



WINGED MESSENGER

Journal of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia - Western Australian Branch

A club for Rolls-Royce and Bentley enthusiasts

July-Aug-Sept 2024



In this issue:
AGM Report
Classic Car Show
RREC Concours
Hampton Court Concours
Recent Events
Upcoming Events



President's Dinner



WA's Police Bentleys

Committee



Executive Committee

PRESIDENT:	Paul Blank	0407 097 911	paulb@classicrally.com.au
VICE PRESIDENT:	Gordon Hay	0499 700 447	gordon.hay@outlook.com
SECRETARY:	Natalie Blank	0410 231 444	hello@natalieblank.com.au
TREASURER:	Richard Murphy	08 9434 5377	merf@iinet.net.au

Committee Members

SOCIAL DIRECTOR:	Germaine Murphy	0421 869 277	germainekoh72@hotmail.com
WINGED MESSENGER EDITOR:	Paul Blank	0407 097 911	paulb@classicrally.com.au
WEBMASTER:	Natalie Blank	0410 231 444	hello@natalieblank.com.au
CHIEF JUDGE:	Brayden Bentley	0438 958 585	braydobb@hotmail.com
TROPHY MASTER:	Peter Mack	08 9386 3656	petermack@westnet.com.au
COMMITTEE:	Anita Burn	0416 252 100	always@iinet.net.au
	Stan Stroud	0433 913 567	stan.stroud@yahoo.com.au
	Alan Dickson	08 9246 3295	alan@dickson.com.au

Other contacts

Website: www.rrocwa.com

Membership Application Forms are available from the website.

Join us on Facebook - Rolls-Royce Owners' Club Western Australia

Note new postal address

CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Honorary Secretary,
Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia,
Western Australia Branch (Inc),
PO Box 1222
Subiaco
Western Australia 6904

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia.
Contents are copyright © 2024

Our Website & Facebook Page

Some of our newer Management Committee members have been doing a lot of work behind the scenes to bring the club up to date in the modern technological world.

You may have noticed we are using **Trybooking** for bookings for our events - even those which have no cost to participate in. It gives us accurate details of who's attending an event and any special requests - and where relevant, which cars are coming. It's also useful for events where payments are made.

Our old **website** is no more and the new, easier to use website offers more functionality and presents the club well for prospective members. www.rrocwa.com

Additionally, we have a presence on **Facebook** with news, items of interest, events and more - where you can participate: **Rolls-Royce Owners' Club Western Australia**



Calendar 2024



Note not all of these are official club events, but we list all we can to enable members with concessionally licensed vehicles to participate in their cars. Official club events in **BOLD**. Some may need to change. Full details will be emailed to club members. Event announcements will appear on the club's Facebook page as well. Also check the website www.rrocwa.com

SEPTEMBER 29 British Cars & Coffee - Burswood Park 10am-midday

OCTOBER 4-5 Festival of Speed Wanneroo Raceway

OCTOBER 13 Club Lunch at The Last Drop Elizabethan Village. Meet at the Lions Lookout in Lesmurdie at 10.30am for the run to the venue. More details when you book via Trybooking: <https://www.trybooking.com/CVMTC>

OCTOBER 26 British Auto Classic is in Busselton 9am -2pm. Signal Park

NOVEMBER 10 Motor Museum of WA Visit & Picnic, Whiteman Park 10.30am at Whiteman Park. We have special parking arranged. Bring picnic/BBQ. Discounted \$15/head Book on Trybooking: <https://www.trybooking.com/CVMTF>

DECEMBER 1 Christmas Lunch in the Hills. In a lovely Mundaring rural setting, with catered lunch. Auction included. Full details will be circulated to members soon.

2025

FEBRUARY 16 Run with Aston Martin Owners Club

NOTE: The President and Secretary will be away in October, so please direct event enquiries to the Social Director: Germaine Murphy - 0421 869 277 germainekoh72@hotmail.com



Club event: **Visit to the Motor Museum of WA at Whiteman Park & Picnic** Sunday, November 10th - 10.30am onwards



See our refurbished club display cabinet, several Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars among the vast collection, which includes the largest single collection of scale model cars in the Southern Hemisphere, plus the Governor's Phantom, Daniel Ricciardo's Formula 1 car, one-offs, rare cars and others which will remind you of times gone by. It's an impressive display.

We're making a special club visit to the much-upgraded Motor Museum of WA at Whiteman Park.

We have special parking arranged on the adjacent lawn, where after our tour through the Museum, we will have picnic or barbeque lunch in the shade.

Special discounted price \$15 per person. Friends welcome. Please book via Trybooking - <https://www.trybooking.com/CVMTF>





From the President

It's an honour to have been elected President at our most recent AGM.

To give you a little background: I've been on the Committee of this club for a couple of years, as Editor. Over the past 40-plus years I've been a keen contributor to the car club scene. I've been the founder of a few clubs, often on committees, have been President of the Council of Motoring Clubs, Mercedes-Benz Car Club, Microcar Club, BMW Drivers' Club, Ferrari Club, Special Interest Vehicle Association and Kars Bikes Group. I'm presently a member of eleven car clubs - but I'm only on committees of a few.

I've been very involved with the Council of Motoring Clubs, of which our club was a founding member. I had some 40 years on the main committee and now serve on two special sub-committees; the Technical Committee liaising with the Department of Transport on concessional licensing issues and the Surplus Funds Sub-Committee handling expenditure of funds the CMC holds.

I'm a classic car broker and valuer, professional car events organizer and motoring journalist for work.

It's all fascinating to me. And I'm especially pleased to be able to provide input and guidance with this club. I've had my Rolls-Royce for eighteen years now and still enjoy it thoroughly.

Some of the changes you've seen in the club in the last year or so have been things I've pushed through and in some cases steered - like our revitalized Concours event held earlier this year. I was particularly pleased how that event worked out - and thank all involved.

My 1970 Silver Shadow



Below: Part of our display at the 2024 Classic Car Show



I'm very pleased we have such a good Committee this year and I'm confident we will achieve a lot. The average age has come down a great deal in the last couple of years and with it will come added dynamism, I'm sure. My plan is to steer the good ship RROCWA on a course to strengthen what we do best and improve what we offer to members in several areas. Stay tuned...

We wave goodbye to long-time Committee member Mick Rust whose input to the club over many years has been immeasurable - thank you Mick. Also, our previous President Stan Stroud and Secretary Alan Dickson are now taking less time-consuming and less demanding roles. Their experience and knowledge will prove invaluable to newer Committee members.

Equally it's reassuring to know that the rest of our Committee members have chosen to stay on for another year.

Our very long-serving Chief Judge Ron Magrath has stepped down from the role and Brayden Bentley (appropriately, a Bentley owner) has joined the Committee in that role. Brayden was one of the new team of Concours judges we adopted earlier this year.

Some tweaking to how we run the local Concours judging will be made before next year's event. And we will retain the excellent new venue.

OTHER ITEMS

Stand Stroud and I will be reviewing the **Deed** under which our club operates, for the main part adjusting wording to reflect the Federal changes which were put into effect last year.

From the end of the last club year we lost several members, some because they've sold their cars, a couple have passed away and other reasons of natural attrition that are typical in car clubs. We are keen to attract some new members.

I've designed a new **Membership Form** and a **flyer** promoting the club which will be available at events in case you know someone who should join...

EVENTS

All of our recent events have been well attended, with numbers a little lower than we'd hoped for the Classic Car Show. It was our first time back for several years and all who attended were pleased with the day. Thanks to Gordon Hay for co-ordinating the display on the day. More and better next year!

We are working on an enticing calendar of events for 2025...

LYNETTE WHYTE

One of our stalwart members for many years, past committee member and dedicated event organizer Lynette Whyte has passed away after long illness. Our sincere sympathy to Roy and her children. We last saw Lynette at the Concours which she arrived at in her lovely Silver Cloud III.

SUGGESTIONS

Please feel free to reach out to me with any ideas and suggestions you may have which might benefit our club.

Natalie and I will be away in Europe in October, running a motoring tour and I look forward to seeing members after we return.

Events



Run to Lunch at The Taphouse, Mulberry Farm

Sunday July 14

Sunday July 14 was indeed a perfectly beautiful day in the Swan Valley.

After meeting our umbrella-bearing contingent in West Perth during rather drizzly conditions, we set off at 11.30 for the run to Caversham. The pleasant 30-minute drive concluded with a smooth turn into the driveway of Mulberry Farm. Here we were promptly directed to our allocated parking area on a clean, open, grassy paddock, now in sunshine.

We all admired the line-up of some 14 'proper cars' before being ushered into a large reception area overlooking expansive rolling lawns that continued down to the Swan River flowing strongly after recent rains.

Our table was set on the east side in front of big plain-glass windows that looked out over the garden and down to the river. Once drinks and meals were ordered the chatter became as animated as ever - about who had just returned from somewhere or who was about to travel somewhere ...

We met and welcomed recently-joined members Jeremy and Janette Foster as well as two polite and bright youngsters. Aston was accompanied by his grandparents Kareena and Ross Ballard and father Adrian Ballard, and Na-Phan was invited and accompanied by Germaine and Richard Murphy. It is always refreshing to have some young conversation livening up the dinner table. Perhaps these two young men might aspire to owning a Rolls Royce one day in the future?

Gradually the meals arrived and were enjoyed by all, often being washed down by a second glass of suitable beverage while conversation continued into the early afternoon.

The event was well organised with several Committee members filling roles on the day to ensure we all felt comfortable throughout. A huge 'thank you'.

- Murray Turner



Events



Annual General Meeting Jaguar Car Club Rooms

Sunday July 28

We had a very good attendance of members at our Annual General Meeting on a rather wintery July day, held for the first time at the Jaguar Car Club rooms in Osborne Park, which turned out to be an excellent location.

In addition to annual reports, the event included a 'Thank You' and award presentation to our long-time Chief Judge Ron Magrath from outgoing President Stand Stroud - in the form of a trophy bearing one of our 3D printed Spirit of Ecstasy mascots.

There were on-screen presentations about our Website and Facebook page as well as a showing of Channel 9's coverage of our Concours a few months earlier.

Pleasingly, the election went smoothly with takers for all positions. The new President thanked the past year's Committee and noted that Mick Rust was stepping away from duties after many years in important roles.

Cake, biscuits, tea and coffee were enjoyed afterwards with lots to chat about. Thanks all who attended.



President's Dinner Celtic Club, West Perth

Saturday, June 15

It seems so long ago, but our annual President's Dinner took place just after the last copy of Winged Messenger was circulated to members...

Held at the Celtic Club, we had an excellent turnout on the night, with Master of Ceremonies Alan Dickson providing a series of jokes to entertain, and Stan Stroud presenting Concours awards with assistance from Peter Mack, our Trophy Master, as well as a short speech to all.

We had 48 people in attendance who enjoyed each others' company late into the evening.

Plans are for some changes for 2025, which will be announced well in advance.



Below: Our array of trophies and certificates





AUSSIE INVADER 5R



Visit to Rosco McGlashan's Workshop and Aussie Invader 5R

Sunday, August 18

We had an excellent turnout to see the just-finished Aussie Invader 5R World Land Speed Record contender built by Western Australia's Rosco McGlashan OAM.

The culmination of a lifetime's work as Rosco explained when he addressed us in his entertaining style, the rocket-powered car is aiming to reach the speed of 1000mph - 1600km/h. Harnessing 200,000 horsepower, this amazing machine incorporates some incredible technology achieved with assistance from experts and companies around the globe.

Rosco set the Australian Land Speed Record of over 800mph several years ago in a previous jet-powered car.

Several members bought copies of Rosco's recently released biography.

For anyone who didn't get there, have a look on the Aussie Invader website for more information about this amazing project: <https://aussieinvader.com>



Classic Car Show



After several years' hiatus, our club exhibited at the Classic Car Show, held at Ascot on September 8th. Ours was one of the clubs which displayed at the very first such show, held in 1969. In addition to our cars, we had a couple of extra cars in the feature display next door to ours, "The Best of British" curated by Paul Blank for the organizers. Next year, with a new venue, we hope to have a bigger, better display. Thanks to all who exhibited and helped on the day.



Photos: Paul Blank



RREC concours at Burleigh House

By Bruce Morrison



1

Images I took at the recent Rolls-Royce Owners Club concours while in the UK.

1. Decauville. An early Decauville, Royce's first car. He was so appalled by its crude standard of construction that he totally dismantled it and rebuilt it to his own exacting standards. He then built a car for himself - the rest is history!

2. SU 13. A 10hp Rolls-Royce car of 1905. After travelling 100,000 miles in it the owner returned it to the factory requesting that it be saved for posterity. And here it is!

3. The arrival of this gleaming early Ghost with its highly polished brass-work caused a mild sensation.

4. Another early Ghost with open drive limousine.

5. An elegant later Ghost open tourer complete with Auster screen and running board tool box.

6. A nicely presented Phantom I tourer.

7. A very correct and splendid 20 hp with Barker dipping headlight.

8. An R-Type Continental - a John Blatchley masterpiece.

9. A supremely elegant 25/30 Gurney-Nutting saloon coupe designed for them by JP Blatchley himself.

10. A 'to die for' beautiful S3 Bentley convertible.

11. My car of the day, an absolutely stunning HJ Mulliner, Phantom III razor-edge Sedanca finished in deep imperial crimson.

12. Miscellaneous items -

a. A glass Lalique mascot

b. A much travelled luggage trunk

c. A rarity for the UK a late Ghost or early PI dashboard with American instruments and centre change 3-speed gear lever and brake handle.



2



3



4



5





World's oldest Bentley T-Series returns home

- **The very first Bentley T-Series returns to the Heritage Collection**
- **First registered on 28 September 1965 as a company 'trials car'**
- **Car found after years in storage as a non-running example**
- **Recommissioned over 18 months of painstaking work at Bentley specialists, P&AWood**
- **Team encountered many challenges, from wiring loom and accident damage to missing dashboard**
- **A sensitive recommissioning process – 'repair over replace' mantra**

The world's oldest Bentley T-Series, a standard saloon in Shell Grey, has returned to Crewe after 59 years. Sensitive recommissioned and retaining much of its original componentry and running gear, it takes its place in the Bentley Heritage Collection.

T-Series chassis number SBH1001 was used as a company trials car and featured in the original press coverage following the model launch at the 1965 Paris Salon de l'Auto. When found under a cover in storage, the car had not run for decades and was missing several key areas - including its entire interior. The car's significance as the first T-Series - or equivalent Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow - off the production line prompted the decision to recommission it, preserving as much of the original car as possible.

Mike Sayer, Head of the Bentley Heritage Collection, explains:

"The T-Series is one of the final two pieces of the puzzle to complete our rejuvenated Heritage Collection. Our Chief Communications Officer, Wayne Bruce and I quite literally found it under a tarpaulin in the back of a warehouse, and given it was the first-of-line chassis we knew we had to save it. Together with our T-Series Mulliner Coupe, this revitalised sedan completes the Bentley heritage story of the 1960s and 1970s, and is now an outstanding example of the model, which was the first Bentley to use a unitary monocoque construction."

After a group of Bentley apprentices started the process of dismantling and assessing the car, the recommissioning of the T-Series was entrusted to the expert team at P&AWood, specialists in the preservation and restoration of classic Bentleys and the



company's partner for Heritage Collection projects. Louise Wood, daughter of co-founder Andrew Wood, led the project, supported by Coachwork manager Dave Lowe - a P&A Wood veteran of 23 years.

Restored to prime condition

Taking stock of the T-Series Bentley, key elements of the drivetrain proved to be in surprisingly good condition. The engine burst into life after a 15-year silence, needing only a thorough service, and the gearbox simply required minor adjustment.

Major challenges for the team included a missing dashboard, no interior trim, a wiring loom in pieces without a detailed diagram, corrosion around the rear subframe and previous poor-quality crash repairs. With few replacement parts available off-the shelf, the team sourced a donor vehicle that was at the end of its life. As the specification of the T-Series evolved over the years, it was important that the donor should also be an early model. Every detail was discussed and pored over, right down to the correct (Rolls-Royce) logo on the seat belt buckles and the lack of wing mirrors.

Meanwhile the paintwork was stripped, revealing poorly executed accident repair work and inconsistent panel gaps. One rear wing was corroded and had to be replaced, after which the entire vehicle was given multiple coats of 2k high build primer, each coat being carefully sanded down once dry. 'We spent a lot of time softening the panel edges, so they don't look carved out of filler,' Dave Lowe

explains. 'And though we're using modern two-pack finishes, we tried to do everything in the old Crewe way.' Brightwork and bumpers were cleaned and polished, but not re-chromed - preserving the original patina.

That story now begins a new chapter, as the T-Series is reunited with its former press office registration number of 1900 TU as the latest addition to the Heritage Collection. Along with the 45 other cars in the Collection, the T-Series will live on Bentley's campus in Crewe, England, on permanent display and kept in running, road legal condition to enable driving when needed.



Above: A beautiful restoration, however I believe the car has been fitted with incorrect later model tail lights that have the integrated reversing light. - Ed.



SPECTRE CONTINUES ITS BESPOKE JOURNEY WITH SEMAPHORE COMMISSION FOR MONTEREY CAR WEEK

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars unveils Spectre Semaphore, a Bespoke one-of-one commission that made its global debut at The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering, on 16 August, during the 2024 Monterey Car Week in California. This highly Bespoke expression of Rolls-Royce Spectre captures the bold new codes of luxury being established by the marque's confident, youthful client base.

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars unveils Spectre Semaphore, a Bespoke one-of-one commission that will make its global debut at The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering, on 16 August, during the 2024 Monterey Car Week in California. This highly Bespoke expression of Rolls-Royce Spectre captures the bold new codes of luxury being established by the marque's confident, youthful client base.

The exterior coachwork is finished in Bespoke Semaphore Yellow – the colour from which this commission takes its name. This solid hue is further elevated with a unique artwork on the bonnet, inspired by the informal elegance of coastal California. Named 'Marbled Paint Spill', the graphic is an abstract tribute to the Golden State and its diverse environment. From the sunshine of Southern California to the eastern silver mountain tops, the Bespoke artisans have brought this inspiration to reality.

To create this motif, Rolls-Royce craftspeople applied silver lacquer and multiple layers of clearcoat for a seamless finish. The bonnet alone is the product of over 160 hours of design, development and production.

The bright yellow colourway extends into the motor car's interior. A combination of Bespoke Lemon Yellow and Citrine Yellow is used across the seats, Starlight doors and above the instrument panel. It blends into the contrasting Grace White and Slate Grey hues with Lemon Yellow stitching.

Spectre Semaphore maximises the interior suite's contemporary design with a clean, high-polish Bespoke painted wood set. Coloured to match the grey material accents, the Cashmere Grey paint is infused with silver mica flakes, which creates a vivacious sparkle under direct light.

Only one Rolls-Royce Spectre Semaphore will be built. It was first displayed on 16 August at The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering, as part of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars' presence at Monterey Car Week 2024.



From
Rolls-Royce Motor Cars



Items of Interest



1932 Rolls-Royce Phantom II Continental Berlina by Figoni et Falaschi

The original owner, the Prince of Nepal, had this striking body built by Figoni et Falaschi, the largest car commissioned to them, and the only Rolls-Royce to receive one of their unique creations. A subsequent owner in the 1950's, Capt. Frederick Henry, was so enamored with this car that he traded his Bugatti Royale even for it. Restoration of this masterpiece was begun in 1986, culminating in the RROC Chief Judges Award and the Lucius Beebe Trophy at Pebble Beach



Above: A not altogether awful customised Silver Shadow I, in the UK. In addition to the big wheels with low-profile tyres and lowered suspension, you'll notice the back doors are rear-hinged, like the 'Coach Doors' on a modern Phantom or Ghost.

Keeping White Sidewalls Clean

Many a Rolls-Royce and Bentley are fitted with white sidewall tyres. This style seems to suit most models very well.

However, little makes a car look sadder than dirty white sidewalls. Road grime, brake dust and general use makes them go grey or brown which takes the sharp look away.

Some years owning a wheel and tyre business taught me how best to maintain such tyres. Cleaning should be done using Alloy Wheel Cleaner - available in spray-bottles from several manufacturers in all car accessory stores.

Spray it on a dry tyre, then using a green plastic kitchen scouring pad with a little water, scrub the whitewall. Rinse off and it will gleam. Don't let the wheel cleaner dry on the tyre. Do one tyre at a time, rather than spraying all and working your way around scrubbing...

- The Editor



Above: Some people can't help themselves. Somewhere, deep inside this monstrosity is a Mazda MX5. Ghostly in all respects.

Hampton Court



1937 Phantom III with body by Inskip



Some friends of mine, ex-Perth, living in London attended the "Concours of Elegance at Hampton Court Palace" on September 1st. Here are some of the images showing Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars exhibited (and some others of interest). The pictures speak for themselves of the beautiful venue and wonderful cars.



1920 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost Alpine Eagle



1937 Talbot Lago by Figoni et Falaschi



1939 Bentley 4 1/4 Litre MX Sedan Coupe by Hooper



1959 Ferrari 166S Spider



1955 Bentley R-Type Continental



Ferrari 275 and Bentley Sedanca



A glamorous Bugatti



1964 Bentley S3 Continental Drophead Coupe



1964 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud III Fixed Head Coupe

A unique Rolls-Royce



by Paul Blank



In my role as an approved Valuer by the Dept for the Arts of transport items for their Cultural Gifts Program, I sometimes come upon real treasure. The Program exists to help institutions obtain rare objects they can't afford to purchase, by giving donors tax deductions to the full value of an item.

In 2013 I was approached by the 50-year owner of a unique 1925 Rolls-Royce 20HP which had been re-bodied by Paris coachbuilder Vanvooren in 1932-33. With a spectacular Art Deco style body - perhaps more suited to a Bugatti - the sleek car unusually featured a glass division, more common in a limousine.

It had been in Adelaide for decades, virtually unseen except by its owner and restorers when work had recently been undertaken. The owner was not a car club member and had never displayed the car.

When I contacted my friend the Curator of the National Motor Museum in Birdwood, South Australia to suggest the car might join their collection, they said "Not another old Rolls-Royce..." My reply was "Wait until you see this one!". The car is now a star attraction at the museum.

Not long after the donation was made, the car was centre of attention at the Celebration of the Motorcar exhibition I organized at Carrick Hill in Adelaide among 150 specially invited cars.



Photos above: Guy Bowden, below: History Trust of South Australia



The Police Bentleys



Thinking outside the automotive square is not a new phenomenon. Perth in Western Australia is one of the most far flung outposts. Perth residents often state that it is the most isolated capital city in the world.

In the early days of motoring, the cars of Perth generally fell in to two groups, small English cars and large American cars. Some European makes also flourished briefly, mainly with smaller cars too. Western Australian roads provided a tough environment for cars, especially with the vast distances and few sealed roads outside of the Perth metropolitan area.

By the late 1920s the Perth Police had a lot of ground to cover, and a ramshackle collection of vehicles for patrols – few of them very capable in a pursuit. The best were four Ford V8s and a Harley Davidson motorcycle they had in addition to some worn out cars as old as 1913.

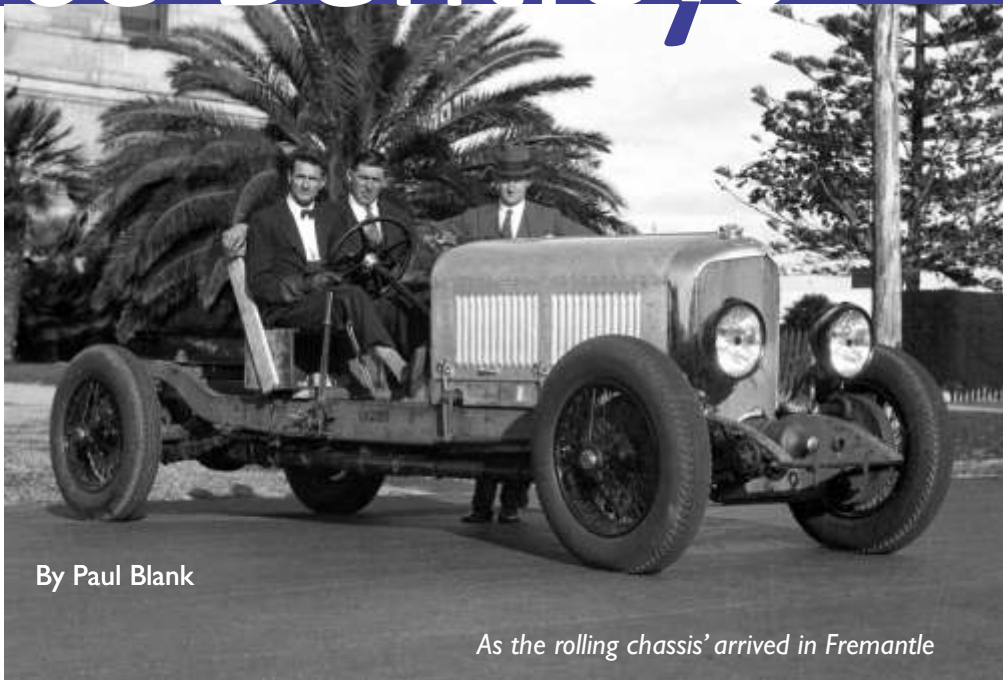
While the start of the Depression was beginning to bite in Western Australia, in April 1930 the Police Commissioner gave a recommendation to Parliament which led to the Agent General in London ordering two new Bentley Speed Six chassis for Police use. This is as remarkable as a Police department ordering new Bentley Arnages today... How could such extravagance be justified?

Somehow the idea was dreamt up that while Perth needed new Police stations, if these cars were to be equipped with two-way radios, it would obviate the need to build ten stations. A pair of Bentleys would cost less than ten buildings. And everyone seemed to like the idea...

Two-way radios were a novelty in 1930, and the Police Bentleys would become the first police cars in the world to be fitted with such units.

The *Daily News* announced in an article on May 12, 1930, "War on Motor Crooks". The article went on to explain that "Two high-powered Bentley motor chassis, said to be capable of overtaking any vehicle likely to be seen on Western Australian roads are now on the water bound for Fremantle...."

"Within the next week or so four wireless operators will be selected from the many applications received. The equipment of the two patrol cars will mark an important stage in the battle against Perth criminals, many of whom are moving with the times by exploiting motor power to aid them in get-aways and in rapid moves." The photograph was captioned "Capable of overtaking any motor car bandit".



By Paul Blank

As the rolling chassis' arrived in Fremantle

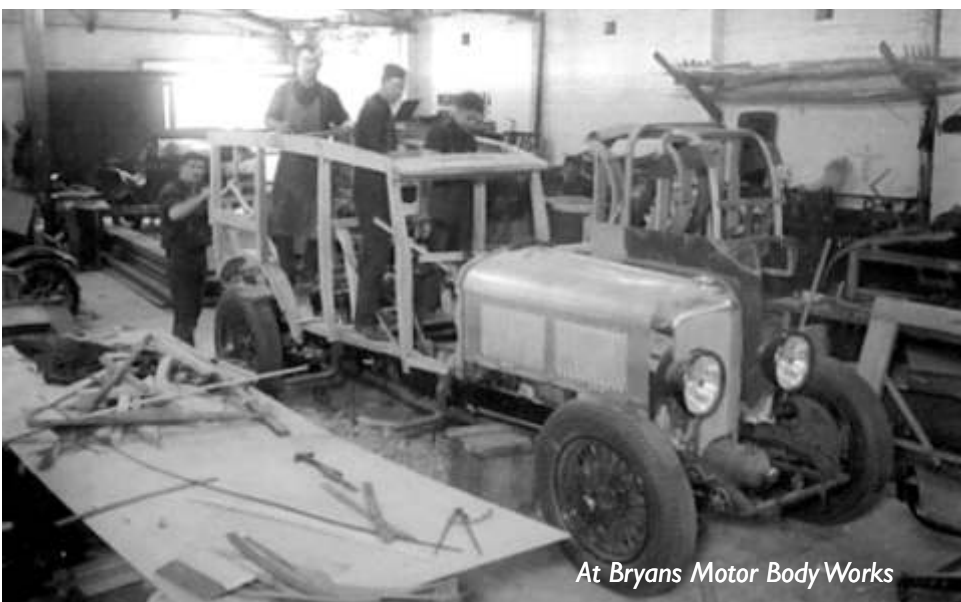
The two-way radio system would prove to be a challenge. Whilst some police departments around the world had patrol cars fitted with radios which could receive messages, none had been able to transmit messages. The AWA company was very keen to equip the Bentleys with two-ways, and agreed to a special rental arrangement for the first three years.

Interestingly the radios operated using only Morse Code, not voice. And they were vast units which took up much of the rear compartment of the Bentleys. An operator had to sit to the side in the rear at all times the cars were in use. The Morse Code key was set up on the pillar behind the rear door so that the operator could rest his arm on the radio. Presumably whilst driving this was a risky endeavour.

With its batteries, the system weighed several hundred kilograms. So it's lucky that the 6.5-litre Speed Six had plenty of power. What Bentley supplied was the same as the 1929 Le Mans racing cars, with the exception of a different compression ratio, camshaft timing and final drive ratio.

Just as well also, because the Bentleys were fitted with heavy bodies. Bryans Motor Body Works, a small operation in Perth constructed the two bodies exactly the same, using sturdy jarrah for the body frames, and aluminium for the panels. The cars finished up with rather American style bodies, which had been specified to be particularly strong, given that the intended use of the Bentleys would be very demanding.

They began in service in October 1930.



At Bryans Motor Body Works

The Police Bentleys



Even with a full crew, the two-way radio and other police equipment and the heavy bodies, the Bentleys were able to perform well. Even after some years of use, in 1935 the Police News noted that one of the cars had been timed at 92mph.

In his 1931-32 report the Police Commissioner stood by the Bentleys, stating "There is no doubt the efficiency of the Department has been considerably increased by the fact that a mobile police station can now be communicated with a moment's notice." There was also a detailed analysis of the per-mile cost of all Police vehicles, with the new Bentleys costing less to run than a 1913 Talbot still on the fleet.

It was all good justification for the huge sum of money which had been invested in these cars – however it was not all smooth sailing for the Bentleys.

The two-way radios were not the best performing units imaginable. The cars were largely used for night patrol – between the hours of 9pm and 5am. Perth Central Station was not ideally situated to receive communications from the west or south of the city, so to work best, one car was kept on the high ground of Kings Park adjacent to the city centre and acted as a relay for messages for the other car as it roamed the streets. Various antenna setups were tried on the cars.

A crew of four were used in each Bentley – a driver, a radio operator, a sergeant and a 'runner' who sat next to the driver ready to leap out and chase after any miscreants on foot.

The cars were fitted with sturdy leather straps bolted to the floor in the cabin. One policeman who was in a Bentley crew recalled years later that holding on to the straps was critical when the cars were at speed, otherwise passengers would be thrown about or hit their heads on the roof. The lucky radio operator could be strapped in place.

If the radio system left something to be desired, then the sheer performance of the Bentleys proved their worth many times. The Police claimed the cars were capable of a top speed of 114mph, and one was said to average 96mph on a journey to a house fire in an outlying suburb. These were exaggerated claims – but if ever a car was going to have urban myths develop while it was in use, it would be one of these Bentleys.

The Bentleys were christened "Gently" and "Softly", though they were well known for their noise as the cars roared around Perth streets. Perhaps Gently from Gently Bentley and Softly to conform... The cars were also sometimes sent to remote rural areas for major crimes, where radio contact proved invaluable.

During World War Two one of the cars was fitted with a gas converter. It produced less than 7 miles per gallon in that configuration and became the car left in Kings Park to transmit messages.

By the late 1930s the radio equipment had been removed. The cars were well known around Perth and in 1947 The West Australian newspaper noted "There has hardly been a major crime committed in this State which has not been affected by one or other of the Bentleys."

After the war, rationing continued and the Police Department decided it was time to sell off their well-worn, seventeen year-old Bentleys. In 1947 the cars were advertised on the Government Tender Board, incorrectly listed as Bentley 4½ litre cars.

Arthur Vance had always thought the Police Bentleys were wonderful cars and when saw them listed on the Tender Board, successfully bid £450 for the pair of cars in January 1948. Unable to afford both and only really wanting one car, Vance had arranged with an acquaintance, Ron Grey to take one car for £200. For his extra £50 Vance had the choice of car and the considerable quantity of spare parts. He chose the car which had not been converted to a gas producer.



Grey proceeded to use his car covering 40,000 miles until in 1962, having covered 300,000 miles it was involved in an accident and the body was scrapped. The car was sold to a Victorian collector after which it changed hands a couple more times, ending up with Graham Miller whose family has owned it for many years. It wears a fabric-covered touring body which was constructed in England.

The Police Bentleys

The car Vance bought, had covered 143,000 miles. Like its sister car, the Bentley was put to work, its 150bhp pulling power being quite useful for lugging. The bodywork was quite poor, having deteriorated with seventeen years of hard work often on rough roads, and Vance's use of it as a delivery truck didn't help.

By the late 1940s the failure of the differential pinion bearings meant that Vance put the car off the road. Vance removed the Bentley's body in preparation for a full rebuild of the car – and buried the body in a back yard...



Vance with his car

Although this was intended to be a short term project, subsequent industrial accidents meant that Vance did not touch the dismantled car for 25 years. In 1977 Vance came to a sharing agreement with Jim Runciman to rebuild the Bentley. In the intervening years Vance had resisted many offers to sell, remaining keen for the car to stay in Western Australia.

The dismantled car was then shipped to Victoria where much of the work was done by specialists.

A new open tourer style body was built, wearing aluminium panels. The bonnet is still the original item. There were many details to attend to - instruments were rebuilt, windscreen pillars and other small items were cast, hinges and door catches and other items were sourced. Jim Runciman recalls "The engine was rebuilt and in October 1987 it fired up for the first time. Although the car was far from drivable this was a momentous occasion as the car seemed to come alive."

A couple of the 'old boys' from the police force who'd used the Bentleys visited Runciman to see the car in the 1980s "One had tears in his eyes" he recalls.

After many years of work, the Bentley was finally finished and in 1996, 48 years after it was last driven, the Police Bentley was back on Perth roads.



Vance has since passed away and the car is now wholly Runciman's – the second private owner of a car over ninety years old. It has been used extensively, having been rallied in many parts of Australia and taken to South Africa for two rallies. The car has been in parade laps at the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne and has competed in the Phillip Island Historics as well as the Classic Rally in Western Australia.

Runciman has done over 20,000 miles in the car, one of which was a trip in 2002 to Uluru in central Australia, with three other Speed Sixes. Nobody could say this car has been pampered – ever.

"It's a great cruising car," Runciman enthuses, "on a moderately winding road it's capable of 85-90mph and even after 4 or 5 hours is still comfortable.

But it's a pig to drive in city traffic because of the heavy steering and crash gearbox – it gives a wonderful insight into motoring of that era".

In some ways it's a shame that the original Police bodywork is no longer there, but in 1949 it was really just rubbish. But it's wonderful that these cars still exist and they are testament to the amazing decision to order the Police Bentleys made over 80 years ago.

In a letter from Vance, published in Motor Sport in May 1949, he noted "When we took delivery of the cars from the plant engineer's workshop, the parting was too much for the mechanic who assembled them and had 'nursed' them through their long and chequered career, such is the mark these grand old cars leave on one."



Today - photo Paul Blank



Hello to all fellow-members of the Rolls-Royce Owners Club

We at Neil McLean Automotives would like to offer our specialist services to all owners of these fine motorcars.

We specialise in all post-war proper motorcars and are the only Licensed, registered private workshop in Western Australia that can offer expertise to service and maintain a fine motorcar to the standard a discerning owner would expect.

We carry a vast range of spares on the premises and are happy to discuss servicing, repairs and restoration for all models.

Having been established here in WA for more than 30 years we are confident we can meet all of your requirements. Please call to discuss how we may assist.

Bev and Neil McLean
NEIL McLEAN MAIME, Minst RE

Neil McLean Automotives ABN 84574547421

15 Elliott Street, Midvale, 6056

License MRB 7209

Tel: (08) 9250 1400

Email: nma@iinet.net.au

FOR SALE:



2013 Bentley Continental GT V8

In superb condition, 49,000km, good options and colour scheme. Drives beautifully. This is a very impressive car.

Excellent value at \$128,500 ono

1FAA 442



1973 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow

Perth delivered to Stan Perron, with much work done keeping the car in top condition. This is an excellent example of Silver Shadow 1.

Don't miss out: \$36,900 ono

RR 1973

Request full details and photos by email

Paul Blank Classic Car Broker

0407 097 911

paulb@classicrally.com.au

www.paulblank.com.au

MD 28143