

A BRIEF GUIDE
TO
ROLLS ROYCE
AND
BENTLEY
MOTOR CARS



BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rolls Royce — The Living Legend
The Magic of a Name (H. Nockolds)

The Vintage Car (Clutton and Stanford)
p.p. 201 - 208

Motor Sport regularly contains articles and letters
about Rolls Royce and Bentley cars.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO ROLLS ROYCE AND BENTLEY MOTOR CARS

The whole subject of Rolls Royce and Bentley motor cars is for many people remote and mysterious. Reverence is their reaction when the magic names are mentioned: a web of fables has been woven around them and a superstitious awe greets the revelation that, "My car's a Rolls".

The purpose of this guide is twofold :-
first — to restore commonsense to the subject
albeit in a limited way.

secondly — to persuade you to own a Rolls
Royce or Bentley yourself.

Great Gidding
Huntingdonshire

J. B. M. Adams

PART I

The first car made by Frederick Henry Royce took to the road in 1904: the excellence of Royce's cars attracted the attention of the Hon. Charles Stewart Rolls, and in 1906 Rolls Royce, Ltd. was incorporated. At first several models were manufactured, but in 1908 it was decided to concentrate on one chassis only, the incomparable Silver Ghost, which was produced from 1906 to 1924; it was then replaced by the Phantom I. The smaller Rolls Royce, the "Twenty", was introduced in 1922. Front wheel brakes were added in 1924/25, and so for practical purposes only cars made in or after 1926 need be considered. Both the larger and the smaller range of vehicles were continued until the outbreak of war in 1939.

In 1931 Rolls Royce Ltd. took over the company which made Bentley cars, and in 1933 the first of the 'new' Bentleys appeared. The old Bentleys, though very fine sports cars in their day, have by now become collectors' pieces.

Table I (overleaf) gives some details of the models available, and there is a brief bibliography on the opposite page.

TABLE I — SPECIFICATION

	R.A.C. Rating	Engine Capacity	Number of cylinders	Arrangement	Year of Introduction
Rolls Royce					
Phantom I	43.3	7,668	6	O.H.V.	1925
Phantom II	43.3	7,668	6	O.H.V.	1929
Phantom III	50.7	7,340	V.12	O.H.V.	1935
“Twenty”	21.6	3,127	6	O.H.V.	1922
20/25	25.3	3,669	6	O.H.V.	1929
25/30	29.4	4,257	6	O.H.V.	1936
Wraith	29.4	4,257	6	O.H.V.	1939
Silver Wraith	29.4	4,257	6	O.H.I. S.E.V.	1946
Bentley					
3½ litre	25.3	3,669	6	O.H.V.	1933
4½ litre	29.4	4,257	6	O.H.V.	1936
Mark VI	29.4	4,257	6	O.H.I. S.E.V.	1946

TABLE II APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE FIGURES

	Petrol Consumption m.p.g.	Cruising Speed m.p.h.	Maximum Speed m.p.h.
Rolls-Royce			
Phantom I	10-12	55	70
Phantom II	10-12	65	85
Phantom III	12-14	80	100
“Twenty”	18-22	48	58
20/25 to 1934	18-22	50	68
after 1934	17-19	57	72
25/30	17-19	60	80
Wraith	16-18	65	80
Silver Wraith	16-19	70	90
Bentley			
3½ litre	18-22	60	85
4½ litre	17-21	65	90
Mark VI	16-21	70	95

The following factors are relevant in assessing the advantages of running a Rolls-Royce or Bentley motor car :—

1. Cost
2. Reliability and durability
3. Comfort
4. Safety
5. Miscellaneous

Cost is probably the first factor and the most significant one for most of us.

COST

Table II shows the performance figures for each model. These figures are, of course, for guidance only, and depend largely on each drivers' methods, and condition of the vehicle.

a. Depreciation

Depreciation is only a minor element in the running cost of a pre-war Rolls Royce or Bentley motor car. Lack of depreciation more than compensates for added running costs.

b. Petrol

The low compression ratio makes the Standard or Commercial grade of petrol a wise choice. The mixture control fitted on many Rolls-Royces helps further to reduce petrol consumption.

c. Oil

Consumption is very variable, and will seldom be less than 1 pint every 250 miles : it may rise

to 1 pint every 80 miles (on a run) without giving cause for alarm. Piston slap, rather than oil consumption indicates the need for a re-bore, for heavy oil consumption is often due to worn valve grommets, piston rings, or leaks from a rear oil seal.

Oil Pressure is likewise misleading. On all models a pressure of 15 p.s.i. or more at normal cruising speed is quite safe : a lower pressure should be investigated. Note that a higher pressure may occur in an engine with poor bearings due to partial sludging of the oil ways.

d. Tyres

We hold tyres for all models from 1926 onwards. Tyres are not cheap but tyre wear is moderate.

e. Insurance

If you have a reasonably good driving record, Third Party, Fire and Theft Insurance may be obtained without any difficulty.

(Comprehensive cover at normal rates was offered to one of our customers on a 1933 Rolls Royce 20-25).

It is almost always better to deal with an insurance broker, than with an insurance company.

f. Repairs

Certain rare but major faults, such as a defective crown wheel and pinion, are most economically by-passed by finding and fitting a replacement. This is not unduly difficult. For example, we have on occasion supplied a complete Rolls-Royce gear box in good order for £20. Some specimen charges for mechanical repairs to smaller Rolls Royce and Bentley models are enclosed; charges for the larger Rolls Royce cars are about 50% higher.

2. Reliability

A Rolls-Royce is utterly reliable: rarely indeed does a Rolls-Royce interrupt your arrangements by a breakdown or a mechanical failure. There are very few unpredictable failures, even on vehicles in the lower price range. The life of a Rolls-Royce or Bentley motor car which has been properly treated is almost indefinite.

3. Comfort

There is simply no more comfortable way of travelling than in the back of a Rolls-Royce. It is true that a certain 'knack' has to be acquired before one can enter the driver's seat without getting the gear lever inside one's trouser-leg! It is also a family car: especially in the limousine-bodied car, there is plenty of room for push-chairs, carry-cots, and (later on) the paraphernalia inseparable from teenagers on holiday.

Is there anything to be said against these fine motor cars?

They have one weakness — the cylinder head. The later Phantom I, the Phantom II and the Phantom III have aluminium castings. Corrosion weakens them, and the product of the corrosion frequently clogs the waterways and may choke the radiator completely, especially if the car has been standing for some time. Other models with cast iron cylinder heads are prone to damage by heat or frost.

A slight external crack may be harmless, but internal ones are dangerous. New cylinder heads are expensive, and good secondhand ones are hard to find.

It should be added that these faults only occur through negligence. It is our normal procedure when carrying out engine work to ensure that the waterways in the cylinder head and cylinder block are freed from scale.

4. Safety

Anyone who doubts the validity of this claim should look at the chassis of a Rolls-Royce and compare it with that of other motor cars! A well-maintained Rolls-Royce satisfies the requirements of the Ministry of Transport's tests by a wide margin.

5. Miscellaneous

a. Before buying a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, make sure that it will go into your garage. The overall length of the chassis of the 'Twenty' is 14' 10", which is of course increased by bumper bars, the luggage boot and the like.

The only model produced with a 'short' wheel-base was the Phantom II (standard chassis) 12' 6" "Continental" chassis, but the overall length of the high H.P. models may exceed 17 feet (12' 0"). Any prospective owner whose garage is less than 16' 6" in length will be to some extent restricted in his choice.

The **apparent** length of these cars depends largely on the body style: the mechanical details and chassis length of a 2-seater 'Twenty' would be exactly similar to those of a vast hearse. Width varies from 5' 8" to 6' 2" (Phantom III).

- b. Ladies prefer synchromesh, which was fitted from 1933 onwards.
- c. As an antifreeze, Rolls Royce Ltd. used to recommend the use of methylated spirits. A considerable economy.

Most of this guide refers more particularly to Rolls-Royce motor cars, but there must be a paragraph about the Bentley.

In general, the design is indistinguishable. The Bentley will be smaller, faster, and more economical if driven at equivalent speeds, but it will lack the stamina of the Rolls-Royce. The price of a Bentley is usually lower than that of the equivalent Rolls-Royce, and a well-kept Bentley, though harder to find, is very good value — for money, especially for those who do not want a roomy car.

Repair charges are comparable.

A Rolls-Royce motor car is built for perfection, but it is not always practicable to maintain it in that state of perfection. For example, a slight purr is noticeable when the little end bushes are slightly worn, or a piston-slap may be heard when the

engine is idling, but it is unnecessary, and wasteful to rectify faults like these. The car will probably run for another 20,000 miles by which time more servicing may be needed — e.g. decarbonising. Then is the time to attend to everything which requires attention.

The preceding paragraph is not intended to lower the standards of the enthusiast, but to hearten the average owner or prospective owner.

From time to time certain "modifications" are made, for example the conversion to solid tappets in the Phantom III, and the 'full-flow' oil system in the post war Rolls-Royce and Bentley motor cars. The importance of these modifications has been exaggerated. Because a car is improved by an alteration, it is not necessarily true that the earlier design was inefficient or defective. Provided that the unmodified car has been properly maintained, the owner will be at no disadvantage.

In the case of the 'full flow' oil modification the 'full flow' system ensures that there is less likelihood of the engine being damaged by different maintenance. The excessive wear of some unmodified examples is caused simply by failure to change the oil regularly.

Select list of Coachbuilders

Arnold	Thrupp and Maberley
Barker	Arthur Mulliner
Cockshoot	H. J. Mulliner
Lancefield	Offord
Freestone and Webb	Park Ward
Gurney Nutting	Rippon
Hooper	Salmons
Mann Egerton	Windover
Mayfair Carriage Co.	Vanden Plas

Note — The term "Replica" means that the body is mounted on an earlier chassis. The car must be judged on its merits: it may be better or worse than a car with a contemporary body.

Coachwork

Before the war, Rolls-Royce, Ltd. made only chassis. The construction of the coachwork was left to specialist firms. After the war, it was decided to offer the Bentley as a complete car as well: and in 1949 this policy was extended to Rolls-Royce. (The first complete car, on a Silver Wraith chassis was known as the Silver Dawn). Almost all pre-war bodies were of aluminium, a metal which does not rust.

A select list of coachbuilders (in alphabetical order) is shown.

The style of coachwork exerts considerable influence on the value of the car. The list overleaf is designed to give some idea of the relative values of various styles.

Tourer —

a completely open car, with sides, screens and a hood. Plus 100%

Drophead Coupé —

a "Convertible", with retractable hood and "wind-up" windows. Plus 75%

Sedanca Coupé —

like a drophead coupé, except that the hood can be retracted so as to open the front compartment only. Plus 65%

Fixed Head Coupé —

like a drophead coupé in appearance, but with a fixed roof. Plus 40%

Sports Saloon —

a more compact and "rakish" version of the saloon, — often appears to be younger than its true age. Plus 30%

Sedanca —

a limousine or saloon, the driver's compartment of which may be opened. Plus 40%

Saloon —

smaller than a limousine, with a luggage boot after about 1934: sometimes with a partition. Normal

Landaulet —

a limousine, the rear compartment of which may be opened. Plus 15%

Limousine —

a large saloon, with a partition and (usually) occasional seats in the rear compartment. Less 30%

These relative values of course depend on the old economic law of supply and demand. Open cars are rare. Any exceptionally elegant or interesting car will command a premium.

It is worth remembering that the most hearse-like limousine will lose something of its solemnity if its colour is changed from black.

Moreover, it is a capital mistake to condemn a Rolls-Royce at first sight. Just as good vintage wine needs savouring to the full and one's appreciation of good music is increased by steady concentration, so a Rolls-Royce with perhaps a little initial charm may in due time have considerable appeal.

General Advice

Generally, judge a car on its merits, without regard to its history.

Many cars have been allowed by their original owners to degenerate over the years, either through carelessness or deliberately because the car was considered to be near the end of its service. Other cars have passed from one enthusiast to another, and have been beautifully preserved in the process.

Usually a car which has been brought back from a state of neglect ultimately reveals what it has suffered, unless it has been restored with consummate skill.

The fact that a previous owner enjoyed a title is irrelevant to the condition of any car !

PART II

J. B. M. ADAMS specialises in providing Rolls-Royce and Bentley motor cars in good condition, and in maintaining a reasonably priced service and spares backing. They have been privileged to supply cars to places as distant as New Zealand to ladies and gentlemen who require useful, comfortable, and elegant transport.

It is a measure of confidence that a Rolls Royce was recently shipped to the workshops from Nyasaland for overhaul.

J. B. M. ADAMS will always do their best to help anyone who desires to purchase a ROLLS-ROYCE or BENTLEY car. Any make of vehicle will be considered for a part exchange transaction, and hire purchase arrangements may be made in suitable cases. There are also two special schemes, primarily designed to assist overseas customers on leave in the United Kingdom, but which may provide additional security for owners who are only partially convinced that a Rolls-Royce or Bentley motor car is the car for them.

In both schemes the charges include the Road Tax, but not insurance, which can be arranged to suit your requirements. There are no mileage charges. Naturally vehicles must be properly maintained, but J. B. M. ADAMS will on request supply any necessary replacement parts. In the rare case of trouble a replacement vehicle is supplied.

Details are enclosed.

The highest advertising boast of the manufacturers of such widely assorted articles as grammo-

phones, perambulators, cigarettes, looms, sparking plugs, motor cycles and even certain types of motor cars has been to say that they are the Rolls Royces of their kind. Such parallels have not been confined to manufactured articles ; the British Rotary Club, for example, once described itself as "the Rolls-Royce of Social institutions". Probably the most celebrated use of the words, however, occurred at a meeting of the Royal Dublin Society, when the Secretary described the Friesian as a "type of milk-producing animal which is known to the man-in-the-street as the Rolls-Royce cow" !

"A man with a curious voice,
Said, "Yes Sir, my car's a Rolls Royce ;"
The very best car
To go near, or far ;
It ought to be everyone's choice."