

IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

PRESIDENT IN ROLLS-ROYCE SMASH



The newspaper caption for this photograph is, "A police motor-cyclist and a chauffeur try to prise the crumpled mudguard of a Rolls-Royce off the wheel after the Rolls carrying President Ne Win of Burma and a police-escort motor cycle collided in Melbourne yesterday."

"President in crash" was front page news in 'The Canberra Times' on 1 June 1974. The article went on, "MELBOURNE, Friday, - President Ne Win of Burma had a poor round of golf today — but he almost did not get one at all.

He had a bump on the head when his Commonwealth Rolls-Royce was involved in a pile-up with two other cars and three Victoria Police motor-cyclists at an intersection in East Brighton.

President Ne Win was on his way to play golf at the Royal Melbourne with Australian professional Peter Thomson.

The Rolls-Royce was badly damaged about the right wheel and one motor-cyclist was taken to hospital for treatment before being allowed home.

President Ne Win was taken to the golf course in another car. He and Thomson, playing the Chief Secretary, Mr Rossiter, and the President's doctor, Lieutenant-Colonel Kyaw Nyunt, lost when the President missed an 8ft putt at the last.

“He did not play his normal game”, a Burmese aide said afterwards. “Everyone was upset about the crash”.

The car is none other than the Sir Henry Royce Foundation's 1967 Phantom V, chassis 5VF159, H. J. Mulliner, Park Ward limousine, now looked after by the NSW Branch. While this reproduction of the photograph is not very clear, the crucial part of the image is the number plate, which identifies it as 5VF159. The Commonwealth registration, ZSF-571, replaced the Crown when the car was not on royal or vice-regal duty, as was the case on this occasion.

[Acknowledgement: This item comes from 'Trove', a National Library of Australia website (trove.nla.gov.au), which provides access to digitised newspapers.]

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