost £116,000.

A brace of soft-top Bentleys from the 1960s also attracted plenty of



interest when sold by H&H, with a '69 T-series MPW Convertible looking like great value with a top winning bid of £50,400 back in 2015.

Then a year later, a 1965 Bentley S3 Continental Park Ward Drophead Coupe beat its low-end auction estimate at just shy of £185,000.



## LATE-MODEL BROOKLANDS

Although Flying Spares is best known for its vast stocks of new and used parts for all post-war classic Rolls-Royce and Bentley models, the company will also sometimes offer carefully chosen cars for sale. The latest example is this 1998 Bentley Brooklands R (chassis number WCH66221), one of just 28 right-hand drive examples built – and one of the very last of the SZ-generation models.

Announced for the '98 model year, the Brooklands R incorporated the suspension system from the Turbo

R for stiffer, more precise handling – enabling buyers to make the most of the car's Light Pressure Turbo-provided 300bhp. Just 100 examples of the Brooklands R were produced prior to the arrival of the Arnage, making these one of the rarest members of the Bentley-badged SZ family.

The example on offer from Flying Spares is finished in dark green with contrasting red coachlines, and features a stone hide interior with green carpets and overmats. Extensive work has apparently been carried out

in order to keep this car in excellent condition, including recent new head gaskets courtesy of the Flying Spares workshops. The Bentley comes with a comprehensive service history to confirm its mileage of 81,000, and the tyres have recently been replaced with the correct Michelin items. The car's R1 DTX registration number is included in the sale, and at £16,950 this particular Brooklands R (which is described as a "stunning car") looks excellent value for money. To find out more, go to [www.flyingsparses.com](http://www.flyingsparses.com) or call 01455 292949.



## THE ULTIMATE GTC?

It might be a later model than we usually feature here in *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, but we thought we'd include this 2009 Bentley Continental GTC for two reasons. First of all, it's an example of the limited-run

Mulliner Driving Specification – and thanks to its unusually low mileage of just 18,000, it's described by its selling dealer as "absolutely as new".

Finished in Beluga Black, this little-used GTC has a matching hood

and interior, with even the wood veneer boasting a Piano Black finish. It's obviously highly-equipped, with a list that includes a power-operated bootlid, soft-close doors, xenon lights, power-folding mirrors, front and rear park control, cruise control, multi-function steering wheel controls, digital television and much more. The car also comes with a full Bentley service history and can be bought for a fiver under £50,000. If you like the sound of this modern classic, you'll find further details at [www.stewartwalkerltd.co.uk](http://www.stewartwalkerltd.co.uk) or by calling 01635 866833.





# RARITY ACHIEVES £454,000

There's more news from H&H Classic Auctions this issue, thanks to the sale of this 1936 Bentley 4½ Litre Vanden Plas Tourer – which despite needing extensive restoration, went under the hammer for an impressive £454,250 at the company's latest sale in late March. This particular example had been owned by former RAF pilot Charles Blackman, who took part in the raid to bomb Adolf Hitler's mountain-top retreat in the Bavarian Alps in April 1945.

Mr Blackman drove his rare Bentley for 36 years before taking it off the road in the late 1980s. It then spent three decades in a garage at his home in Stockport, Greater Manchester, but was unearthed after his death in January of this year, at the age of 96. The car was expected to fetch between £150,000 and £200,000 at auction, but went on to achieve well over twice the top estimate. The last time it changed hands, it had been bought by Mr Blackman for the grand sum of £260.

This is one of just six W.O. Bentley 4½ Litres assembled by the Service Department from new-old-stock parts in 1936, five years after Bentley had been taken over by Rolls-Royce. It has matching numbers and original Vanden Plas Tourer coachwork, and has been in the hands of just two owners from new – with Mr Blackman having owned it since 1952.

Back in 1936, Nobby Clarke and Hubert Pike came up with the idea of using the stockpile of new and reconditioned parts that they had inherited from Rolls-Royce's 1931 takeover of Bentley to produce new examples. A total of ten cars were built this way, comprising six 4½ Litre models and four 3½ Litres. Of the 4½ Litre cars completed, chassis number RC41 is the only one to retain its original coachwork (the other five have been re-bodied as Le Mans-style Tourers), making EMF 113 a genuinely unique example.

Damian Jones, head of sales at H&H, told us: "This Bentley is so unusual because it was assembled in the mid-1930s using a chassis and mechanical parts which dated from no later than 1931. Only the body was freshly made when the car was assembled and sold as new in 1936. The W.O. Bentleys made from 1919 to 1931 are far more valuable than the Derby Bentleys that followed from 1933. This car was accepted as a W.O. Bentley because its chassis and mechanicals were all made during the W.O. era."



# MULLINER *Marvel*

We examine a rare and stunning example of the Silver Cloud II Drophead Coupé, one with an intriguing history

WORDS: IAN SEABROOK PHOTOGRAPHY: MATT RICHARDSON



**T**he importance of the Silver Cloud cannot be overstated. It was the transitional model that really took Rolls-Royce from a builder of chassis to a builder of complete motor cars. It was an essential step, as buying patterns changed and new money arrived – along with new expectations from potential customers.

Of course, it was not the first complete car built by Rolls-Royce; the Bentley MkVI and Rolls-Royce Silver Dawn were both available with Standard Steel in-house bodywork, which really was a first for this prestige manufacturer and marked the start of the great coachbuilt era coming to a close. The Silver Cloud, however, would be almost entirely new, with a much stronger chassis design and, initially at least, a reworked version of the inlet-

over-exhaust six-cylinder engine.

If the Silver Cloud was to sell well it had to look the part, and that responsibility fell upon the shoulders of John Polwhele Blatchley. He had learned his craft at Gurney Nutting & Co Ltd, one of many independent British coachbuilders; but having reached the position of chief stylist at the age of just 23, Blatchley moved to Rolls-Royce in 1940 as the demand for coachbuilt cars evaporated during wartime.

After initially spending the Second World War designing cowlings and other parts for the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine, Blatchley moved to a role as draughtsman in the car division, only to then become a stylist once a suitable position was available. The need for Standard Steel bodywork was driven by metal availability, with

aluminium being hard to find due to it being absorbed by the aero industry.

## **CLASSIC DEVELOPMENT**

Having only been able to work on specific details of the 1940s steel bodies, Blatchley was soon working on the replacement for these models, though it is said that the Silver Cloud design was sketched in ten minutes after earlier proposals were rejected. Blatchley didn't work on the Bentley Continental, but it is clear that this model – with its stylishly curvaceous lines – inspired his design nonetheless. The result was a large saloon that somehow managed to mask its bulk with delicate, sweeping curves.

Such curves would work equally well on a two-door body, and it was H.J. »



**FEATURE CAR**  
SILVER CLOUD II DHC



The woodwork of this concours-standard car is obviously in perfect condition



The Silver Cloud's interior was fully re-trimmed in 2018



Attention to detail has been the key to this restoration



**“The H.J. Mulliner-built pair of Silver Clouds was delivered and registered to Wilson Interests Ltd in April 1960”**

Mulliner that turned the Silver Cloud into a very pretty, if rather substantial two-door drophead coupé. An enormous, electric folding roof allowed for a very comfortable four- or five-seater, but the cost when new would have been substantial, and on the Silver Cloud II platform only 107 examples of Design 7504 were built – just 32 of which came with right-hand drive.

The example featured here was built in late 1959, by which time H.J. Mulliner had been absorbed within Rolls-Royce, joining Park Ward as part of the company’s in-house coachbuilding division. Coachbuilt bodies were still constructed at H.J. Mulliner’s Chiswick factory (and would continue to be until 1968), but the change of ownership certainly highlighted the changing tide. This car was one of two built for South African shipping entrepreneur Max Wilson, with both cars featuring a number of premium options – including electrically-operated windows and aerial, rear armrest-mounted radio speakers and whitewall tyres. The H.J. Mulliner-built pair of Silver Clouds

was delivered and registered to Wilson Interests Ltd in April 1960.

By 1973, the woodwork on this particular example was in need of repair, with Jack Barclay commissioning Hoopers Ltd to carry out the work. The car was sold from Wilson Interests Ltd to a Mr Theodorovich in July 1988, with the sale being handled by Classic Automobiles. For some reason, the V5 logbook was re-issued to Mr Theodorovich in 1989, and so he is listed as both the third and fourth owner.

Mr Theodorovich was based in Kowloon, Hong Kong, but the Cloud remained in the UK, where P.J. Fisher continued to maintain and service the vehicle for the following ten years, during which time the car was resprayed in white. Mr Theodorovich then exported the Rolls-Royce to Hong Kong in 2011, whereupon servicing transferred to Frank Dale & Stepsons, a company that maintains a presence in both London and Hong Kong. The Silver Cloud eventually returned to the UK in September 2017.

Soon after, this stunningly handsome

H.J. Mulliner creation entered the ownership of DM Historics, where the car has undergone a full concours-standard restoration, returning it to the original Shell Grey metallic paintwork with hand-painted red pinstripes. The brightwork was all re-chromed and whitewall tyres have been fitted, as per the original specification. In 2018, the car was treated to a full re-trim in red leather, with grey carpets and a new power-operated hood. The woodwork also required some further work to bring it to the required standard. Now completed, the car is presented for sale at the time of writing with an asking price of £345,000.

While the logbook shows four previous keepers, it is believed that in fact the only previous owners are Max Wilson and Mr Theodorovich – which is fairly remarkable for a car ordered almost exactly sixty years ago.

## **IMPOSING SHAPE**

Taking in the lines of this drophead is an absolute pleasure. Parked next to other »

**FEATURE CAR**  
SILVER CLOUD II DHC



Both the 6.2-litre V8 and the engine bay it sits in are beautifully detailed

**“Overall, this is a vastly impressive machine that looks all the better for its return to Shell Grey”**



vehicles, the immense size is apparent; but taken in isolation, the lines work so well you could almost imagine that the Cloud design originated as a sleek drophead. The proportions are so well considered that the sheer bulk of the car is very well hidden.

Of course, Blatchley's great trick was to compose a design that is traditional without being stuffy and upright. The enormous Rolls-Royce grille dominates, but somehow the flowing lines all around seem perfectly matched to it. It is unmistakably a Rolls-Royce, looking quite unlike any other car (other than its illustrious Bentley Continental stablemate). It has presence, without drama.

Perhaps the best thing about the styling is how clean it is. There is no unnecessary adornment, just delightful details – such as the way the enormous sides are broken up not only by the



sweeping wing-line, but by subtle echoes of those lines further down the wing. They do just enough to break up a considerable amount of metal.

The interior, of course, feels very fresh indeed and those seats are yet to attain a single crease, but it's the woodwork that really impresses. The way it sweeps into the door cappings is a lovely touch, and the finish is exemplary.

Sat in the back of this glorious machine, it's amusing to note that the

substantial roof actually has courtesy lamps fitted on the rail above the rear window. There is some very impressive engineering in the way the roof folds, and it does so in a surprisingly speedy fashion when activated. For that reason, one is advised to keep fingers well out of the way...

Lowering the hood naturally transforms the interior, which feels rather snug and cosy with it in the raised position. With »

## FEATURE CAR SILVER CLOUD II DHC



the hood down, it's rather like an outdoor picnic on board, albeit with all your home furnishings rather than fold-up chairs and a blanket. It feels unmistakably special.

Under the side-lifting bonnets, the 6230cc V8 and its surroundings have been beautifully detailed. Of course, the V8 engine is not quite as smooth and refined as the earlier six-cylinder engine, but that's only by comparison. As we manoeuvre the car for photography, the most telling noise is the gentle whirr of the transmission. It's beautifully vocal.

Overall, this is a vastly impressive machine that looks all the better for its

return to Shell Grey. (It's hard to imagine it being anywhere near as impressive when it was finished in white.) The red trim contrasts beautifully with the grey, making this a car of stunning aesthetics. The whitewall tyres may not be to all tastes, but we think they work well here (as well as matching the car's original spec), adding a touch of California glamour and helping to break up the substantial flanks.

This special Silver Cloud II sadly reflected the gradual tailing off of Britain's once-booming coachbuilding industry, although it was a fine way to mark the approaching end.

Coachbuilding was not always about being outlandish or ornate. Sometimes it was just about putting a slightly different spin on a design that was really rather splendid in the first place. This car certainly serves as a beautiful example of that. ■

### THANK YOU

To find out more about the H.J. Mulliner-built Silver Cloud Drophead Coupé currently available from DM Historics, call +44 (0)1732 440494 or go online to [www.dmhistorics.com](http://www.dmhistorics.com).





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**1937 Bentley 4¼ DHC by Park Ward**  
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**1935 20/25 DHC by Thrupp & Maberly**  
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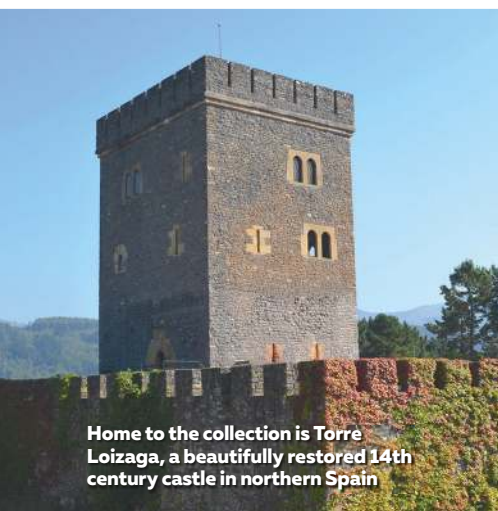




# COLLECTION AT THE CASTLE

A historic castle in Spain is home to one of the world's greatest Rolls-Royce collections, an astonishing array of vehicles recently visited by two *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* readers

WORDS: SIMON BUCK-HONOUR PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREW BUCK-HONOUR



Home to the collection is Torre Loizaga, a beautifully restored 14th century castle in northern Spain

**T**ucked away in the dramatic mountain scenery of northern Spain, less than an hour from Bilbao, is one of classic motoring's greatest surprises. Indeed, housed in a beautiful 14th century castle known as Torre Loizaga is one of the world's most complete private collections of Rolls-Royce motor cars.

Lovingly restored over three decades, the renovation of the Loizaga tower and medieval castle ruins was masterminded by talented landscape painter, musician and local businessman, the late Miguel de la Via. But Miguel also had other talents, most notably a passion for vintage and classic cars, and over the same period he built up

a remarkable collection of 75 such vehicles – primarily manufactured by Rolls-Royce and representing all models made between 1910 and 1988.

This unique and unrivalled collection is displayed in a series of spacious halls around the extensive property, with all the cars kept in running order and maintained on site by expert technicians. Torre Loizaga has been open to the public since the 1990s and has traditionally been an obligatory stop for car clubs and enthusiasts who have shared their experiences on many different internet forums.

In April 1997, the tower became the setting for an impressive meet-up of classic cars from the UK, during which members of the Rolls- »



One of the world's finest gatherings of Silver Ghosts can be found at Torre Loizaga



The Phantom IV (chassis number 4CS4) formerly owned by the Emir of Kuwait



A line-up of Phantoms, with the Emir of Kuwait's Phantom IV in the foreground



This rather special Silver Wraith limousine features coachwork by H.J. Mulliner



The collection of Rolls-Royces represents all models built between 1910 and 1988



A solitary Bentley heads up this impressive display of pre-war Rolls-Royces

## MUSEUM VISIT SPANISH COLLECTION

Royce Enthusiasts' Club presented a plaque to Miguel de la Vía, declaring him Honorary Member for Life in recognition of his work. The family still owns and runs the property, with the founder's niece, María Lopez Tapia de la Vía, who is herself an RREC member, and her son Patricio doing so with utter professionalism, as well as having a friendly and enthusiastic approach to

preserving the wonderful collection.

Along with the motor cars, there are fascinating photographs and other memorabilia relating to Rolls-Royce displayed on the walls surrounding the exhibits. The collection is spread throughout six halls, the first of which displays luxurious pre-war machinery made by various manufacturers of the time, including a gorgeous 1925 Isotto

Fraschini Type 8, a 1907 Delauney Belleville 10HP Roi des Belges and a 1936 Hispano Suiza by Van Vooren, along with a selection of horse-drawn carriages from an even earlier era.

The second hall houses more modern and classic machinery (including various examples of Jaguar and Austin-Healey, as well as a unique British 'Merryweather' fire engine),



The collection boasts six separate halls, each one packed with immaculate machinery  
Below: Was there ever a more imposing sight than this extensive line-up of Phantoms?



A convertible Corniche makes the ideal companion for this eye-catching Silver Shadow



The Silver Wraith display includes the 1958 example formerly used by the British royal family



Among the earliest cars is this 1910 Silver Ghost with Roi des Belges coachwork by Barker & Co

while the third contains Italian and British sports cars of the '80s together with contemporary examples of the Rolls-Royce marque. The remaining three halls are dedicated exclusively to Rolls-Royce, aside from a solitary Derby Bentley.

What makes the collection particularly special is that not only are there eleven immaculate Silver Ghosts, including chassis 1462 (a Roi des Belges by Barker, dating from 1910) and various models built at the only Rolls-Royce factory outside England (in Springfield, Massachusetts), but there are also examples of all Phantoms I to VI – including a Phantom IV once owned by the Emir of Kuwait. In fact, every Rolls-Royce model of 1910-88 is represented, including two Silver Wraiths that were once used for state occasions by the British royal family.

The museum is normally open to visitors on Sundays throughout the year, but also on other days by appointment and especially for groups. »

## “This unique collection is displayed in a series of spacious halls around the extensive property”



This display of various versions of the Silver Cloud makes an impressive sight



The exhibits are all kept in running order by the in-house team of technicians



A 1928 Rolls-Royce 20hp (chassis GKM18) at the head of this pre-war line-up



Surely one of the best collections of Phantoms you'll find anywhere in the world

## MUSEUM VISIT SPANISH COLLECTION

Guided tours are provided, although a free-flow system is also possible. There are a number of events held at the venue during the year, including the three-day Salon High Motors each September – a showcase of luxury foods, drinks, goods and services, along with car marques on display, with an itinerary of presentations and tastings throughout the long weekend.

The same event also encompasses the Autobello Concours of Elegance competition, which is open to any classic car type and age. Following a parade in front of the crowds by the cars taking part in the competition,



The non-Rolls-Royce exhibits include a 1903 Peugeot (foreground) and 1925 Isotta Fraschini

medals are awarded to all participants and trophies presented under several categories, with judging carried out by a jury of motor car specialists. This year's event is to be held on September 27-29th, and more details can be found online at [www.salonhighmotors.com](http://www.salonhighmotors.com).

The owners of Torre Loizaga are

justifiably proud of their extensive collection, and are happy to accept pre-arranged visits from individual classic car owners or groups – each one guaranteed a warm welcome to this fascinating array of motor cars. For more details of this amazing collection, simply visit the website: [www.torreloizaga.com](http://www.torreloizaga.com). ■



A 1912 model by Barker (chassis 1997) in the foreground of the Silver Ghost collection



The collection includes this varied display of Rolls-Royces from the 1980s



The Salon High Motors event takes place each year, incorporating the Autobello Concours of Elegance



Modern-day Bentleys were well represented at last year's Salon High Motors event



A memorial plaque dedicated to the founder of this unique collection



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Most responsible owners of older Rolls and Bentley models recognise that the lighting needs upgrading to make the cars safe to use in modern traffic. This has involved quite a lot of time and effort in the past, but now Better Car Lighting of Warwickshire have announced a revolutionary new conversion which uses the latest technology to make the upgrade surprisingly quick and easy to install.

At the front a new LED bulb replaces the original sidelight unit.



# Bright news for older cars

It is very bright warm white until the indicators are activated, and then it changes to flashing orange. At the back, an amazing new three-function bulb directly

**One bulb - 3 functions**



replaces the original and gives a brighter tail light and brake light and flashes orange through the red lens when the indicators are activated.

All of this is made possible by a new electronic control module which mounts at the front and

tells the new bulbs what to do and when. It can work in conjunction with semaphore indicators and the kit has bright flashing LED bulbs to upgrade these, but will also suit cars built without them.

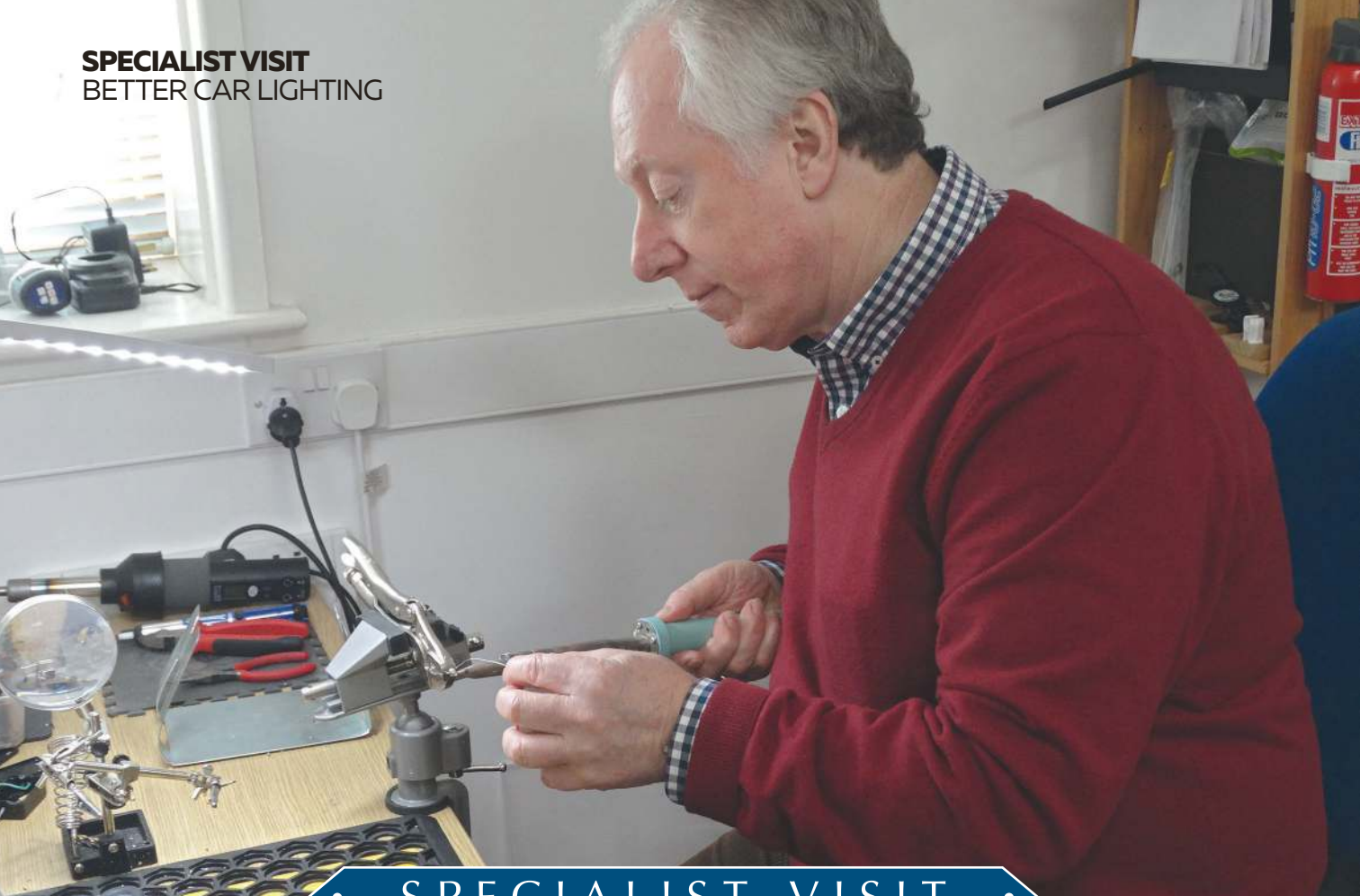
Inside the car there is a loud sounder and a discrete visual display. All of this means that

an upgrade that used to take days can now be done in hours.

The complete kit, together with instructions costs just £249.99+VAT.



For more details, visit  
[www.bettercarlighting.co.uk](http://www.bettercarlighting.co.uk) or call  
**0121 773 7000**



• SPECIALIST VISIT •

# THE LIGHT TOUCH

We pay a visit to a Warwickshire-based specialist in classic car lighting upgrades – and discover just how much he’s transforming the safety aspect of countless older vehicles

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL GUINNESS

“I can’t believe how much enjoyment I get from running this company,” smiles Gil Keane during our visit to Better Car Lighting, the firm that he founded and runs from rural premises near Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. “It manages to combine my fascination for lighting and design with my love of classic and vintage cars – and I can honestly say that every day is great fun.”

Gil goes on to joke about being “in my dotage”, despite the fact that he’s fit and active enough to single-handedly run what is a very busy small business. But there’s no denying that he has enjoyed a long and successful career, having spent more than three decades as the man behind Quicksilver Automotive:

“I had a lot of people working for me in those days, and we were involved in many different aspects of the car industry – from creating limited-edition models for manufacturers and dealer groups through to owning the Venom car alarm brand.”

With a lifelong interest in lighting and its effect on the human brain, however, Gil devoted time and resources to his idea of ambient lighting being used in vehicles: “There had been research done as far back as the Second World War into how lighting could affect pilots, with work being carried out on improving night vision without the glare that can cause tiredness. I’d always thought that the same principle could be applied to the motor industry

and I started doing my own research into ambient lighting for cars.”

Gil’s first experiment was in the use of LEDs for dashboard lighting, before moving on to the idea of ambient lighting in footwells as a way of keeping the driver alert at night: “When our feet are in total darkness driving at night, it can have a subconscious effect,” explains Gil. “There’s a part of the brain that is working overtime trying to predict what’s happening around our feet. But with very soft lighting in the footwell, that particular brain activity is greatly reduced, making a night-time drive less stressful and less tiring. It’s a fascinating subject, and one that can bring real changes to tiredness levels.”

In the early days of his experiments, Gil



arranged with a local transport company for a number of its commercial vehicles – many of which were driven through the night – to be fitted with LED lights inside their cabs, strategically placed to provide some subtle lighting in the darkest areas: “The company agreed to this as long as we fitted the LED lighting and then removed it again at a later date. When the trial finished, however, and we tried to arrange removal of the in-cab ambient lighting, we were told to leave it in there. The drivers loved it and reported fewer problems with tiredness on long journeys.”

Gil began receiving orders from private car owners, which then led to similar work being carried out for the Stratstone dealership group. Quicksilver Automotive also became involved in the burgeoning new sat-nav industry, as well as new-fangled reversing cameras and similar hi-tech launches. But it was the subject of lighting that continued to fascinate Gil, presenting him with an ideal opportunity to devote all of his time to the subject once Quicksilver was eventually dispersed and his old premises sold: “I wanted to retire from running a company on that scale, and always liked the idea of being a one-man-band operation that combined my passion for automotive lighting with my enjoyment of helping owners of old cars. That’s how Better Car Lighting came about.”

## GOING IT ALONE

Although the company has been established for a number of years, Better Car Lighting has been based at its current location for just eighteen months



**Above: Better Car Lighting’s LED headlamp upgrade kits are among its bestsellers**

– and what an impressive set-up it is. The smartly presented premises house Gil’s large stocks of lighting upgrade kits and their components, as well as the workshop area where he carries out his development work. And the good news is that Better Car Lighting now has a wide range of different products available, each one aimed at improving both the driving experience and the safety of today’s classic vehicles.

When it comes to improving your headlamps, the company offers everything from single LEDs to all-in kits aimed at today’s hands-on classic car owners. For owners of vintage cars in particular, Better Car Lighting has an exclusive range of LEDs for different applications in both positive and negative earth wiring. For example, anyone with an early car that uses BA15D bulbs (a common fitment) now has an LED alternative available off the shelf, as Gil explains: “If your car runs a dynamo and BA15D headlights, you will

appreciate better than most why driving in the dark is tiring. One problem is that the headlights are feeble and yellow, another is that there just isn’t enough juice to run the coil, tail lights, number plate lights, sidelights and then to power up the headlamp bulbs as well. Changing as many bulbs to LED as possible is a good solution – especially as these headlamp bulbs give a powerful, period-correct, warm white light on both dip and main beams, and need just a fraction of the power to do the job properly.”

Gil also offers LED kits to replace sidelight, fog lamp and brake light bulbs, but it’s his work on LEDs for indicators that is particularly interesting. Better Car Lighting now offers a wide choice of different options for flasher units, although the switch to LEDs in this instance also means a change of relay, says Gil: “Upgrading the flashers on your classic car means you need to swap not just the bulbs but also the relay. The new bulbs are so efficient »



**LEDs that flash orange but also provide white sidelights are an aid to safety**



**There are LED bulbs available for a vast range of classic car applications**

## SPECIALIST VISIT BETTER CAR LIGHTING



Each LED is designed as a straight swap for a twin-filament regular bulb



Every kit from Better Car Lighting comes with comprehensive instructions

that there's not enough load for the old one to work. We sell the LEDs and relays separately, although buying an all-in kit that comprises all four flasher bulbs and the relay will obviously save both money and time. Two- and three-pin relays are available, again for cars with either positive or negative earth wiring – and for anyone who's not sure which relay their car has, they can buy the other relay separately and send one back for a full refund when they've finished the job."

### ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Such thoughtful service makes customers of Better Car Lighting realise this isn't a company that's

## "The company offers everything from single LEDs to all-in kits aimed at hands-on classic car owners"

simply all about profit; Gil is a genuine enthusiast who gets obvious pleasure from assisting owners in their quest for improved lights on their classics. Even his replacement flasher relays, for example, look like genuine period units – an essential factor when anyone's looking for a lighting upgrade that doesn't affect the original appearance of the car.

Just as important, however, is Gil's ingenuity when it comes to solving problems. He has, for example, developed flashing LEDs that operate

within the semaphore-type indicators on older classics, making them far more noticeable to motorists who are only used to spotting modern-type flashers. And he also offers LED bulbs that provide white sidelights which then switch to flashing orange when indicating; they're an easy swap from the original twin-filament type of bulb, but again they make your car's turn signals far more noticeable.

Another of Gil's excellent creations is his bespoke LED for the rear of any



Gil Keane is the mastermind behind countless LED lighting upgrades



There's no shortage of LED stock at Gil's Warwickshire headquarters



Even Better Car Lighting's LED-compatible relays have a period look to them



New bulb holders can also be supplied by Gil as part of his vast range



Buyers can choose from a range of four period-looking hazard light switches

car that has its tail light, brake light and indicator all within one unit – with his clever replacement (and adaptor) offering different-coloured lights to make each function vastly more obvious. And for even earlier cars (or those that simply need more lighting), Gil has recently launched miniature high-power LEDs that measure just 23mm across, enabling them to be used as alternatives to number plate bolts or simply mounted on a bracket under the bumper, well out of sight when not in use. These tiny units offer white sidelights and orange flashers when fitted up front, while at the rear they give you tail lights, brake lights and flashers, with incredible brightness on offer considering their minuscule proportions. Another safety factor on many classic

cars is, of course, their lack of hazard warning lights, and again Gil has risen to the challenge by producing LED-based hazard warning light and flasher kits, with the hazards being operated by a choice of four different period-looking switches (push-pull, toggle, rocker and push-button), ensuring there's one that will suit your car's dashboard no matter what its age. And while we're on the subject of dashboards, there is also now a comprehensive range of ultra-small LEDs available from Better Car Lighting specifically designed to replace your standard dash lights (giving a superior lighting effect as well as improved long-term reliability), plus LEDs for your dash-mounted warning lights that actually flash in an emergency. Whichever kit you buy from Better Car Lighting, it will come with full fitting

instructions as well as the offer of one-to-one help via a phone call to Gil if you have any queries during the fitting process. Items can be ordered via the website (with same-day despatch on offer) or by phone, and Gil is happy to advise anyone who's unsure which products they need to be ordering. Whatever is lacking when it comes to lighting on your Rolls-Royce or Bentley, there will be a solution... and this is where you're likely to find it. ■

## THANK YOU

Many thanks to the Gil Keane for our recent guided tour of Better Car Lighting. For more information on the company's many upgrades for classic car lights, indicators and so on, check out the website ([www.bettercarlighting.co.uk](http://www.bettercarlighting.co.uk)) or call 0121 773 7000.

# BOUND FOR IRELAND

Fifteen years ago, an offer from Bentley Motors to borrow the then new Arnage T proved irresistible for Ian Adcock. Our regular contributor recalls one very memorable trip...

PHOTOGRAPHY: IAN ADCOCK





**B**entley + Racing = Le Mans. It is an equation that every motorsport fan knows, as simple and obvious as Maranello + Red = Ferrari. But back in the days when Bentley was making the Le Mans 24-hour race its own private club, there were other events that caught the imagination of not just the public but also the playboy drivers who competed. It was a time when local authorities would close a few roads, put some straw bales out and organise a race, bringing much needed publicity and income to areas desperately in need of both.

Two such events were held at Phoenix Park, Dublin, and the Ards TT road race, east of Belfast. Bentleys competed in each – admittedly not with the same success as the marque’s French forays, but they weren’t totally disgraced. And so when fifteen years ago, on one of those dull, wet, miserable ‘Why do I live

in a country where the sun forgets to shine?’ mornings, the phone rang and a cheery voice at the other end (belonging to then Bentley PR man, James Barclay) offered me the latest Arnage T for a few days, life was suddenly a lot brighter... if not exactly drenched in sunshine.

The problem was, what to do with the car? I mean, apart from drive it. There were only 600 or so Arnages built each year and, with each one spoken for, there was little point in comparing it against other cars. And it was equally pointless testing the car in the conventional zero-to-60mph and ‘bursting through the handling envelope’ way, because we already knew that not only was the Arnage T ferociously fast (thanks to its 6.75-litre V8 producing 450bhp, giving it a 168mph top speed and demolishing the 60mph sprint in just 5.5 seconds), it also handled pretty damned well despite its bulk. We also knew, of course, that

it cost a lot (£170,000 or thereabouts) and was not very fuel efficient.

What I could do, however, was experience and enjoy the Bentley magic for a day or two, revelling in its outrageousness, pretending it was mine... even if the accommodation I went back to at night was a humble B&B and not the five-star luxury designer hotel round the corner. I could also visit the race circuits that helped to make Bentley what it is, which is how I ended up in Phoenix Park asking a local Garda where the circuit used to be.

Phoenix Park is Europe’s largest enclosed urban space, with its 1752 acres being surrounded by a 6.8-mile long wall dating back to Henry VIII’s time. With its lattice work of roads, including a 1.9-mile straight bisecting the parklands, the Park was an ideal location for speed trials held in 1903 as part of an ‘Automobile Fortnight in Ireland’, organised as a condition of S.F. »

## FEATURE CAR BENTLEY ARNAGE T

Ian and the Arnage T  
tackling Gough Corner at  
Phoenix Park



Edge's famous victory in the previous year's Gordon Bennett Race. Successful though the event was, Phoenix Park as a race venue did not emerge until 1929, and that was only because the Ards TT race was also a success.

### HISTORY REVISITED

Nowadays, Phoenix Park is the haunt of keep fit fanatics (joggers, power walkers and cyclists abound) and there is a 30mph blanket speed limit. The roads are narrow too, barely sufficient for the broad-shouldered Bentley and, say, a Transit van to pass without swapping paintwork. Phoenix Park is no longer used for racing, but the short Oldtown circuit that used a small section of the original must be a pale imitation of what would have been an awesomely quick event.



The Phoenix monument was temporarily moved for the 1929 Irish International Grand Prix



For a car of such bulk, the Arnage T handled with aplomb



There's a 30mph speed limit in force these days



The old Ards TT hairpin in Dundonald



South Street, Newtownards, was part of the TT route

Time for a quick Bentley break at Conway Square



## “The following year saw an epic duel between Birkin in his ‘Blower’ and Caracciola in his Mercedes SSK”

Of course, there were complications: the Phoenix monument halfway down the main straight would have provided an interesting diversion for the competitors but, wisely, it was dismantled prior to the 1929 Irish International Grand Prix and relocated in the Park only to then be moved back to its original position.

Cruising around the Park in the air-conditioned, leather-swathed luxury of the Arnage T, the big tyres rumbling over the broken tarmac, steering wheel gently thrumming in my hands, it struck me just how brave were the racing drivers of 80-odd years ago. Tim Birkin was a regular competitor in his ‘Blower’ Bentleys, as was Glen Kidston in his standard version; indeed, it was Kidston who finished second in the 1929 Irish International Grand Prix at an average speed of 79mph, with Birkin trailing in sixth on handicap. In

the Éireann Cup held the same year, Bentleys were second through to fifth, as well as seventh and eighth.

The following year saw an epic duel between Birkin in his ‘Blower’ and Caracciola in his Mercedes SSK, with victory falling to the German car – sweet revenge for Mercedes after Bentley’s crushing victory in that year’s Sarthe Classic. In places, the original wooden edging to the track still exists, but the statue at Gough Corner no longer does thanks to the IRA.

You would think a car that occupies nearly 124 square feet of road space would be a handful within the narrow confines of Dublin’s streets or the pencil-thin lanes in the surrounding countryside, but you’d be wrong. For a start, you have an imperious driving position that puts your head and shoulders above other road users. And, of course, the Bentley’s

squareness helps, with no droopy snoot or particularly sloping boot line to make it a tricky steer. I found it easy to place the car, although the fact that it came armed with peripheral sensors that squawked maniacally as I closed in on tight spaces was a help.

The Arnage T’s ride was firm, made firmer still if we opted for the sport setting that shortened the gear changes and, seemingly, made the throttle more reactive as well. It was better suited to the open spaces of motorways and sweeping A-roads, where we could use the car’s awesome power more fully. But even on sinuous roads, it was possible to maintain an indecent average speed thanks to being able to see so much ahead, allowing us to make full use of the sweeps and curves as the Bentley powered through.

There had always been a feeling of understeer with the Arnage, but with »

## FEATURE CAR BENTLEY ARNAGE T

the lower mounting point of the rear damper now moved from the upright to the lower wishbone to give even better body control under hard cornering, together with improved stability, it was predictable and containable. Cornering slow-in, fast-out style and keeping the lock tight seemed to make the Bentley shrink around us and increase its nimbleness. I know it might sound silly to refer to a car weighing 5500lbs as nimble, but that was how it felt as I approached rain-drenched Newtownards, some 93 miles north of Dublin and east of Belfast.

### HEADING NORTH

Ironically, it was the financial success of the Ards TT in 1928, attracting a crowd of half a million spectators around its 13.5 miles and adding a reputed half a million pounds to the local economy, that sparked off the Phoenix Park races. In its turn, Ards was inspired by Le Mans, although it was never going to be a 24-hour event, rather a six-hour race for the Tourist Trophy that had not been competed for since 1922. One of the driving forces behind the race, incidentally, was Harry Ferguson, who would later become famous for the tractors named after him, as well as the four-wheel drive system used on the Interceptor-based Jensen FF.

What used to be the start is now a small industrial estate on the outskirts of Dundonald, before the circuit takes a sharp left up to Bradshaws Brae. Motoring along the Brae, I was pleased to be in the Bentley's cossetting warmth and not enduring the lashing rain, like so many of the drivers must have done all those years ago. Birkin and Cook took part in the first Ards TT in 1928, finishing first and second in class, and fifth and seventh overall. Driving that road, I could sense how dauntingly fast this road circuit must have been; it was just a pity that the Arnage T's performance was strangled by the Sunday afternoon trippers in their family saloons.

If the circuit was fast, it also had tricky parts, no less so than in Newtownards where the cars plunged through a narrow gap between the town hall and a shop. Locals like to tell you that the nicks in the stonework were caused by drivers getting a tad too close, clipping the wall with their wheels – all of which sounds like a bit of Irish blarney to me. From there they plunged down the almost



### “Locals like to tell you that the nicks in the stonework were caused by drivers getting a tad too close”

dead flat and virtually straight run into Comber; now a succession of single and dual carriageways, it would have allowed me to really exploit the twin-turbocharged V8 if only the road been quieter and less greasy.

As it was, I had to content myself with trying to imagine Birkin, Cook and (in 1929) Rubin, Harcourt Wood and Hayes battling it out. In fact, Bentley never won at Ards, while Birkin had his only racing accident here when he crashed heavily at Ballystockart in the rain-soaked 1930 event. Grey, dank, miserable weather shrouded Comber where the original butcher's shop (after which the corner was named) still stands. From there the road twists and snakes its way to Dundonald and the old hairpin, now an anonymous set of traffic lights.

Eventually, the Ards TT met the same fate as so many races held on public roads when, in 1936, local

driver Jack Chambers lost control of his Riley coming into Newtownards, demolishing a lamp post, killing eight spectators and injuring fifteen others. The race continued, but it was to be the last one held.

Running late for the ferry from Dublin to Holyhead, I risked the wrath of the local constabulary and let the leash out a little on the Arnage. Cruising at 100mph was as effortless as sitting in your lounge chair at home, the only disturbances being an occasional squeak from the hide and sometimes a faint rumble from below as the tyres steamrolled their way over a road imperfection. The big disc brakes were equally impressive, shrugging off speed with contemptuous ease. There might have been other luxury limousines on the road fifteen years ago, but none compared to Bentley's Arnage T in terms of power, prestige and sheer driver appeal. ■



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# THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

An S1 might not seem the most obvious Bentley in which to tackle an international rally, but this specially-prepared example is different from the norm – and is about to prove it via an 8000-mile adventure

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL GUINNESS



I'm no stranger to the Bentley S1, having experienced numerous examples over the years. It's a model (along with the original Silver Cloud) that I have a particular penchant for, having always admired the smoothness and relative simplicity of the straight-six powerplant that predated Rolls-Royce's all-new V8 of 1959. With most of my time spent aboard an S1 being a somewhat sedate experience, however, I was intrigued to hear about the example you see here. This, you see, is an S1 with a difference.

We all know that classic Bentleys are a major force in international rallying, although most of those we see tackling the toughest terrain around the world are of the vintage variety. Look at any historic rally entry list and you're likely to find a handful of Bentley 4½ Litres (and their contemporaries) taking part. Indeed, a whole cottage industry exists in the UK dedicated to preparing vintage Bentleys for these truly arduous rallies. In this instance, however, the vehicle in question is a 1958 S1 – an arguably surprising choice for one of the most challenging rallies on the international scene.

As you read this, the car will already be in Beijing ready for the start of Peking to Paris 2019, a modern-day challenge that follows in the tyre tracks of the original rally from the early days of motoring. Organised by the Endurance Rally Association (ERA), this year's Peking to Paris is the seventh event of its type since its reintroduction, and is open to any pre-1976 classic. Needless to say, though, not every car can cope with such



The Bentley at Padgett Motor Engineers awaiting shipment to China

a challenge, with even the ERA admitting that Peking to Paris is the "longest and perhaps the toughest driving challenge for vintage and classic cars".

The 1955–59 Bentley S1 was, of course, a robustly engineered saloon even in standard factory-built spec, a car designed for covering long distances in comfort, style and at decent speed. What it wasn't designed for though, was more than a month's worth of non-stop abuse over thousands of miles of arduous terrain. It's the kind of torture likely to cause issues even for a car as strong and reliable as a Bentley, particularly

one that's already experienced more than sixty years of motoring.

## UNUSUAL CHOICE

Intrepid brothers Doug and Mike McWilliams inevitably enjoy a challenge, hence their decision to tackle the Peking to Paris event in 2019. What was particularly interesting, however, was their idea that a Bentley S1 would be the perfect vehicle for driving from China to France as quickly as possible, taking in Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Germany along the way. It was an unusual choice »

## PEKING TO PARIS 2019

The Peking to Paris Motor Challenge follows in the wheel tracks of the original pioneers of 1907, as the ERA explains: "Driving an old car nearly half way around the world with a bunch of like-minded enthusiasts, against the clock, with the added spice of timed sections, makes Peking to Paris the longest and toughest driving challenge for vintage and classic cars.

In its latest guise, the event is open to pre-1976 cars and is suitable for both novice crews (with training and support) as well as experienced rally entrants. Taking an exciting route via gravel, sand and stunning roads, luxurious hotels

and desert camping, this is a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Those taking part need a sense of adventure and must be prepared to spend nights under canvas in the deserts of Mongolia and Kazakhstan. The ability to carry out regular maintenance on your own car is also essential. And with average daily distances of between 250 and 400 miles, there'll be no shortage of challenges ahead.

This year's Peking to Paris starts on June 2nd and will run for a total of 36 days. For further details of this and other ERA events, go online to [www.endurorally.com](http://www.endurorally.com).



## FEATURE CAR PEKING TO PARIS S1

of vehicle, albeit an intriguing one.

Finding the 'right' example for sale was the first step, as the brothers needed one that was good, solid, up and running but obviously not so immaculate that it found itself at the top end of the Bentley S1 price scale. But once the ideal example had been located, they then turned to Jeremy Padgett of Lincolnshire-based

Padgett Motor Engineers, entrusting him with the preparations for Peking to Paris 2019. His task? To ensure that the Bentley was not only made robust enough to cope with the countless challenges ahead, but also modified in order to comply with the strict regulations stipulated by the ERA.

Jeremy has been involved in the world

of classic Bentleys for his entire career, and in 1995 took over the company that his father, Alan, had founded 38 years earlier. Alan had become involved with racing Bentleys after buying a 1926 Speed Model 3 Litre, and eventually worked on some very interesting examples – including the legendary 'Old Number One', plus the Birkin 'Blower' (JU 5872) when it was owned by Stanley Sears. He subsequently undertook work on many BDC members' well-known cars, helping to establish Padgett Motor Engineers as a highly respected specialist in vintage Bentleys, with Jeremy eventually joining the family firm full-time from the beginning of 1978.

By that stage, the company had also become a major force in the world of Bentley Specials, building many cars that are still racing to this day. Alan and Jeremy spotted another opportunity, however, via increased interest in upgrading R-Type Continentals to rally specification, and Padgett Motor Engineers soon established a reputation for the quality of such work. Jeremy has since prepared numerous examples that have gone on to be successful in historic rallying, and in the last decade he and his team have dedicated their time and expertise to around 25 Continentals. These have ranged from the restoration of 'standard' examples through to full-scale modifications for international competition, with numerous Padgett-prepared cars successfully competing in historic rallies around the world.

It goes without saying that, compared with an R-Type Continental, an S1 saloon with standard factory bodywork is relatively commonplace. It's not the type of Bentley that Padgett Motor Engineers tend to see in their workshops on a regular basis. But with the company having so much experience when it comes to rally-preparing some of the finest coachbuilt Bentleys, it's little wonder that the McWilliams brothers approached Jeremy with the inevitable question: "Can you build us an S1 that can compete in – as well as complete – the Peking to Paris?"

### UPDATED SPEC

What you see here is the completed car, recently shipped over to China at the time of writing – and all set for one of the world's greatest classic car challenges. But getting the Bentley to this stage hasn't been easy, with Jeremy and his team facing a vast list of rally regulations supplied by



A larger than standard fuel tank has been fitted, fillable from inside the boot



The car sits higher than standard, aided by heavy-duty rear leaf springs



Falken Wildpeak all-terrain tyres offer toughness and extra grip



This bespoke bolt-on exhaust extension is designed for deep water



Bolt-on panels beneath the Bentley help to ensure a smooth underside

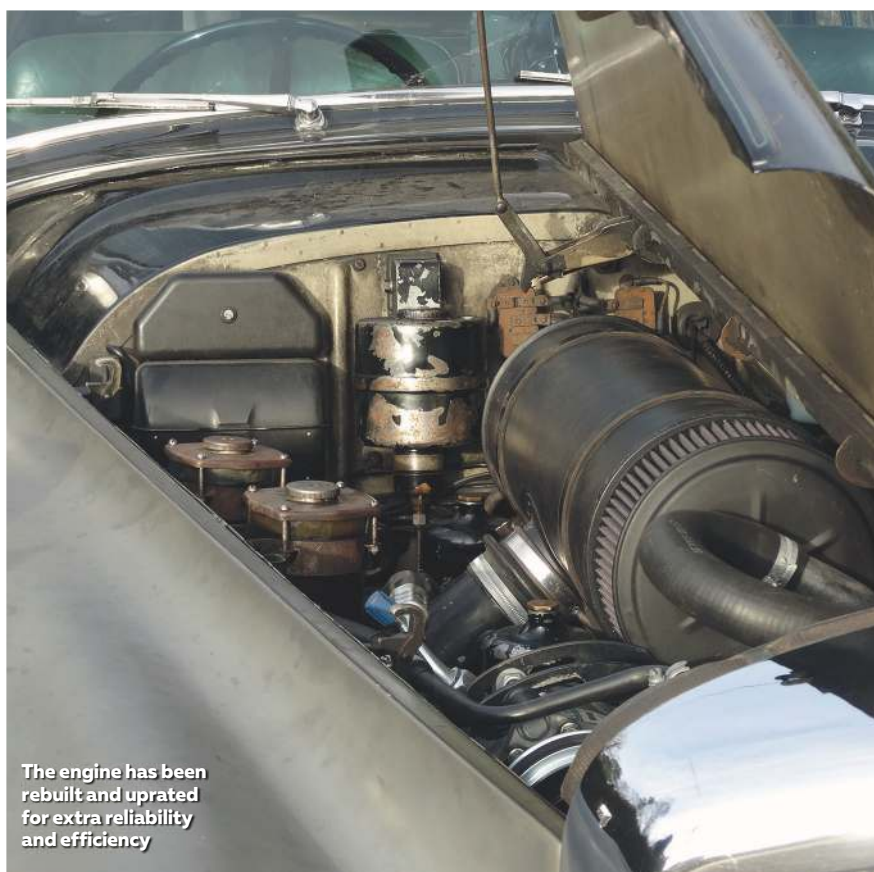
**“Getting the Bentley to this stage wasn’t easy, with Jeremy and his team facing a vast list of rally regulations”**



the ERA, in addition to the non-compulsory modifications deemed essential if the car is to stand a chance of competing successfully.

The most obvious visual change is to the S1's ride height, with the car now sitting roughly 2.5 inches higher than standard thanks to the fitment of bespoke front springs and heavy-duty rear leaf springs. Indeed, the springs used all round are just about the most robust that can feasibly be fitted, helping to ensure that the Bentley copes with some of the most rutted roads on the planet (although to call them roads is perhaps being over-kind). To complement the uprated suspension, meanwhile, is a set of Falken Wildpeak all-terrain rubber, providing the kind of traction and tyre toughness that the S1 is sure to need in such conditions.

Beneath the car but out of sight to casual onlookers, the modifications go much further – and include a set of bolt-on aluminium panels that run almost the entire length of the underside, as Jeremy explains: “The panels manage to protect the underneath against damage from rocks and debris, but they also serve another vital purpose. If the car should get stuck, it will be much easier to tow out if the underneath is »



**The engine has been rebuilt and uprated for extra reliability and efficiency**

## FEATURE CAR PEKING TO PARIS S1



The interior of this competition-prepared S1 remains in good order



Arguably the most comfortable seats of any rally car... ever



A high-spec GPS system is essential for the Peking to Paris rally



There's no shortage of modern-day add-ons aboard the Bentley



The rear seat has been removed to allow space for tools and spares

smooth. In standard guise, with the possibility of sand or extreme mud getting caught around every component and chassis section, recovering the car would be a lot more difficult."

There have, of course, also been changes under the bonnet. The original 4887cc straight-six engine was running well at the time of purchase, but Jeremy and the McWilliams brothers didn't want to take any chances, hence the need for a complete strip-down and rebuild to ascertain the exact condition of the classic powerplant. This also provided a good opportunity to carry out a whole series of desirable upgrades, including the installation of forged alloy pistons, a crankshaft modified to accept viscous fluid dampers, and a gas-flowed high-compression cylinder head – with the emphasis being on extra efficiency rather than increased outright power.

Up-rated exhaust valves and new forged alloy pistons have helped to improve the engine's output and durability still further, with electronic ignition also being fitted for extra reliability. Other upgrades include a pair of two-inch SU HD8 carburettors and a bespoke stainless steel exhaust system, as well as fitment of a lightweight alloy radiator built specifically to a Padgett Motor Engineers design. The car's original air filter has also been swapped for a trio of specially modified K&N filters, which are not only highly effective but can also be washed out and re-oiled when necessary.

The S1's original fuel tank has been replaced with a larger unit (for coping with the longest-distance stages of the Peking to Paris), with its filler being accessed via the boot. This allowed Jeremy and his team to create an ingenious modification using a vertical section of exhaust, which bolts on to the existing tail pipe (exiting below the left-hand rear wing) and then on to a bracket situated where the fuel

**“The obvious visual change is to the S1’s ride height, with the car now sitting 2.5 inches higher than standard”**



filler once was. When not in use, the modification is completely invisible behind the fuel filler flap; but when the McWilliams brothers are tackling deep water and need to raise the height of the exhaust outlet, it’s a quick and easy job to attach the extra vertical section.

Like the engine, the S1’s transmission was in good working order prior to the car arriving at Padgett Motor Engineers, but Jeremy wasn’t about to take any chances: “We sent the gearbox off to G. Whitehouse Autos, a Midlands-based specialist in automatic transmission rebuilds and repairs. It was completely stripped and rebuilt to ensure it was ready for the Peking to Paris challenge, with a few useful changes carried out at the same time. The internal modifications mean that the car doesn’t now change down to first until it’s almost at a standstill, making it more suited to the kind of extreme conditions it’s about to face.”

This British-specification S1 didn’t come with air conditioning when new, but has now been fitted with an aftermarket system to bring some much-needed comfort during the challenges that lie ahead. The back seat has been removed to provide sufficient space for the multitude of spares, tools and other essentials that could be needed during the adventure. And, of course, you’ll also now find on board the kind of modern technology deemed essential for today’s most challenging historic

rallies, hence the high-spec GPS system, electronic odometer and assortment of charging points and USB ports.

## **ON THE ROAD**

This is one classic Bentley that’s all set for an epic adventure on one of the most demanding international events of its type. But how does it drive compared with a standard-spec S1? The simple answer: remarkably well. Climbing aboard, the first impression is of an unmolested and original interior, with a pleasing level of patina to the car’s period leather and wood veneer trimmings. Then your eyes are drawn towards the modern electronics attached to that gloriously stylish dashboard, the fire extinguisher on the floor and the modern-style seatbelts – and you know this is an S1 built for a specific task.

The engine sounds as smooth and refined as you’d expect from a straight-six S-series, but the way in which this suitably uprated powerplant performs is an absolute joy. Standing-start acceleration feels surprisingly swift, with the speed continuing to build at a highly impressive rate as the car works through its uprated gearbox, surging forward even in top gear.

As we tackled the rural B-roads that surround Padgett Motor Engineers’ picturesque location near Sleaford, the car’s mile-munching capability really shone through, as did its ability to take

rough surfaces in its stride. And although traversing Lincolnshire’s countryside over a single afternoon could hardly be compared with the full Peking to Paris experience, it certainly reinforced just what a highly capable – and competitive – machine this particular S1 has become. The way in which its modified suspension coped with the ruts and undulations was excellent, with the car maintaining a compliant ride and decent comfort levels despite its raised height and more robust springs.

Suddenly, after an all-too-brief experience of the Padgett-prepared car, the prospect of driving up to 400 miles per day over ultra-tough terrain seemed a slightly less daunting proposition than it did before. Jeremy and his small but highly experienced team deserve praise for transforming a standard Bentley S1 into a genuinely competitive contender – and we look forward to seeing how this impressive machine deals with one of the toughest challenges in historic rallying ■

## **THANK YOU**

We’re grateful to Jeremy Padgett and his dedicated team at Padgett Motor Engineers for allowing us access to this rather special Bentley S1. For further details of the company’s restoration and rally preparation services, check out the website ([www.padgett-bentleyrestoration.co.uk](http://www.padgett-bentleyrestoration.co.uk)) or call 01529 240400.



# FROM CRICKLEWOOD TO CREWE

Rolls-Royce's 1931 acquisition of Bentley Motors meant the end of the road for the glorious 8 Litre – and numerous challenges for the new owners. We take a look at the early post-independence years and the eventual move to badge-engineering

WORDS: JEREMY SATHERLEY PHOTOGRAPHY: BENTLEY MOTORS & KELSEY ARCHIVE

It was a sad day indeed when W.O. Bentley was instructed to dispose of his 8 Litre at Jack Barclays, walking home with just £100 to his name. In a fit of corporate paranoia, Rolls-Royce had bought not only the works, showrooms and unused chassis as part of its acquisition of Bentley, but also the man himself – ensuring that he could not rear his head in competition with them again for a very long time. W.O. was to

have no hand whatsoever in any new Bentley's design, nor invited onto the board. Instead, he was to have a string of odd jobs over the next three years, looking after the demonstration fleet at the main London showrooms, testing cars and assisting at press receptions.

As to the form the new Bentley was to take, there was no settled plan. Before acquiring Bentley Motors, Rolls-Royce had been working on

a scaled-down 20/25, codenamed Peregrine – a close-coupled, smaller-engined 16/18hp four-seater. As a way of giving him something to do, W.O. was sent out on test with this "very nice little car, carrying a rather dainty radiator". However, it was soon apparent that Peregrine couldn't be produced in large enough numbers for cost-effective production, nor show much of a price difference over the existing



models. With pressure mounting to do something constructive with the Bentley marque, the Experimental Department's leading lights of Ernest Hives and W.A. Robotham reasoned that instead of going to waste, Peregrine's chassis could be adapted as a basis for the proposed Bensport (as it was known internally).

But what about the engine? Among the many projects Sir Henry Royce was cramming into the last full year of his life was the development of a supercharged 2.4-litre unit, which the sales team was confident would attract clientele, in a car of Alfa Romeo-like character. The test team took an un-supercharged prototype to France on one of their exhaustive endurance tests, but found that with the car's 'English' gearing the engine was running so continuously at 5000rpm that the bearings were breaking up after just a few thousand miles. So that put paid to both the engine and the supercharger idea.

With time marching on and the prospect of buyers losing interest, the Experimental Department suggested installing the 3669cc Rolls-Royce 20/25 engine in the Peregrine chassis. "To our great relief," recalled Robotham, "Royce accepted our lash-up as a basis for his final designs on 24th October, 1932". It also made production sense to have one engine serving two different models, albeit with the Bentley's being adapted via a crossflow head, »



**Evolved from the 3½ Litre was the new 4¼, shown here with Vanden Plas drophead coachwork**



**The Rolls-Royce takeover of Bentley inevitably meant the end of the road for the 8 Litre**



**The streamlined Embiricos Bentley was a one-off extensively tested by Rolls-Royce**

## BENTLEY CENTENARY POST-INDEPENDENCE YEARS

twin carburettors and a modified camshaft – enough, together with a few boy-racer touches like milled valve cover nuts, different filler cap and monogrammed 'B' floor mats, to give Bensport a character of its own.

### NO 'BLOODY THUMP'

With three cars shown to the press in September 1933 at the Royal Hotel, Ascot (double rooms 15 shillings, chauffeurs or servants eight 'bob' all in, and 'dogs permitted'), deliveries of the 3½ Litre began early in 1934. There was no doubt that the 'lash-up' had resulted in what P.G. Wodehouse would have called "an all-round good egg". Not over-large (typically 16 feet long by nearly 6 feet in width), it looked well-proportioned in most of the body styles that clothed it; and with 75mph in third and a 90mph maximum, it was up there with the Alvis Speed 20, Railton Straight Eight and the newly-introduced 3.3-litre Bugatti Type 57, to which the Bentley was closest in price. Economy was about average for the class too, at 16mpg.

Readily appealing as a sporting car with Rolls-Royce quality, the 3½ Litre sold well from the off, despite complaints from die-hard worshippers of the vintage Bentley's traditional 'bloody thump', who considered the



The Bentley Corniche was originally meant to be unveiled at the 1939 Earl's Court Motor Show

**“With three cars shown to the press in September 1933, deliveries of the 3½ Litre began early the following year”**

new car rather soft and refused to have anything to do with it. But the popular Brooklands racing driver Bira (actually Prince Birabongse of Siam, who drove the likes of MG Magnette, ERA and Delage on track) and his cousin Prince Chula set a good example, having no such objections as early customers.

No car is perfect, of course, as W.O. discovered on continental test runs in another of his sinecures as technical adviser to the managing director. He found its front-end chassis flexing to

be “unbearable on bad pave”, while wind resistance closed up the radiator shutters in fast cruising, causing overheating; and although the servo worked well, the brakes themselves faded alarmingly after extended use.

That flexing frame inflicted front axle tramp, forcing the adoption of Wilmot-Breeden Harmonic Stabiliser bumpers with lead weights at each end to damp out the tremors. Initially these blades were too flimsily attached, as marque dealer Jack Barclay found when his



Announced in September 1933, the Bentley 3½ Litre proved commercially successful

demonstration car's front bumper fell off, unsettling it enough to turn over. This wouldn't have happened with the Bugatti Type 57's stronger chassis and independent front suspension; in fact, Barrie Price, motoring author and restoration specialist in both marques, went so far as to say that the Bugatti's steering and roadholding were "vastly superior". Nevertheless, W.O. remained gracious about the car that bore his name but not his designer's input, describing it as "light and easy to handle", as well as having "the best gearbox – with synchromesh – that Rolls-Royce had ever produced". He went on to say: "All that it seriously lacked was independent suspension at the front, and really fade-free brakes".

Testing the 3½ Litre was to be W.O.'s swansong with Rolls-Royce. He had just completed his obligatory three-year 'sentence' with the company when, coinciding with his contract coming up for renewal, he was invited by Lagonda to be its technical director. The company was up for sale at that time, with (ironically) Rolls-Royce interested in buying it. But when Lagonda was sold instead to Lincoln's Inn solicitor Alan Good, W.O. saw it as his ticket out, joining the firm's design team at Staines and working on an improved 4½-litre Alvis and the new V12 engine. The offices may have been ramshackle, with W.O. dive-bombed by spiders from the leaking corrugated iron roof, but it was still a welcome new experience: "After the diversions and anxieties of Bentley Motors, the frustrations and politics of Rolls-Royce... I felt quite lightheaded with the sense of freedom". Not only that, W.O.'s work on the Lagonda V12 involved him in Le Mans again, with the two team cars achieving third and fourth place in 1939.

## BIGGER CAPACITY

As the 3½ Litre's production run continued, the usual increase in weight imposed by coachbuilders led to an upgrade in engine size in 1936. Although the new 4¼-litre engine was torquier, performance stayed about the same thanks to accumulated weight, and it was considered a slightly rougher unit than previously. But of greater concern by this time were reports of owners losing oil pressure and ruining their big ends on the new German autobahns, after prolonged spells of flat-out driving.

Treated reasonably, the Bentley's mechanicals were durable enough. At



Deliveries of the 'Standard Steel' MkVI began in October 1946



The R-Type of 1952-on was a development of the MkVI, with useful updates

Brooklands, cars could lap at 88mph in full touring trim and reach a maximum safe limit of 4500rpm (and 93mph) on the standard axle. Fine for the no-option nature of winding, single-carriageway British roads, and even on French *routes nationales*, where the presence of boxy little Rosengarts and Citroën *camionettes* overflowing with *haricots verts* interrupted maximum speed bursts. But on the Reich's autobahns, running at 95mph indefinitely was causing the revs to go to 5000 with oil temperatures exceeding 100°C. Hardly ideal when, in Barrie Price's opinion, the thickness of the white-metal big ends was already questionable, allied to a build-up of crankcase heat in an

engine of modest sump capacity.

The works' solution for intending autobahners was to offer a higher axle ratio. But once the owner returned to English road conditions, he'd then be complaining of having to change gear more often. Something had to be done to maintain the Bentley's reputation as one of the fastest touring cars on the road, said Robotham. So for 1938, not only was an overdrive 'box – a four-speeder with an indirect top – introduced for the standard 4¼ Litre, but serious thought was given to the production of a lighter, higher-performance model.

As it happened, a special order received by Rolls-Royce's Paris branch »

## BENTLEY CENTENARY POST-INDEPENDENCE YEARS

provided the ideal basis for a design study. It had come from wealthy Greek racing driver André Embiricos, who had asked for a lightweight two-door aerodynamic coupé. Walter Sleator, the agent, commissioned noted designer Georges Paulin to evolve a wind-cheating shape, to be constructed of Duralumin by French coachbuilder Pourtout. 'Le Streamline' was ready by January 1939, and though it caused twitchings among the Derby top brass, Robotham felt it would provide an excellent opportunity to show that Bentley was more than ready for Europe's fast new roads.

Embiricos obligingly put the car at the disposal of a Rolls-Royce team, who assessed it on various routes through France and Germany. Three hundredweight (152kg) lighter than the standard 4¼ Litre saloon, 'Le Streamline' devoured conventional *routes nationales* at an average 87mph, and managed 112mph for five minutes on a treacherously icy autobahn. Shortly after, Sleator took it around Monthéry and managed over 114 miles in the hour before returning the car to its owner, nicely run in. The Embiricos car then lived on, coming sixth in the 1949 Le Mans event – by which time it had 60,000 miles on its odometer.

### CORNICHE CALAMITY

The publicity generated by the Embiricos project prompted many enquiries for a production model. Using experience gained from 'Le Streamline',



Derby's Ivan Evernden was set to work on a concept named Corniche, in consultation with Georges Paulin and Parisian coachbuilder Van Vooren. It was scheduled for display at 1939's Earl's Court Motor Show alongside the new Bentley MkV, a much-improved 4¼ Litre featuring independent front suspension, whose chassis the Corniche shared in lightened form.

Robotham regretted the insistence on four doors for the concept: "When completed, the Corniche was nearer the standard Bentley than the Embiricos in weight. Nevertheless, it had a very

lively performance and a top speed of about 110mph". Aerodynamics again predominated, although the overall aesthetic effect this time was slightly bizarre – a mixture of contemporary French panache with a Detroit-style front end reminiscent of a Lincoln-Zephyr and a '39 Hudson.

Bizarre or not, plans were laid for production and in the summer of 1939 the first car was ready for continental trials in company with 'Big Bertha', a straight-eight Rolls-Royce limousine prototype. A critical time politically to be going abroad, but Robotham wanted to get in as much European testing as possible before the international situation worsened. Apart from throwing tyre treads at 110mph on the autobahn, the Corniche acquitted itself well, also proving that it could scale mountain roads free of fuel-vapour lock and descend without brake fade.

Fate then took a hand, although stories tend to differ at this point. One account has the Corniche twice suffering accident damage, culminating in the body having to come off for repair in France, the chassis being returned to England and the repaired body – whilst awaiting shipment – being destroyed by enemy action at the docks. Yet Robotham, one of those closest to the Corniche project, makes no mention of this in his memoirs. According to him, the 'Big Bertha' limousine crew completed their own test programme and set off for home, leaving Ivan Waller with the Corniche to collect new tyres

Among the coachbuilt R-Types was this Empress-style Freestone & Webb offering





The most advanced looking coachbuilt R-Types were the sensationally svelte Continentals

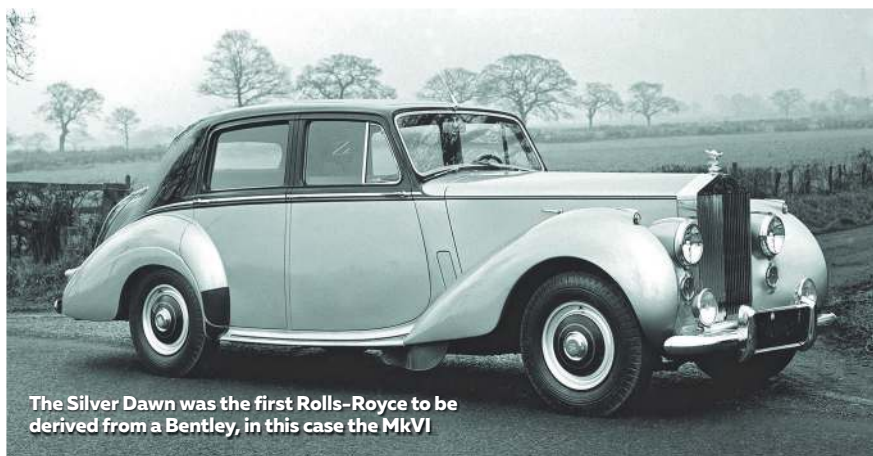
from Cannes airport and continue with high-speed trials. By the time Waller was instructed by Robotham to return, hostilities had arrived so fast that he had to leave the Corniche behind on the quayside before boarding the ferry at Dieppe. Shortly after, the RAC sent on the keys but not the car: it had sustained a direct hit from a bomb.

Whichever was the true account, the project was dead. The Corniche would be reinstated only in name, and then not until the Silver Shadow generation of two-door models inherited it in 1971.

## MkVI APPEAL

The Second World War obviously stifled Bentley's plans for 1940, with the Corniche stillborn and only eleven MkVs produced. Initially the Chassis Department – now relocated to Belper – busied itself with speculative proposals for a rationalised post-war range, including a small car and even a tractor. But priorities shifted to tank development until it was considered appropriate to resume car matters in 1944, concentrating then on the new Bentley MkVI.

The proposed MkVI used much MkV content, but with a shortened wheelbase and generally simplified throughout – “much the better for it”, opined Barrie Price – for easier production (newly transplanted to Crewe). The engine remained at 4257cc, but now specified an overhead-inlet and side-exhaust head, allowing a



The Silver Dawn was the first Rolls-Royce to be derived from a Bentley, in this case the MkVI

## “A special order received by Rolls-Royce’s Paris branch provided the ideal basis for a design study”

suitable combustion shape for good turbulence and smoothness. Departing from normal Rolls-Royce and Bentley practice, and anticipating austere peacetime years ahead with a declining coachbuilding industry, the car was offered with a single off-the-peg body produced by Pressed Steel at Cowley for finishing, trimming and mounting in the Crewe works (although chassis were still available for coachbuilt bodies for those who wanted them).

Known as the ‘Standard Steel’ Bentley, deliveries began in October 1946, with the Maharajah of Baroda

taking the first one. It was the right car at the right time, its understated but tasteful looks and unostentatious radiator providing well-heeled owners with a welcome anonymity in a more egalitarian-conscious post-war world. In appearance the car remained unchanged for six years, save for cutaway rear-wheel spats and chrome waist strips in September 1948, and scuttle vents and larger hubcaps from late 1951, by which time engine size was increased to 4566cc with a twin-exhaust system. This final MkVI was to be referred to retrospectively »

in the trade as the 'Big Bore, Small Boot' to distinguish it from the longer R-Type that arrived in October 1952.

The MkVI was well liked. It was the most rigidly-constructed British car of the period, could do over 90mph with ease, and the new gearbox designed for it was silky and precise – even with the export-only steering-column change (discounting the fact that one on a prototype jammed in second in France, obliging Robotham to rev his way back to Boulogne at 40mph). The car's worst enemy over time was rust in the rear body, sills and spot-welded sidelamp housings, while the by-pass oil filter system used up to 1951 could cause havoc with the main bearings. But the engines were so well designed, said Barrie Price, "that they remained amazingly smooth, even when the crankshaft was badly scored with bearings worn right through the thin-wall white-metal lining". And when the time did come for major overhaul, the convenient quick-release front wing and radiator

## **"The proposed MkVI used much MkV content, but with a shortened wheelbase and generally simplified throughout"**

assembly maximised accessibility.

Erstwhile Bentley Drivers Club president Stanley Sedgwick certainly loved his 1952 'Big Bore': "It was fast, safe, comfortable and a joy to drive; versatile, equally at home shopping, commuting, towing, touring and all-in-all just about the best compromise one could wish for".

### **ROLLS-ROYCE VERSION**

To satisfy export orders to countries such as the USA (where Bentley was less well-known), a Rolls-Royce Silver Dawn version was introduced in July 1949. This was more or less identical to the MkVI, save for the Rolls-Royce radiator and a column change; but acknowledging traditional Rolls-Royce

reserve, the twin SU carburettors were replaced by a single Stromberg, which Robotham felt "gave more consistent slow-running". The Dawn wasn't made available on the British market until October 1953, by which time it had adopted the R-Type's silhouette.

The 1952-55 R-Type itself was a further refinement of the MkVI brew, featuring a more graceful tail that added 7½ inches to the overall length and contributed another hundredweight (51kg) to the bulk, a new lightweight aluminium fuel tank notwithstanding. The dual-exhaust system was simplified, screen demisting improved and the spare wheel gained a profiled tray under the boot floor. It was the first Bentley to be offered with a four-speed Hydramatic gearbox, which



Bentley had an eye-catching presence at the 1953 Earl's Court Motor Show



**W.O. Bentley left Rolls-Royce to join Alvis, giving him a new-found sense of freedom**

proved generally trouble-free at the slight expense of fuel consumption and performance. However, the discriminating Price felt that without the manual version's heavy flywheel, the engine was slightly rougher and that "the tendency to jolt in the second-to-third gear upchange was never entirely eliminated".

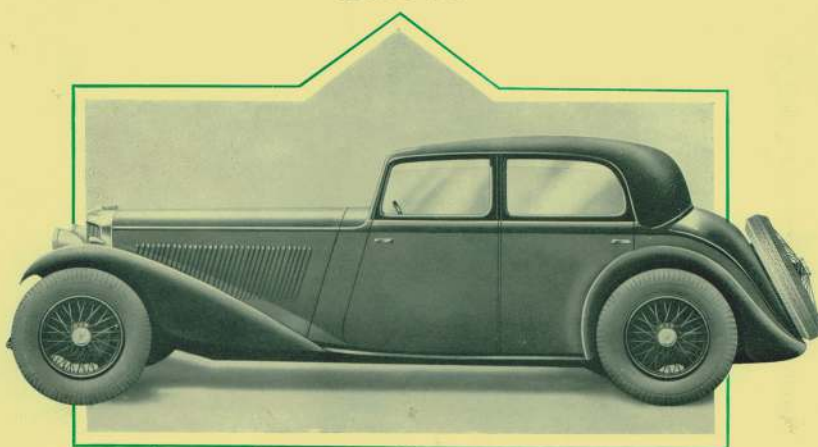
Be that as it may, the R-Type was one of the most handsome cars to come out of Crewe, alongside an even greater beauty of the period, the 1952-54 R-Type Mulliner Continental – the work of chief project engineer Ivan Evernden, with John Blatchley assisting. Although interpreted as a reborn Corniche, it was much closer in spirit to Embiricos car, albeit with more luxurious room for four in its two-door, fastback coupé body panelled in light alloy. A higher-compression head and higher final drive raised maximum speed to 117 mph, and it was supplemented by a Park Ward version in September 1954, when both models received the bigger 4887cc engine in advance of the S-series' and Silver Cloud's introduction the following April.

Automatic was also offered on the Continentals from late 1954; in which case, Price declared, you chose between the manual transmission juddering on take-off because of the higher gearing, or masking it with a system that didn't "suit the personality" of the car. But in the Mulliner Continental's original, purest form, *The Autocar* magazine struck the right note when it said:

**This advert for the 3½ Litre saloon described it as 'eminently suitable for touring'**



THE 3½ LITRE  
**BENTLEY**  
SALOON



Price £1,460 complete

**W**ITH its exceptionally attractive appearance and low overall height, this car appeals to those who require the maxi-

mum protection, whilst the sliding sunshine roof and commodious built-in luggage locker make it eminently suitable for touring.

*Please see over for further details.*

"This Bentley is a modern magic carpet which annihilates distance and delivers the occupants well-nigh as fresh as when they started. It is a car Britain may well be proud of, and is sure to add new lustre to the name it bears".

Taking 1955 as our cut-off point for this particular feature, some may argue that the post-war sharing of standard bodies with Rolls-Royce models had caused Bentley identity to suffer. Yet Bentleys continued to outnumber their Rolls-Royce clones significantly – thus maintaining more frequent

street presence – until well past the S1 stage. The tide only turned with the S2 of 1959-62, when short- and long-wheelbase standard Silver Cloud II production exceeded the Bentley's by 29 per cent. And for the next couple of decades, export policy and changing buying habits determined that the Rolls-Royce image flourished at the expense of Bentley's. Indeed, it wouldn't be until the arrival of the Mulsanne Turbo and its successors of the '80s that we would finally see a resurgence of the Bentley identity of old. ■

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# CAMARGUE: A TALE OF CONTROVERSY

With the Italian-styled Camargue having spent too long in the shadows (no pun intended), we take a look at its history and explain why it now deserves its time in the limelight

WORDS: SAM SKELTON PHOTOGRAPHY: KELSEY ARCHIVE

Search the internet for information on the Rolls-Royce Camargue and you won't find many positive opinions. You'll see that it had a starring role in the *Top Gear* book, *Crap Cars*, and you'll find various articles describing it as a lemon, as a mistake. In short, you won't find much praise. Yet, the Camargue is surely a car that deserves a more positive press,

particularly as one of Rolls-Royce's rarest models of the last half a century – with just over 500 examples sold between the model's debut in 1975 and its demise eleven years later.

The Camargue has always suffered at the hands of its critics primarily for three reasons. First, it was vastly expensive – and when the Corniche did a similar job at the same time, relatively few buyers were willing to pay the

extra. Second, the body was a little heavy handed to some eyes. And third, as so few drivers have experienced the joy that a good Camargue can bring, it's the screaming masses that seem to have the upper hand. Happily, however, the market has started to wake up to the Camargue, with values now strengthening as a result.

The Camargue project was initially developed as a replacement for





the Silver Shadow MPW two-door, a Silver Shadow-based coupé. But the company's financial difficulties and subsequent launch of the mildly updated Corniche proved one thing: if the newly rebadged Corniche could save the company from bankruptcy, there was life in the old car yet. The Camargue project was therefore repositioned as a range-topping personal car, to sit above the Corniche in the range and to give the company a halo model that could be built to maximise profit.

Named after a region of French marshland bordered by the Mediterranean, the Camargue was targeted at the kind of jetsetters who might have had a holiday home in Monaco, or for whom international travel was a way of life. The aeronautical world could offer Concorde, and Rolls-Royce presented the Camargue as precisely the kind of car in tune with that supersonic lifestyle.

You certainly needed a bank balance to match such a lifestyle if you were to afford a new Camargue, a model that cost £29,250 upon its launch in 1975 – at a time when the average wage was £72 per week and the average house cost a smidge under £13,000. Indeed, the Camargue's list price would have bought you a usefully-sized detached dwelling within the London commuter belt, such was its upmarket status.

## ITALIAN STYLING

It shouldn't be a surprise to learn that such an extravagant vehicle had its roots in a one-off project developed for the aristocracy. The Bentley T-series coupé created by Pininfarina in the mid-1960s for Lord Hanson was the spark for what became the Camargue project. That one-off design was finalised and shown at the Paris Motor Show of 1968, attracting the attention of a number of Rolls-Royce bigwigs in the process.

Pininfarina had accepted the commission well aware that it might lead to official work from Rolls-Royce to develop a new Continental; and when Rolls-Royce did approach the famed Italian styling house about a project of its own, the same stylist who had created the Lord Hanson car was set on the job. Paolo Martin was also involved in the design of the original Triumph Spitfire, the Lancia Monte Carlo and the Fiat 130 Coupé; and while elements of the Pininfarina

**Pininfarina created a one-off Bentley T-series coupé in the late 1960s**



## “Paolo Martin was also involved with the design of the Lancia Monte Carlo and Fiat 130 Coupé”

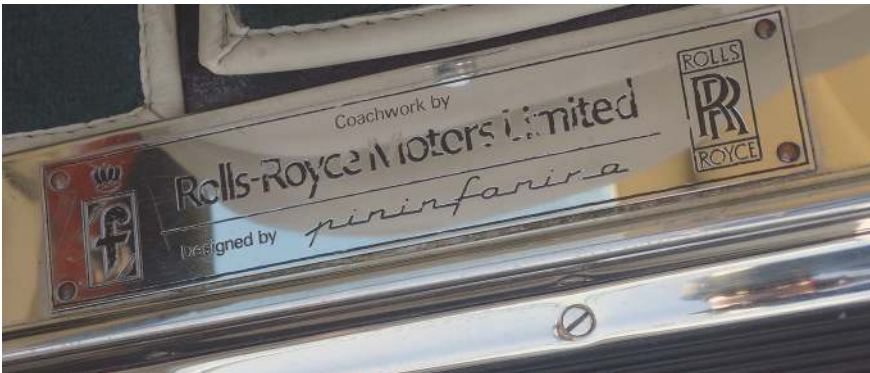
Bentley might have made it into the eventual Camargue, the big Fiat was equally influential upon the final design.

Unlike Rolls-Royce's internal styling department which prized traditionalism and retained imperial measurements, the Italian design house of Pininfarina reflected continental norms by using metric measurements on design drawings and blueprints. As a result, the Camargue became the first Rolls-Royce to be styled to metric proportions – a fact not lost on its detractors, who suggested that the size of the body was the result of confusion at Crewe between the centimetre and the inch! Other firsts for the Camargue included curved side glass; previous Rolls-Royces had retained

flat side windows, but Paolo Martin felt that a range topper should make concessions to contemporary norms.

Martin also inclined the Doric radiator grille forwards by seven degrees (the first time the famous facade had deviated from the vertical), as Pininfarina favoured a sporting stance. The rest of the body was familiar to students of the Fiat 130 Coupé, albeit scaled up to Rolls-Royce proportions. It was less fussy than the Silver Shadow bodysell, with slab sided flanks, wing tips that met the bonnet rather than rising above it, and a rear end that was elegant in its simplicity. On the face of it, the Camargue's 'shell had the potential for true beauty, but its size meant that much of the detail became »

## CLASSIC HISTORY ROLLS-ROYCE CAMARGUE



The dashboard design was unique to the Camargue



There was noticeably more space on board than in the Corniche

lost and the overall effect was a touch underwhelming to many onlookers.

The Rolls-Royce styling department was not impressed by the Camargue when bodies in white were first seen. The nose – likened by some to the pink Rolls-Royce used by Lady Penelope in *Thunderbirds* – had been modified last minute, with the grille assuming greater prominence and robbing it of its delicacy. The rear, meanwhile, had its own issues. It was described in Graham Hull's book *Inside the Rolls-Royce & Bentley Styling Department 1971-2001* as "suffering from bad posture". Its tail-down stance and narrow track made it look ungainly, "as if crushed by a great weight that the self-levelling suspension couldn't handle". Where a coupe should be svelte, the Camargue's external aesthetics left something to be desired.

Inside, however, was different, with the Camargue taking its styling cues from light aircraft rather than following the same pattern that traditional Rolls-Royce buyers expected. There was still walnut, but for safety reasons the veneer was backed with aluminium sheet. The instruments were fitted into black housings as per the average Cessna, and the seats had wider and sportier looking pleats more in the manner of Newport Pagnell than Crewe. The overall effect was rather special; the interior of the Camargue would have been perfect for a new flagship Bentley sports coupé, despite being officially only sold as a Rolls Royce.

Interestingly, the road-going Camargue prototypes all wore Bentley grilles in an effort to obfuscate the true nature of the car for any press photographers. A single Bentley Camargue was built in 1985 by special request, and was allocated a Bentley chassis number, while others have been converted to Bentley badging and grille design whilst retaining their Rolls-Royce numbers. Originally, the idea was to use the Camargue as the basis for the turbocharging plan – to create a super coupé in the manner of the old 'Blower' Bentleys – but low interest in the Camargue meant that the eventual Mulsanne was felt to be a safer bet as the basis for a range topper.

### FAMILIAR TECH

Under the skin the Camargue was little different from the Silver Shadow upon which it was based. The floorpan was shared, as were the 6.75-litre

**“The Camargue was notable for pioneering Rolls-Royce’s split-level air conditioning system”**



L-series V8 and GM Turbo Hydramatic 400 three-speed transmission, plus just about everything else down to the differential and suspension. One difference between Camargue and Shadow, however, was the lowering of the Camargue’s compression ratio to 8:1 (in place of the Silver Shadow’s 9.5:1), which meant that four-star petrol became an option where five-star wasn’t available.

A feature shared with later Corniche models and the aforementioned Mulsanne Turbo was the Camargue’s fitment of a Solex 4A1 four-barrel carburettor, a move that increased both power and torque. Although the figures were never officially released, the believed improvement was in the region of 10%, which would have given the car approximately 220bhp.

The Camargue certainly needed that extra power. It was a full ten percent heavier than the equivalent Silver Shadow saloon, carrying an extra 228kg in weight. This meant that despite the extra power, it was no quicker than the saloon which sired it; a top speed of 120mph and a 0-60mph time of 11.3 seconds were almost identical to the Silver Shadow thanks to the newcomer’s increased weight and frontal drag. (The rarity of the Solex carburettors and spares, plus problems with warped carburettor bases, has resulted in many Camargues being converted to the saloon’s twin SUs, causing

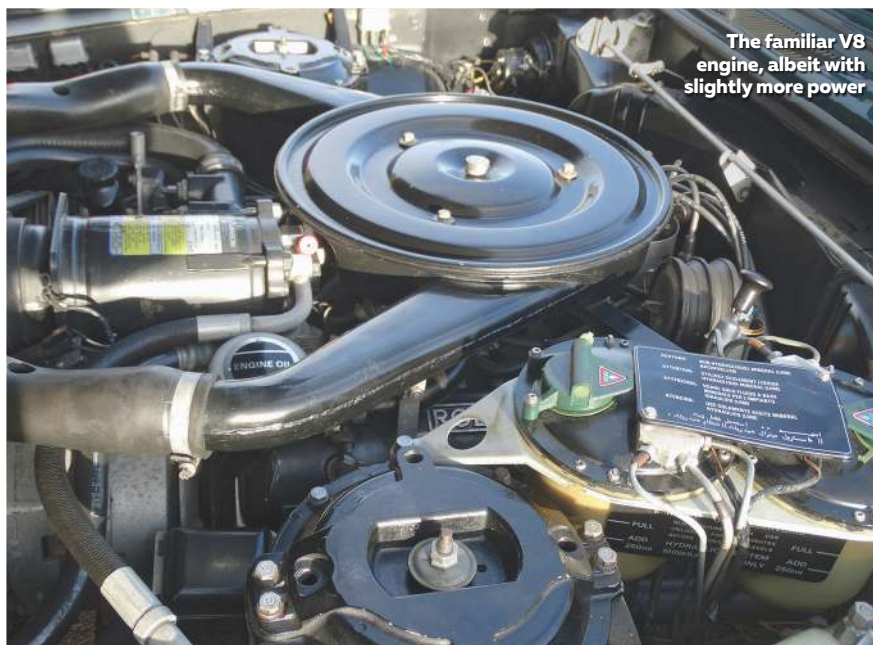
performance to suffer as a result.)

The Camargue was also notable for pioneering Rolls-Royce’s split-level air conditioning system, which had been in development for a full eight years. The system boasted the power of thirty domestic fridges and was able to split the air temperature by level. Those who wanted cold faces and warm feet rejoiced; and while such systems are commonplace now, that fitted to the Camargue was the first automotive application of its type. The same

system later made it into the saloon models via the Silver Shadow II of 1977, and continued without significant change into the Silver Spirit of 1980-on.

## **PRESS REACTION**

At its press launch, the Camargue left some journalists perplexed, not least those from *Motor Sport* magazine: “Closer examination of the assembled cars greatly disappointed us, for rumours of specification and price »



**The familiar V8 engine, albeit with slightly more power**

## CLASSIC HISTORY ROLLS-ROYCE CAMARGUE

had led us to expect a totally new and advanced car. Instead we found that the monocoque shell of this two-door saloon is the only new thing about it, apart from a brilliant, automatic, two-level air-conditioning system, which in any case will eventually be fitted to the

other models in the Rolls-Royce range. So what is this grossly expensive motor car all about apart from the exclusivity which its price and low production rate will ensure? The advantages over and above the Corniche are quickly enumerated: that automatic air-

conditioning (which, as we've said, will eventually be incorporated in all Rolls-Royces), more interior space, including an 8.5-inch increase in rear seat width compared with the Corniche, and an extra 3 cu.ft. of luggage capacity to give an enormous 25 cu.ft. total."

Fortunately, the press were pleased with how the car drove, citing the better weight distribution afforded by its Pininfarina-designed body and the well-balanced if slightly light power steering. There was no initial understeer, and all who drove the Camargue were impressed by its poise and balance for a car so big and potentially unwieldy. Noise issues caused by stones kicked up into the rear wheelarches and wind noise around the mirrors were felt to be jarring in a car worth the same as five Jaguar XJ12s, however, while the engine was considered intrusive when compared to the big Browns Lane cat.

*Motor Sport* concluded with the assumption that while it might not sell strongly in the UK, the Camargue would certainly export well – a view that was shared with Rolls-Royce itself, which projected 70% export sales compared with 55% for the standard saloons. The company was bullish about the way the world would take to the car, taking the unheard-of step of raising the price for the US market rather than reducing it in line with the sterling/dollar relationship.

The \$15,000 hike was justified by the need to adapt Camargues to meet US regulations for safety and pollution, though Rolls-Royce certainly knew its market. The Camargue could generate profit for the company, and it exploited this in markets where finances flowed more freely. Currency depreciations in the wake of a recession led to large price hikes during the Camargue's life span, which affected sales – as did the fact that the car had been launched in between two global energy crises.

On the Camargue's press launch in Sicily, Rolls-Royce Motors' managing director David Plastow stated: "During the last couple of years we have seen the secondhand prices of Corniche coachbuilt cars reach figures in excess of £20,000, and the clear indication was that the world's motor market would accept an additional coachbuilt Rolls-Royce provided that it represented in shape and exclusivity a significant advance upon the present coachbuilt cars. Our customers expect the best and they are prepared to pay for it. They are also paying for



Rolls-Royce managing director David Plastow was proud of the new Camargue

exclusivity, and thus the Camargue will be coachbuilt in very limited numbers – one per week to start with, rising to two per week by next year.”

## CUSTOM CREATIONS

It’s perhaps not surprising to learn that clients who favoured customised Rolls-Royces soon took to the Camargue, with a series of cars built and trimmed in ways that would have caused traditionalists at Crewe to suffer internal haemorrhaging. These ranged from the mild to the wild, with companies such as Hooper also quick to seize upon the Camargue as the basis for the ultimate in personal cars. Front spoilers, Parkertex velour trim and additional toys such as televisions were prominent additions to a number of examples.

One noteworthy Hooper conversion was a car known as the Beau Rivage, commissioned and built by Hooper itself for the 1983 Geneva Motor Show. This car was unique and is reputed to have been sold within two hours of the show doors opening. Finished in two-tone Magnolia and Walnut, the interior was finished in Nuella Tan leather with Deep Fawn carpets. Among its additional equipment were a redesigned centre console and a television and VCR, while aspects of the trim were colour coded. The car is believed to survive in enthusiast hands.

Rather bizarrely, one Camargue has even been converted to a hunting vehicle, with cut down flanks, no doors and a raised ride height for when out on safari. By order of an Arabian aristocrat, Franco Sbarro created the machine, featuring an electrically retractable windscreen among its many hunting-related accessories.

The most desirable series Camargues are the special edition models, which began with the Anniversary. A total of 212 Rolls-Royces were completed to commemorate 75 years of the marque in 1979, with each car featuring red badge wording in place of black, plus a plaque on the inside of the glovebox lid. Rolls-Royce had originally intended to use only Silver Shadow saloons as the basis for the Anniversary, but in the end two particularly special examples were built – one based on a Silver Wraith, the other on a Camargue. Registered ONM 265V, this unique car was finished in the one-off shade of Coronation Blue Fire Mist.

The Camargue was also made



The Camargue Beau Rivage was built by Hooper



The retractable hardtop conversion by Niko-Michael Coachworks

## “Rolls-Royce projected 70% export sales for the Camargue, compared with 55% for the standard saloons”

available in Limited Edition guise, of which just twelve were built. Finished in white with a matching Everflex roof, the Camargue Limited Edition models all featured red leather with red and white trim, colour-coded bumpers and alloy wheels. The Limited Edition batch was completed in 1986, intended to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Rolls-Royce sales in the United States, and was sold exclusively in America. These were the only Camargues to be sold with a name badge – which denoted them as Camargue Limiteds – and were the last twelve Camargues produced. One was subsequently converted by Niko-Michael Coachworks of Port Washington, New York,

into a retractable hardtop.

Interest in the Camargue has risen significantly in the last decade, with time and exposure showing it to be the elegant and timeless piece of design it truly is, rather than the gauche irrelevance that so many onlookers have accused it of being over the years. While values continue to climb, however, it is still one of the most accessible of Rolls-Royce’s most exclusive personal models. Camargues don’t often come to market, but when they do you’ll find that between £50,000 and £75,000 is still enough to secure what is arguably the most sporting of all Rolls-Royces assembled at Crewe. ■

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are you a fan of the Camargue, or do you feel that it still deserves to be seen as an ‘outsider’ compared with other Rolls-Royce classics? Is the car’s initial controversy part of its appeal, or do you prefer your coachbuilt models to be rather more traditional? Whatever your views on the Camargue, drop us a line and we’ll publish a selection of responses next time. Write to us at: [rrb.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:rrb.ed@kelsey.co.uk).

# • YOUR SHOUT •

**Got something to say about anything Rolls-Royce or Bentley related? Then we want to hear it!**

Send an email to [rrb.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:rrb.ed@kelsey.co.uk) or write to: The Editor, *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, Kelsey Media, Cudham Tithe Barn, Berry's Hill, Cudham, Kent TN16 3AG



## **CAMARGUE QUESTION**

I would like to say how much I enjoy each issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*. In the January/February 2019 issue I particularly enjoyed the photographs of the RROC's annual meet, but I have a favour to ask regarding the photograph of the Rolls-Royce Camargue that was on display.

Would it be possible to get a colour print of that car? The Camargue has always been my favourite Rolls-Royce, and I hope that you do a feature on it in a future issue of the magazine. Any help with my request would be greatly appreciated.

**David Boos**  
California

***Unfortunately we don't offer colour prints, David. However, I hope you enjoy this issue's feature on the Camargue – Ed.***



## **ROYAL BENTLEY**

I thought you might be interested in these photographs of one of the royal Bentleys that I took some years ago at Jack Barclay Nine Elms. I assume that the car had just been serviced. If you want to use them in *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, I'm not bothered about copyright – so do what you want with them.

**Giles Usher**  
Via email

***Great to see the Bentley State Limousine in all its glory, Giles. Many thanks for sharing your photographs – Ed.***

## **AUSTRIAN QUERY**

For some time now, I've been thinking about buying a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, SZ or SY series. Unfortunately, in your very successful magazine there is only information about (restoration) workshops in the UK, and I'd be very interested in hearing about any that are outside the UK – for example, in Austria. Thank you for any help that you can offer.

**Robert Kaltenbach**  
Via email

***I'm afraid we don't have any details of classic Rolls-Royce and Bentley specialists in Austria, Robert. If any readers can recommend a particular company there, do let us know – Ed.***

## IN PRAISE OF RAY

I am a subscriber to *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver* magazine and look forward to receiving each issue. I read with interest the article in the March/April 2019 issue concerning Martin Buckley's Silver Cloud II adventures and the involvement of Ray Hillier (of Hillier Hill) in assisting with the purchase of 54 AGF, a vehicle of which Mr Buckley is obviously very proud.

I want to share own my experience of Ray Hillier with you. About 18 months ago, I purchased (sight-unseen and following an exchange of emails) a 1995 Bentley Turbo S. Ray Hillier assisted me with pre-purchase inspections and the vehicle has been with him at Olney ever since. I finally visited my Bentley in early January of this year.

Since my purchase, I have corresponded with Ray at some length, commissioned various jobs of work (some big, some small) and the vehicle

is now in exceptionally fine condition. I should add that the car was in very good condition when it was purchased. At present, I'm content to leave it in England for use when my wife and I visit.

The real purpose of this letter is to record my delight that old fashioned professionals of Ray Hillier's ilk are still to be found. Ray's correspondence has been formal, unfailingly polite and informative, and his involvement with my vehicle has been proactive in a very desirable fashion. Unfortunately, after many years of collectable and classic car ownership in Australia, I have only encountered one other expert with Ray Hillier's focused dedication to client and customer service, and he is the man who services my Bentley Continental in Sydney.

I suspect Ray Hillier would be embarrassed to know that I have written to you in these terms. Having met him earlier this year, he struck me as a very humble, self-effacing



gentleman. The readers of your magazine might be interested in the fact that an aficionado living 12,000 miles away on the other side of the globe could so successfully purchase and own a delightful classic with the assistance of someone like Mr Hillier.

**Jack Pappas**  
Via email

## MEMORIES OF TICKFORD

I was fascinated to see the Hooper Limousine (March/April 2019 issue) based just a few miles from where I live. Why? Because I used to manage the coachbuilding division of Aston Martin Tickford and led the team of highly-skilled craftsmen who carried out all the work on extending the vehicle for Hooper. I even applied the first cut to a brand new Silver Spur!

The biggest challenge was making a completely new steel roof by hand to provide the elegant roofline and additional headroom. It has brought back fond memories of the brilliant team I had, and particularly reminds me of working with George

Moseley who lofted the roofline in the traditional manner. Best of all, we were able to join it back together and conduct torsional rigidity testing, which confirmed that all the comfort and integrity of the standard car had been retained.

We built many bespoke Aston Martins, Lagonda limousines, Mercedes-Benz limousines and other fine cars, but the pair of Rolls-Royce limousines for Hooper and the Sultan of Brunei was probably the most demanding! Thank you for reminding me.

**Nigel Shepherd**  
Via email



## HAPPY READER

I have just received the January/February 2019 issue of *Rolls Royce & Bentley Driver* and was absolutely thrilled that my 1956 Bentley S1 was featured in the Personal Choice section. This has made my day more than you can know! Even though she is a restoration project, it means a great deal to me to have her in your outstanding publication.

I just wanted to send you an email and thank you so very much for your communications and inclusion

of my car. I look forward to each issue, as it is the best automotive magazine to be found. Please continue the incredible work.

**Jeff Kelley**  
Oklahoma

**We were delighted to include your Bentley, Jeff. If other readers fancy having their cars featured in our Personal Choice section, find out how on Page 81 – Ed.**



# MEMBERSHIP EXTREMES

The RREC probably boasts a broader range of members' ages than most car clubs – a fact that's celebrated via these two fascinating examples



Teenager Matthew John acquired his Rolls-Royce 20/25 (GBT32) when he was just 13 years old



Matthew's 20/25 chassis is now complete, drawing plenty of attention at the RREC Annual Rally

One of the really great things about the RREC is its diversity of membership, with almost 8000 enthusiasts brought together by a common interest and love for the cars. It's a worldwide community with an 80-year age range – and there is no such thing as a typical member.

Take teenager Matthew John, for example. He was just 13 when he asked his parents whether he could buy an old car to work on. It took Matthew five months to find his Rolls-Royce 20/25, advertised on eBay and in need of total restoration – and six years and thousands of hours later, the chassis is now close to perfection. It was exhibited at the RREC Annual Rally in 2018, where the scores of friends and

mentors Matthew has gained through the club were able to admire his work, which many of them had advised on through the online technical forum without ever having seen the car.

Once having joined the club, RREC members tend to be members for life. Just one example from the other end of the spectrum is Noel McIntosh-Cobh. Graduate engineer Noel placed a wanted ad in *The Times* on December 1st, 1967, offering a good home to an old Rolls-Royce and was rewarded ten days later with the offer of a then 35-year-old car. Noel christened the car Josephine and joined the RREC, marking the beginning of a life-long classic motoring adventure that has taken them both around the world and on to Australia, where he

and his family now live. Last October, Noel celebrated 50 years of unbroken RREC membership – an achievement that is recognised by being awarded an engraved lapel badge by the board and given free membership henceforth.

That's a great achievement, of course, but Noel is by no means alone. There are at least 71 other club members who have passed the 50-year milestone, with some headed for 60 years, who have been members from the very early days. There are around 350 members boasting 40 or more years of service, and around 4000 memberships standing at ten years or more. Almost 700 new people joined the club in 2018, and an amazing 127 new members were welcomed in the first two months of 2019 alone.

The age of cars in the RREC ranges from more than 110 years old (with 326 Silver Ghosts owned by members) right up to brand new examples, with every model represented in between. Far and away the most popular are the Silver Shadow and Silver Spirit based models, with almost 1800 of each, while the most exclusive are the Phantom IV, V and VI – with just 87 examples across all three versions.

Even more remarkable is the global nature of the RREC. UK membership is divided into 18 areas with a further 23 overseas sections. Total membership is based in more than 60 countries and it's not uncommon to have to manually add a previously unregistered country to the pull-down list in the membership database. ■



Australia-based Noel McIntosh-Cohn has been a club member for 50 years with his 1936 Derby Bentley





THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB FOR  
**ROLLS-ROYCE  
& BENTLEY**  
ENTHUSIASTS

THE RREC WELCOMES ALL ROLLS-ROYCE AND BENTLEY ENTHUSIASTS TO THE

# Annual Rally & Concours d'Elegance

Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire

21-23 June 2019



No need to pre-book\*, simply come along and enjoy a fantastic weekend among fellow enthusiasts.

**Full weekend (Fri-Sun)**  
£50.00 per car  
**Saturday OR Sunday Only**  
£30.00 per car

*\*RREC members should pre-book via The Hunt House as normal.*

**TRADE STANDS • ENTERTAINMENT • SEMINARS**



# CONCOURS COUNTDOWN

The Bentley Drivers Club is looking to achieve the world's largest ever gathering of Bentleys to commemorate the marque's centenary at this year's Concours d'Elegance

The Concours d'Elegance, one of the blue riband events of the Bentley Drivers Club's annual social calendar, is just a few short months away – and this year it will celebrate Bentley Motors' centenary with an extra-special event in the historic surroundings of Blenheim Palace.

Tagged '1001 Bentleys at Blenheim', the BDC is hoping to attract a world-record gathering of Bentleys – owned by both club members and non-members – to the Oxfordshire venue in a bid to commemorate the marque's '100 Extraordinary Years'. This year's Concours d'Elegance – which takes place on Sunday 8th September – will have 18 trophies up for grabs in the Concours, Patina and Inter-Regional Challenge classes, as well as a magnificent Exhibition Class display of Bentleys from all decades. There will also be an array of trade stands, a club shop and a W.O. Bentley Memorial Foundation marquee.

Held in association with the internationally renowned Salon Privé event, the Concours d'Elegance will occupy the whole area on the North Lawn (lake side) of the palace. Concours d'Elegance visitors will also be able to see the Salon Privé supercar display and have exclusive access to the Salon Privé closed area on the South Lawn Enclosure.

"Our Concours d'Elegance this year is a special, one-off occasion designed to fittingly celebrate Bentley Motors' centenary," explains Nick Wilkes, BDC's general manager. "We have been able to hold this historic event at Blenheim Palace thanks to the help of the Salon Privé organisers, and it offers us the extremely exciting opportunity to bring together the largest ever gathering of Bentleys against the backdrop of one of Britain's finest palaces. Our goal is 1001 Bentleys, but the more the merrier!"

Visitors planning to attend the Concours d'Elegance can take advantage of five ticket pricing options, which also cover entry to the Salon Privé lawns and exhibits,




The BDC is hoping to attract a world-record gathering of Bentleys to Blenheim Palace

as well as the BDC's pre-event gala dinner. These ticket prices range from £50 to £445 and can be purchased online from Salon Privé at [www.salonpriveconcours.com/bentley-owners](http://www.salonpriveconcours.com/bentley-owners). More details on the Concours d'Elegance can be found on the BDC website: [www.bdcl.org/event/concours](http://www.bdcl.org/event/concours).




Meanwhile, the BDC's Competitions Committee is hard at work preparing for the Annual Race Day on Saturday 3rd August. It's the club's 71st consecutive race meeting to be held at Silverstone, which this year is set to feature a homage to the iconic 3 Litre model along with the usual Bentley scratch and handicap races, plus the now traditional lunchtime track parade of Bentleys. The Friday will feature a Touring Assembly from the BDC's Wroton clubhouse to

Silverstone in time for an evening paddock party, to which competitors, marshals and officials are invited.

Since the last issue, the BDC's two-week Centenary Extraordinary Drive has taken place, starting at the Queen Mother's Castle of Mey on the north coast of Scotland and finishing with a magnificent formal dinner in the White Tower at the Tower of London. What was hailed as the 'grandest of all grand tours' travelled via the Highlands and islands to Edinburgh, York, Crewe, the Cotswolds and London, visiting such famous locations en route as the Royal Yacht Britannia, the National Railway Museum, Bentley Motors, Sudeley Castle and, of course, the Tower of London – with a host of fantastic drives and salubrious dining locations lighting up the itinerary. ■



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# CELEBRATING HISTORY

One of the board members of the US-based Rolls-Royce Foundation tells us about its aims and successes, as well as its rather impressive collection of classics

The Rolls-Royce Foundation was organised as a US educational foundation in 1978, with the idea for such a group having been discussed for several years. We are based in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, in our own building next to the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club headquarters. Our mission is to help educate the general public, as well as enthusiasts, restorers and mechanics about the history of Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars, especially in America.

The foundation has extensive archives concerning Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars, as well as the remaining archives from the Springfield,

Massachusetts factory of Rolls-Royce of America. In addition, we have a very large collection of chassis cards from Springfield and from the New York service facility, which later became the J.S. Inskip dealership. These records include a great deal of information about Brewster-bodied and later Inskip-bodied cars, and the cards have been kept up to date ever since Inskip gave them to us in 1969. We also have copies of the English factory's chassis cards and other records of these cars. The foundation provides a reference service via these records, and gets enquiries from owners of cars several times a week. Needless to

say, these efforts can be fascinating.

We have an excellent museum at our headquarters, where we usually have about twenty donated Rolls-Royces and Bentleys on display. So far they range from a Springfield Phantom I to a very late Silver Spur among the Rolls-Royces, while the Bentleys go from a 3½ Litre Sedan Coupe by Hooper to a late-model Mulsanne. We also have a pre-production prototype Phantom spaceframe from about 2003, and we're keen to extend these collections both backwards and forwards in the future.

A major donation from Presley Blake some time ago comprised the original paintings by Melbourne Brindle that he used in his book, *Twenty Silver Ghosts*. We have just finished building a gallery room at the foundation for the paintings, where they will be on view permanently. Our educational efforts include giving tours of the museum to the general public and to school groups, supporting both educational programs and scholarships in colleges across the country, and educational seminars on many different subjects. We will shortly complete a series of seminars on rebuilding and installing the engine of a one-off 25/30 coupe, and we continue to offer seminars on servicing post-war cars.

We show cars from our collections at concours d'elegance and other events, mainly in the mid-Atlantic states. Recently we lent one of our Bentleys to a distinguished exhibit at the Simeone Collection in Philadelphia on '100 Years of Bentley'. We work closely with both the Sir Henry Royce Foundation and the W.O. Bentley Memorial Foundation, frequently exchanging information and sharing research enquiries with both groups.

We plan to reach out more in the future, extending our efforts to include participation in other clubs' activities across North America – and we cordially invite all readers to visit us and avail themselves of our collections and services. You can find out more at: [www.rollsroycefoundation.org](http://www.rollsroycefoundation.org). ■



The on-site museum usually has around twenty donated classics on display



The foundation's Pennsylvania-based HQ boasts its own workshop facilities

# ROLLS ROYCE

## F o u n d a t i o n :

### A Few Goals of the Rolls-Royce Foundation:

- Digital archiving of historical & factory records
- Educational museum
- Scholarship endowments for vintage vehicle restoration & automotive technology programs at institutions of higher education
- Historical information is available by individual chassis request.

“Dedicated to preserve and promote the heritage of Rolls-Royce and Bentley motorcars”

The Rolls-Royce Foundation is a separate 501(c)(3) non profit organization from the RROC and can be contacted at  
189 Hempt Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

[rrfoundation@comcast.net](mailto:rrfoundation@comcast.net)

717.795.9400

[www.rollsroycefoundation.org](http://www.rollsroycefoundation.org)



# PERSONAL CHOICE

Here at *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*, we invite readers to share photographs and stories of their much-loved cars. Check out these new arrivals...

## 1990 ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER SPUR II MULLINER PARK WARD

**OWNER:** ANDREW H. DIEM

Be careful what you wish for as it might become true... and you could end up happier than you ever imagined. In 2005, accompanied by my fellow chairman emeritus of the Chesapeake Region of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club – the late Dick Bull – we drove his 1982 Silver Spur to the club's Annual Meet in Greenwich, Connecticut. As the owner of a long-wheelbase Silver Cloud I and a Corniche II, I had never before experienced the comfort and 'waffability' of a Spur for a long road trip.

While I was on the show field at Greenwich, I saw a very special 1990 Silver Spur II Mulliner Park Ward – and I was totally taken aback by this spectacular motor car. The owner was kind enough to give me some

background on the Silver Spur and allowed me to take photographs. I learned that it was one of just 25 limited-edition examples built in 1990 and sent to the USA. I then began the long search for one of my own.

I saw that same special Spur again at the Annual Meet of 2007 (in Stevenson, Washington), albeit in the hands of another owner. The new custodian filled me in on more of the details of the car and I became increasingly convinced that I wanted to find one of these beautiful Silver Spur II automobiles. With many other things going on in my life, however, the thought of finding one wasn't my highest priority, and so the story moves forward to 2011 – when I started my search in earnest.

Following several leads that did

not materialise, I found the example you see here (chassis number SCAZNOD1LCX3258) in Florida. After discussions with several club members who knew the car, as well as my mechanical expert Ted Stern, an arrangement was finalised. All that remained was to have the Rolls-Royce delivered to me via an enclosed trailer.

The Silver Spur – now known by its license plate CLARET – was originally specially ordered and owned by a philanthropist family in Palm Beach, and was used primarily for social functions. When it was delivered to me, the odometer showed just 9690 original miles – and the condition verified that mileage. It still required some routine maintenance, however, so as to minimise the potential



This special Silver Spur II is one of just 25 built for the USA

The CLARET license plate is Andrew's finishing touch



for 'failure to proceed' moments under my new ownership.

My dear friend and retired maven of Rolls-Royce motor cars, Ted Sterne, spent time teaching me about the uniqueness of the Silver Spur II's mechanics and its electronics. This second series of SZ cars was the first to utilise the electronic adaptive damping automatic ride control, as well as the first to employ a number of Electronic Control Units (ECUs) together with a Digital Instrument Panel (DIP). After attending his seminar at the 2012 Annual Meet, I learned that John Palma of Palma's Automotive does an excellent job of rebuilding a number of the required ECUs that may need replacing on second-series SZ series cars.

## SPECIAL EDITION

While looking for 'Claret', my homework turned up interesting details about this series of motor car. The 1990 base price of the standard Silver Spur II in the USA, for example, was in excess of \$165,000, but the Mulliner Park Ward fitments added another \$50,000-plus. The first striking feature about the Mulliner Park Ward edition is its wine-red Bordeaux paintwork; and as a wine lover, I know

that the English refer to Bordeaux as claret, hence the CLARET license plate.

The Everflex roof covering was a deleted feature, and bright stainless steel trim pieces were added to the entire length of the door sills. On the rear luggage compartment, a distinctive badge stating 'Silver Spur II Mulliner Park Ward' was applied. The interior struck me as particularly impressive, with the wood veneer used on all the door panels being American walnut quartered in the traditional manner to create magnificent patterns. (As an architect, I know the effort involved in creating such 'book matched' folio-sized craftsmanship.) The right-hand rear seat picnic table came complete with a cedar-lined cigar box and cigar cutter, a wine and champagne opener and a humidor. The left-hand picnic table contained a baize-lined storage compartment complete with two decks of Rolls-Royce playing cards.

On-board special amenities for the rear area included illuminated cocktail cabinets (with four cut-glass tumblers and crystal decanters with MPW monograms) fitted to the backs of the front seats. Between the rear seats, the designers placed an illuminated refrigerator large enough to hold two one-litre bottles of chilled

refreshment (currently champagne), with the compressor for the fridge being placed discretely in the side of the luggage compartment.

Two telephones were also fitted in the car (one for the front seat passengers and one for the rear), though these are no longer in use. It was an unusual feature in 1990 to have one phone in an automobile, let alone two! There is a veneered pull-down tray above the rear seat telephone used for jotting notes with the specially-designed pad and pen.

The Connolly hide used throughout is in Magnolia, nicely set off by the maroon leather piping. The glovebox handbook pouch was made in special matching Magnolia leather and had a silver R-R motif. The glovebox door retained a recessed plaque attesting to the limited edition of this motor car, with a special number for each example - mine being number eleven in a series of 25.

I recently had the opportunity of a brief ride in the rear compartment of my Rolls-Royce to experience the ultimate way to travel. Next on my wish list will be to have a chauffeur able to embark upon a long trip, so I may finally fully experience those rear compartment goodies... ■

## 1991 ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER SPIRIT II

OWNER: LEE JONES

Ever since I got my first toy car (a blue Silver Shadow MPW two-door) at the age of about six, I knew that I wanted to own the real thing. It was a feeling that grew stronger when my mother worked for a lovely guy who owned a Silver Shadow in Caribbean Blue, which was followed by a Silver Shadow II in Willow Gold. All through my schooldays, I'd sit in the library and lust over a book going by the name of *Rolls-Royce: Seven Decades of Descriptions, Reports & Road Tests by Autocar*, and my friends would test my knowledge. I had Rolls-Royce posters on the wall of my bedroom, and every car show I went to saw me

heading straight for the Rolls-Royces.

I wrote to Rolls-Royce to apply for an apprenticeship in around 1981; by the time I left school with not great grades, however, there were 3.8 million people unemployed, and so unfortunately I wasn't able to join the company's Veneer Department. Instead I went into building, made some money and bought Ford Granadas... but still I longed for a Rolls-Royce. For my wedding, I even hired a Silver Shadow II as a self-drive for a week, something that really made my wedding day. Many times since, I have saved enough money to buy my own example, only for something to come along

that meant I had to spend it again.

Still though, the dream stayed alive – until finally, after 44 years of waiting and by then having turned fifty years of age, I decided it was a case of 'now or never'. I couldn't afford to invest £20,000 in one, even though that's £15,000 less than I spent on my Skoda; but I decided to spend what I could afford in the hope that the car would be kind to me. I finally achieved my lifetime's ambition to own the best car in the world and to have my place in the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club.

Waiting a long time to acquire such a car gave me considerable knowledge of both what I wanted and





what faults to look for. I completed my own inspections (despite all the advice not to do so) and acquired this Silver Spirit II in September 2018 from a private owner in Cornwall. Having previously looked at over twenty Silver Shadow and Silver Spirit I and II cars, this was by far the best I'd seen in the £8000-15,000 price range – and that included a number of more expensive examples from reputable dealers.

It's a very different car to drive compared with an early Silver Spirit. It has an improved interior (with a notable change to both the wood veneers and the dashboard layout) and also comes with better brakes and steering, plus an 'adaptive ride' feature that continually adjusts the dampers on all four corners, ensuring passengers get to enjoy the most stable and 'wafting' of experiences.

Originally purchased from Jack Barclay's of London in 1991, the car was maintained by them and H.R. Owen for much of its life, with its latter years seeing it serviced and looked after by specialists. Work carried out to the Rolls-Royce since I acquired it includes a full service, a set of brand new Avon Turbospeed tyres and a new DAB radio and speakers. I've also repaired the previously faulty electric windows, have investigated various electrical gremlins and have thoroughly cleaned the leather.

My Silver Spirit II is obviously not perfect, but it's in pretty good order for its age and the 104,000 miles that it's travelled. These cars love to be driven, and low-mileage cars that have sat idle most of their lives can often throw up innumerable challenges, despite being cosmetically superior. Maintenance is a must but is expensive, and so far I've spent over £3000 since buying the car.

My Rolls-Royce has had a paint job at some point, and the wheelarches have been repaired – but it will still



The already tidy interior is due for some minor improvements

need more work in order to improve it in the future. As and when funds allow, I'm planning to remove the dents in the bodywork, restore the paintwork on the front nearside wing, repair the damage to the leather seats and door cards, and resolve an intermittent start issue.

I always think that you don't really

own a Rolls-Royce; it merely remains in your tenure for a while, to preserve before bestowing it on to the next lucky owner. Meanwhile, if any of your readers know how to prepare and spray paint, and could help me with a paint job on the nearside wing for a reasonable price, I would love to hear from them.... ■

## SHOW US YOUR PRIDE AND JOY

If you fancy seeing your own Rolls-Royce or Bentley within these pages, it couldn't be easier! We're interested in any model of any age – and even its condition isn't important, as we're just as keen to see ongoing projects as we are potential prize-winners. All you need to do is email us a small selection of

good quality jpeg images – and we'll do the rest. Within your email, don't forget to tell us a bit of history about your car, details of any work carried out, or perhaps your future plans for it. The more information, the better!

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# FROM THE ARCHIVES

We take a look at some of the most fascinating, most innovative and most successful Rolls-Royce and Bentley models via an array of period brochures, adverts and images

WORDS: PAUL GUINNESS



## SHEER QUALITY

This fittingly high-quality brochure was issued by Rolls-Royce in 1978, packed with information about the history of this illustrious marque, as well as detailing the quality and levels of craftsmanship that went into producing every car. Even the Connolly hide used by Rolls-Royce was specifically sourced for the company: "The skins originate in Scandinavia and

Northern Europe where a relative absence of barbed wire and insect pests produces the unblemished quality which alone is acceptable".

The brochure's copywriters were equally ebullient when it came to describing the choice of veneers used by Rolls-Royce: "What Hatton Gardens or Antwerp are to diamonds, Milan is to fine veneers. So it is that experts travel each

year to buy veneer. The quantity they want is large enough to cover a football pitch twice over. The quality they demand is the best".

The front cover of the brochure featured an atmospheric shot of the Spirit of Ecstasy, while Page 7 (also shown here) offered the latest Corniche Convertible – in this case an American-spec car with its hood down.

## BENTLEY'S BEST VALUE

The all-model Bentley brochure of 1988 inevitably contained full details of the Continental (as the Bentley version of the Corniche was known by then), the high-performance Turbo R and the highly luxurious Mulsanne S. Then, of course, there was the entry-level Bentley Eight shown here, a model that offered relatively good value while still managing to retain the feeling of opulence that buyers expected.

The brochure boasted that the "distinguished pedigree of the Bentley Eight is suggested by its distinctive mesh grille, handsome alloy wheels and purposeful new headlamps", while the famous 6.75-litre V8 engine ensured "smooth and effortless performance". It also pointed out that, despite being the most affordable Bentley, the Eight didn't compromise on luxury: "An interior trimmed in fine hide, straight grain walnut veneer and Wilton carpet make the Bentley Eight a most elegant motor car."



## CORNICHE ANNIVERSARY

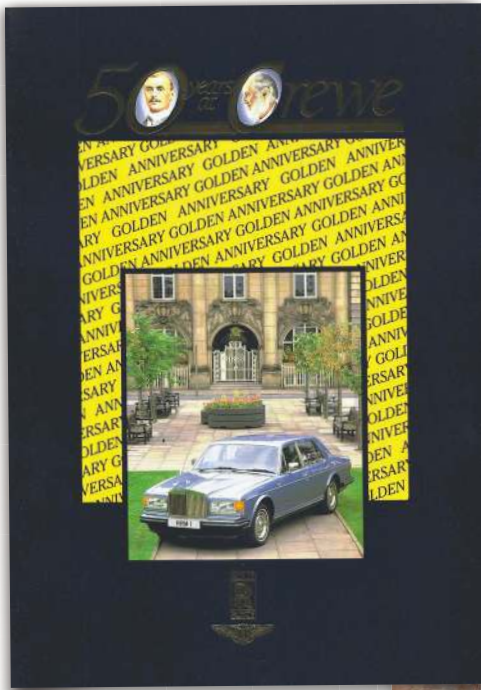
Rummaging through my archives a few weeks ago, I came across this monochrome press photograph issued by Rolls-Royce in October 1992 to promote the limited edition Corniche IV Anniversary Edition – a model created to commemorate the Corniche's 21st birthday. Just 25 examples of the Anniversary Edition were built, each one finished in the attractive hue of Ming Blue (with a cream hood) and fitted with a silver plaque on the dashboard.

This hand-built convertible was in the autumn of its career by then, with the updated Corniche IV having been unveiled at the start of 1992 – featuring such improvements as four-speed (GM4L80) automatic transmission, adaptive suspension and a glass rear window in place of the previous plastic item. The Anniversary Edition that followed in the October adopted the same mechanical spec but with the added appeal of being a strictly limited edition.



Rolls-Royce Corniche IV - Anniversary Edition

Public Affairs Department Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Limited Tel 0270 535043



## **FIFTY YEARS AT CREWE**

Rolls-Royce issued this handsome publication in 1988 to mark half a century of the company being based at Crewe, with a special introductory note at the start from Peter Ward, chief executive at that time. Mr Ward wrote: "We have produced the booklet especially for our employees, past and present, who have supported the company so loyally through both the good and difficult times".

The entire history of Rolls-Royce at Crewe was covered, from the levelling of the Merrill's Farm site that began in July 1938 right through to the latest-generation range of cars aimed at discerning buyers of the late '80s. One of the company's most recent achievements had been the building of the 100,000th Rolls-Royce, an event that saw a parade and pageant being held at Crewe in August 1985.



## **EARLY SILVER SHADOW**

Published in a lavish brochure from 1966 are these two photographs of the exciting new Silver Shadow, with a suitably upmarket looking backdrop being used in each case. The Silver Shadow had caused a sensation at the Earl's Court Motor Show the previous autumn, and there was no shortage of well-heeled customers eager to snap up this most modern of all Rolls-Royces by the start of 1966.

The brochure boasted of the Silver Shadow's "modern, functional, yet dignified styling", as well as a driving experience that incorporated "silence, comfort, smooth ride and the assurance of complete safety given by the power brakes". It also explained that the newcomer's independent rear suspension "enables the highest standard of comfort to be maintained at speed", as well as guaranteeing a "smooth level ride, irrespective of the load carried, under all road conditions".



## ULTIMATE CHOICE

If you've enjoyed reading this issue's tribute to the Camargue (starting on Page 64), you'll also appreciate this high-gloss fold-out brochure from 1984, which featured the entire Rolls-Royce line-up of the time – including the Camargue, shown here on the back cover. The brochure described the Camargue as a car in which "incomparable British craftsmanship is combined with coachwork and interior styling by Pininfarina of Turin".

It went on to explain that the Camargue came with "carefully matched hand-cut Nuella hides, shaped, smoothed and sewn to perfection", as well as "fully automatic split-level air conditioning coupled with superlative levels of comfort". Indeed, the brochure insisted that the Camargue was "the ultimate personal car".



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## Silver Spirit



The new Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit embodies the traditional Rolls-Royce values of peerless craftsmanship and the very latest technology. Superbly engineered and luxuriously appointed, the Silver Spirit mirrors the desires and values of its discrimination owners.

From the delicate modification of the celebrated radiator, complementing the new styling, to the reshaped rear body, this new design is smooth, clean, more integrated. Uncompromising standards, tireless attention to detail, and a host of innovations combine to create a thoroughly modern motor car of timeless quality.



## Silver Spur



The new Rolls-Royce Silver Spur is different and distinctive, the supreme embodiment of the Rolls-Royce motor car, and a milestone in the history of the marque. From the delicate modification of the celebrated radiator, complementing the new styling, to the reshaped rear body, this new design is smooth, clean, more integrated.

Providing its owner with the ultimate in luxury and elegance, yet harnessing the world's most advanced automotive technology, the Silver Spur ensures exceptional comfort for driver and passengers alike.



## STILL GOING STRONG

This pair of double-sided A4-sized cards was issued in 1995 to promote the latest Silver Spirit and Silver Spur, with the latter model featuring a four-inch increase in its wheelbase in order to become "the supreme embodiment of the Rolls-Royce motor car", providing its lucky owners with "the

ultimate in luxury and elegance, yet harnessing the world's most advanced automotive technology".

The Silver Spirit, meanwhile, found itself in MkIV guise by the mid-1990s, featuring the latest in a succession of improvements carried out since the launch of the original version in 1980. Indeed, in its latest form the

Silver Spirit boasted some subtle but important changes to its aesthetics: "From the delicate modification of the celebrated radiator, complementing the new styling, to the reshaped rear body, this new design is smooth, clean, more integrated". It was, explained the leaflet, a "thoroughly modern car of timeless quality".

# COMING SOON...

**ROLLS-ROYCE  
& BENTLEY** *driver*

Want to know what's scheduled for the next issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*? As always, we've got some great features coming your way.



## **BENTLEY MKVI BEAUTY**

We catch up with a stunning example of the famed MkVI Standard Steel saloon, long-term owned by a Gibraltarian enthusiast with impeccable taste in classic Bentleys



## **LIVING WITH A TURBO R**

One of the finest modern-classic high-performance saloons is the Bentley Turbo R – but what's it like living with this behemoth of luxury motoring?



## **LEGENDS OF RACING**

Jeremy Satherley revisits Bentley's glory days of racing at Le Mans and Brooklands – all part of our coverage of this historic marque during its centenary year

**IC** IntroCar



## **SAVING PANDORA**

Following its recent resurrection after years of suspended animation, Dan Furr's Silver Shadow II returns to these pages as our new long-term classic project – in conjunction with IntroCar



## **TEMPTED BY A 20HP**

Fancy owning a Rolls-Royce of the 1920s? With the 20hp offering surprisingly good value, we explain how to find the very best example for your money

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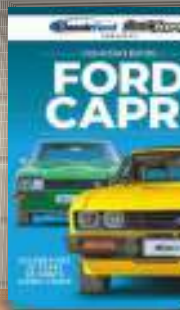
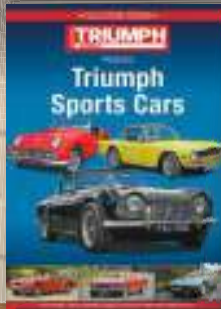
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# NEW-TECH SOLUTIONS

Continuing his series of Rolls-Royce engineering recollections from the 1970s, Tony Spillane explains the innovative use of digital laser technology and its application in vehicle development

PHOTOGRAPHY: TONY SPILLANE

In this instalment we're starting in the 1970s again, a time before the existence of PCs and laptops. Everything back then was analogue, and lasers were the domain of science fiction. So how was it that we at Rolls-Royce got to use a digital laser machine to measure our local road profiles?

Road profiles are measurements of the height variation of the road surface as you travel along it (bumps, potholes and so on). These measurements are important, as they form the input to both vehicle ride comfort development and vehicle durability analysis. As I was working in the area of new technology, I was fortunate enough to go to various national and international seminars and presentations on various new technology topics.

At these I would meet people from other car companies, and also other industries, such as aerospace,

railways and construction; and at one such event I met an interesting guy from the UK's Transport & Road Research Laboratory (TRRL) based at Crowthorne, Berkshire. He told me about this digital laser device that they had developed, and they were interested in measuring some 'unusual' road profiles. I offered the particular local roads that we at Rolls-Royce used in Cheshire – and in exchange for an evening meal and a few pints of beer (as well as somewhere safe to 'park' his machine inside the Crewe factory), the deal was struck.

The TRRL machine comprised a Ford Zephyr estate car that housed the computer (I'm not sure what type; generally we were using DEC PDP 11/34 machines back then). It towed a long trailer that was made of fabricated aluminium tubes, so it was both light and stiff. Onto this were mounted

three lasers, one at the front, one in the middle, and one at the rear end. Each of these lasers shone a light beam down onto the road, and a receiver collected the reflected beam, giving a measurement of the vertical height. As the machine went along the road, the three lasers would produce a profile of the road surface, which could be saved as a computer file and also printed out on a long roll of paper.

We had a number of favourite local roads, each for different purposes, such as vehicle shake, vehicle harshness, secondary ride, steering column shake and so on. These would each have a favourite vehicle speed, used to give consistent comparisons car to car, and we had loads of in-vehicle measurements under these conditions. Within a day or two, we had each of these road surfaces quantified – a magic moment! Now we had both input and output, and so we could analyse the vehicles as 'systems'. We even reached an agreement with the local council for it not to resurface these roads, as they were part of our vehicle development process.

There were two main applications of these road profiles. One was to develop the ride comfort using computer mathematical models of the vehicle, the other was to use as 'drive signals' for the electrohydraulic rig tests, mainly for durability proving.

## RIDE DEVELOPMENT

This was largely covered in my article in the September/October 2018 issue of *Rolls-Royce & Bentley Driver*. To summarise, a computerised mathematical model of the vehicle was constructed using the 3D geometry of all the significant connection points, the mass and inertia of all the significant



The TRRL computer was aboard the car, which towed a long trailer equipped with three lasers

components, and their stiffness/flexibility. Using the NASA program Nastran, the natural frequencies (resonances) and mode shapes were then calculated by the computer program. The road profile data was then used as input, and the computer would then calculate the output (for example, vibration levels at specific points on the vehicle). This could then be compared to actual vehicle measurements, with quick and easy 'what if' changes being evaluated in the computer model of the vehicle. There were also various other outputs available from the computer analysis to help direct the 'what if' analysis.

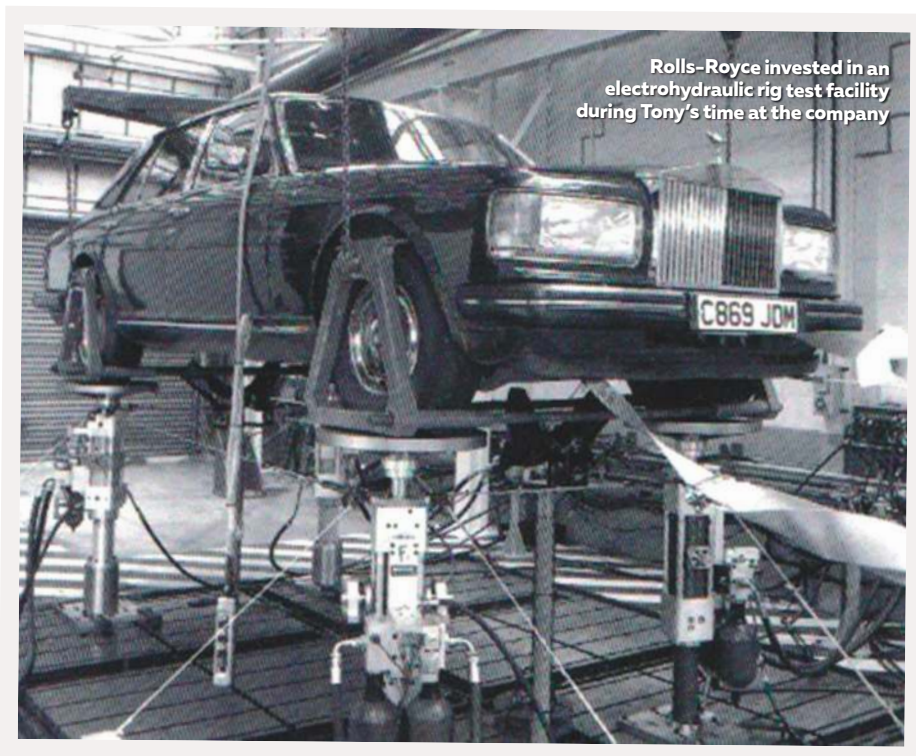
## DURABILITY PROVING

By the late 1970s, Rolls-Royce had invested in an electrohydraulic rig test facility. The system comprised hydraulic cylinders operated under very high pressure oil to create potentially very high loads and forces, all under computer control. With the collection of the local road profiles, these could be used to 'drive' the electrohydraulic actuators. A 'correlation factor' was used to create a second road profile, therefore creating the front left and front right drive signal. Then a time delay (derived from vehicle speed and wheelbase) was added to create the two rear drive signals.

Four actuators could be mounted vertically (one under each wheel), and with the vehicle on top of this the road inputs could be recreated. This could be left running 24 hours a day for durability testing, or used for various on-vehicle diagnostic purposes. The SZ Refinement Package (featured in my previous articles) made use of this facility, both for whole vehicle testing as well as the testing of individual components. In the latter case, the speed of application could be usefully increased to perform the tests much more quickly than 'real world' testing.

## FRENCH TESTING

As mentioned in my article covering productionisation of the SZ Refinement Package (November/December 2018 issue), it was found that certain French roads created unacceptable levels of vehicle shake, even though



## “The road profiles that created particularly high levels of shake tended to have a particular surface profile”

the vehicle performed well on UK roads. Although I was able to measure the in-vehicle vibration levels, I was unable to persuade my TRRL colleague to take his laser machine across to France to measure road profiles there. We just had to make an educated guess at it, by comparing the difference in output on the UK road (where we did know the profile) to the French road (where we didn't).

The road profiles that created particularly high levels of shake tended to have a particular surface profile, with a strong fundamental waveform in them. This, according to our TRRL colleague, came from repeated use by HGVs travelling at regular speeds. The trucks have heavy axles, which can easily go into a vertical resonance and compact the road into a waveform. It then becomes a 'chicken and egg' situation, as the waveform sets off the HGVs' resonance, which further compacts the road surface. With the long straight

D-roads in France that we regularly used, this effect was liable to happen.

For our before and after testing, consistency is vital. On one occasion, whilst we were making a vibration recording of a particular vehicle configuration, we came up against a very slow council wagon. It had hot tarmac on the back, and two guys with shovels were chucking out some tarmac whenever they spotted a road defect. They relied on the traffic to flatten it down. This was going to ruin days of previous vibration recordings, and so we followed them at a discreet distance (in other words, out of sight) and swept the loose tarmac off the road before it could be compacted down.

Once we'd got back to the hotel in Blois and explained the tale, the hotel owner's daughter and her friend thought it was hilarious! We certainly lived up to the French understanding of us being mad Englishmen. Unfortunately though, I still didn't get to give her a ride in the Rolls Royce... ■



## • THE BIG PICTURE •

**With Silver Shadow bodysHELLS being built by Pressed Steel and then transported to Crewe, the Rolls-Royce factory had to employ careful storage procedures, as shown in this classic image**

WORDS: PAUL GUINNESS PHOTOGRAPHY: BENTLEY MOTORS



In the same year that Rolls-Royce unveiled its eagerly awaited new Silver Shadow, two of the most significant names in the UK's motor industry became interwoven via the British Motor Corporation's acquisition of Pressed Steel Ltd – the biggest independent manufacturer of car bodywork in the

country. It was a logical move, given that 61% of the bodyshells produced by Pressed Steel in 1965 were destined for BMC. By then, however, Pressed Steel also had a longstanding connection with Rolls-Royce via models like the Bentley MkVI and the Silver Cloud family – and the company was keen to

maintain this connection for the Silver Shadow. Bodyshells were therefore produced at Cowley and transported to Crewe throughout the life of the Silver Shadow, with the Rolls-Royce factory carefully storing each one prior to its gradual progression from bare 'shell to complete new car.

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**BENTLEY**

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6390

**CONTINENTAL CONVERTIBLE LHD**



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**1956, 56,000 miles, £15,000.** 2 owners, blue with grey leather interior, runs well, bodywork not perfect. Minor work will make a very nice example. Please call 01483 282830, Surrey.  
7844

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**1958, £23,000.** Superb condition with PAS, drives really well and complete with tools, brochure and handbook, etc. Please call 01253 206271 or email [johnmcglynn@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johnmcglynn@blueyonder.co.uk), Lancashire.

**T II**



**1977, £33,950.** Finished in Georgian silver with a cream interior with contrasting carpets. Totally renovated throughout in our own workshops 5 years ago and still looking beautiful. Low mileage and a stunning example, the refurbishment costing over. Please call 02085 676557, London (T).  
8129

**TURBO**



**1987, 65,000 miles, £14,000.** First owner 13 years and covered 51,000 miles with main dealer servicing. Special order by chairman of company. I have owned the car since 2000, has good history. MoT till August. First to see will buy. Number plate is not included. Please call 07979 301972, Durham.  
7661

**TURBO R**

**1988, 69,950 miles, £10,000.** In dark blue immaculate condition. 12 months MoT. Please call 07835 747275, Lancs.  
7053

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**20/25 BREWSTER LANDAULETTE DE VILLE**



**1930, £72,500.** Rare, desirable, in lovely condition and fitted with overdrive and power steering. Drives beautifully. Please call 01248 602 649. (T)

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**25/30 PARK WARD LIMOUSINE PROJECT**



**1938, £14,500.** Structurally strong and well finished with a lovely interior but missing engine. Please call 01248 602 649. (T)

**CORNICHE 5000 SERIES**

**1979, 65,477 miles, £79,000.** A wonderful example of these increasingly rare and much sought 5000 series cars. Please call 01732 886002, Kent (T).  
8117

**ROLLS-ROYCE**



**1975, 84,382 miles, £1,500.** Barn find needs complete restoration engine turn over. Drive side floor needs work. Car complete and tyres pump up roll. Please call 07799 745236, Surrey.  
6899

**SILVER GHOST FOUR DOOR TOURER**



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**1978, £15,800.** Gold coachwork, cream leather work, low mileage, fresh MoT, tax exempt, service history, recent tyres and battery and remarkable condition throughout. Please call 01722 743681, Wilts. 7706

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**1981, 87,000 miles, £8,000.** Finished in porcelain white and red leather upholstery. Factory, supplied by Martin Walter. Full service history (20 stamps), MoT August. Please call +00353 01333 312016, Fife. 7657

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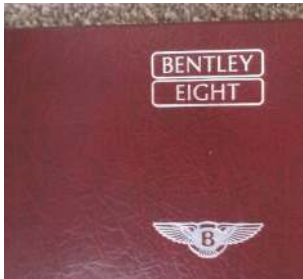
**ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER SPIRIT**



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**MEMORABILIA BYGONES FOR SALE**

**BENTLEY EIGHT HANDBOOK**



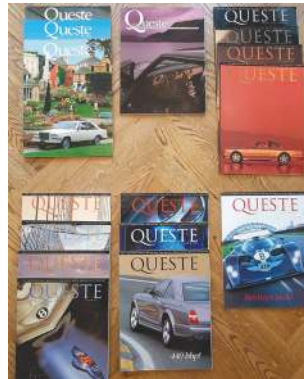
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**ROLLS-ROYCE BARNACLE TAX DISC HOLDER**



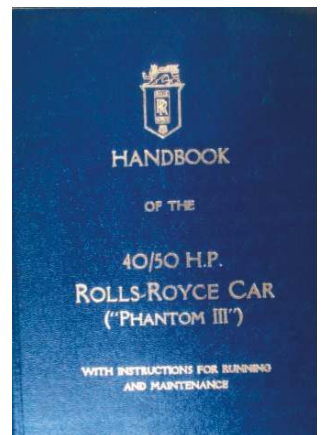
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## PAUL GUINNESS

Back in the early '90s, Rolls-Royce issued this publication featuring a reprinted road test from a British motoring magazine – which claimed to have found the very best car in the world

At the end of 1991, Rolls-Royce issued this twelve-page publication featuring a reprint of a road test in *Car* magazine, in which the latest Bentley Turbo R was pitched against a trio of upmarket rivals: the Jaguar Sovereign 4.0, Mercedes-Benz 600 SEL and Lexus LS400. The text, which had appeared in the November 1991 issue, explained: "They're big, they're fast, they're supremely comfortable – and one of these four saloons is the world's best car."

Naturally enough, it was the Bentley that proved to be the winner – a fact that you'll already have gleaned from Rolls-Royce's keenness to reproduce the feature in this special brochure. But all these years later, this four-car test makes fascinating reading, as do some of the specific comparisons between the different models.

It could be argued, of course, that there'd be something wrong if the Turbo R hadn't trounced the opposition, given that it was by far the most expensive model here. Indeed, with a list price of £124,096, the Bentley (in long-wheelbase guise) was not only significantly dearer than the £89,600 Mercedes-Benz, it managed to make both the Jaguar and Lexus (at £37,200 and £37,095 respectively) seem almost bargain-like. *Car* admitted, however, that on this occasion it was ignoring value for money: "This is a when-money-doesn't-matter comparison. We're after the world's best car, nothing less, and hang the cost."

With that in mind, why didn't the magazine opt for a Rolls-Royce? After all, wasn't this most upmarket of British brands traditionally seen as the best car in the world? Well, not according to these road testers, who were of a different opinion by 1991 – a full eleven years after the original Silver Spirit had gone on sale: "Quiet and luxurious though it is, and regal though its bearing, the dear old Spirit is not up to the new V12-engined S-Class. Nothing less than Rolls-Royce's best model will do here. And that's not a Rolls at all, but rather a Bentley. The Turbo R is by some margin the best car that Crewe makes."

Throughout the four-car comparison, it was obvious that the Mercedes flagship was closest to the Bentley in terms of talent, as you'd perhaps expect given its pricing. It was described as "the most technically advanced and the most technically intriguing" of the group, aided by its brand new 6.0-litre V12 engine. But in other ways, it just wasn't special enough: "If the Benz is the Star Wars of the group, the Bentley is the Flying Scotsman – the honest but simple high-speed express, hand-crafted and the fruit of the labours of a small but talented group of engineers and artisans."

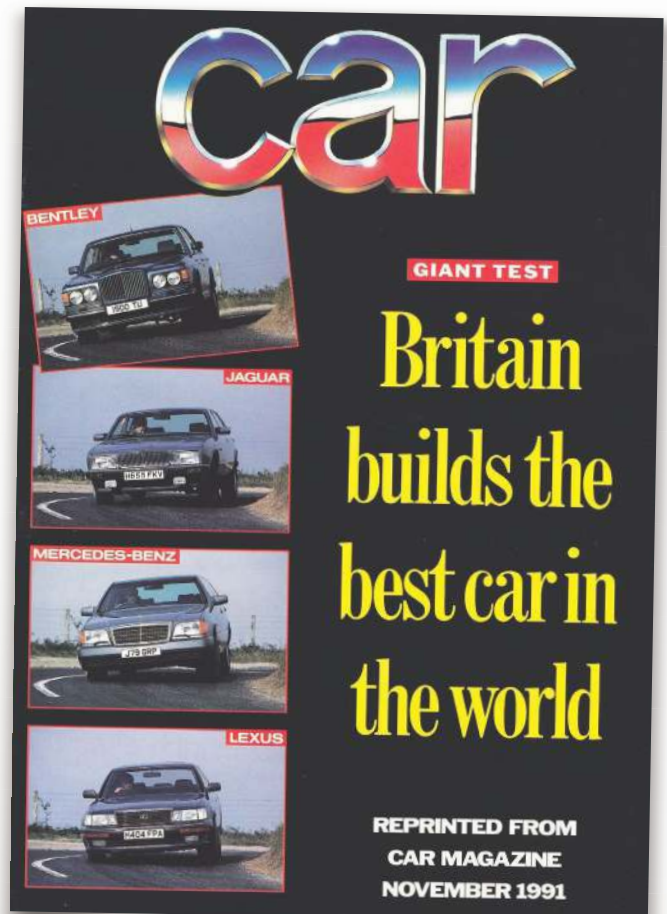
It was the hand-built nature of the Turbo R that

ultimately helped it to win here, as the road test's conclusion explained: "Whereas the Benz, eerily competent though it is, feels like a markedly better version of a £30,000 saloon, and feels like a mass-produced car, the Bentley is in a different world. A world of unmatched cabin comfort, beautiful craftsmanship, superb quality materials..."

Re-reading the road test now, it's refreshing to find that some of the most critical motoring journalists of their time appreciated the good old-

fashioned appeal of the Bentley, ultimately preferring it to a newer, more hi-tech rival. And it's the same kind of argument that could be applied on today's modern-classic scene, with a well-preserved Turbo R surely being a more tempting proposition than a W140-generation Mercedes-Benz S-Class. Wouldn't you agree? ■

**"Throughout the four-car comparison, it was obvious that the Mercedes was closest to the Bentley in terms of talent"**





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