

The Foundation's Rolls-Royce Avon aircraft engine

As RROCA Members we tend to focus our attention on the automotive side of Sir Henry Royce's engineering genius and think of Rolls-Royce as the manufacturer of "The Best Car in the World". We must not forget, however, that Royce, who lived by the motto "Whatever is rightly done, however humble, is noble", was awarded the OBE in 1918 and was created a baronet in 1930 for his services to British aviation.

As the primary focus of The Foundation is to honour Sir Henry's engineering genius it is important that we highlight the aviation aspects of Royce's working life.

The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd. (CAC) was based in Melbourne (Fishermans Bend) and was owned by a consortium of Australian companies (Broken Hill Associated Smelters, Electrolytic Zinc, General Motors Holden, Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia and New Zealand and the Orient Steam Navigation Company) and Rolls-Royce Limited.

The establishment of CAC in 1937 reflected the concern about the developing situation in Europe by civic-minded people such as Essington Lewis who led the move. The Australian and British Governments both seemed unable to grasp the significance of Germany's ambitions and our vulnerability should war occur in Europe. The CAC factory was set up from scratch on a site at Fisherman's Bend with its own airfield for testing aircraft. Production commenced in 1937 with the Wirraway, which was an Australian version of the North American designed Harvard. CAC then went on to produce many aircraft types ranging from piston engine trainers and fighters (including the Wingeeel and Rolls-Royce Merlin-engined Mustang) to leading-edge jet fighters such as the CAC Avon Sabre and engine, wings and tail fin for the Dassault Mirage.

Herbert H Knight (the father of 50 year Victoria Branch Member, Richard Knight)

commenced his career in the aircraft industry at Westlands (UK) in 1928. He was at CAC from 1937 until 1969 and was General Manager and a Director for the last nine years of his career. Richard and his nephew Nicholas Knight presented the Avon engine to The Foundation in recognition of the contribution of Herb Knight to the aircraft industry in Australia from 1933 to 1969 and his role in bringing aircraft manufacture to Australia.

A total of 218 Avon engines were manufactured by CAC under licence from Rolls-Royce and a further 1,704 overhauls were undertaken for the RAAF. CAC had a long association with Rolls-Royce - 108 Merlins, (plus spares), and 112 Nene jet engines were built in Australia by the company.



above: The Foundation's Rolls-Royce Avon Jet Engine on display at Bill Allsep House in Rowville, Victoria.

The Foundation's Avon engine was manufactured in the 1950's. This engine type was fitted to the Canberra bomber manufactured by the Government Aircraft Factory (also located at Fishermans Bend). Later versions were used in the CAC-built Avon Sabre jet fighter for the RAAF. This was a heavily modified and more powerful development of the North American Sabre.

The engine is an example of the capability of the, then, local aircraft industry to pick up and manufacture, what was at the time, a leading edge engine design. The Avon was one of Rolls-Royce's most successful engines, both for military and commercial application, including marine and power generation applications.

The Foundation is indeed fortunate to have such an historic engine with associations with both Rolls-Royce

aviation technology and the fledgling Australian aviation industry. The engine is on permanent display at Bill Allsep House.

We pay tribute to Richard and Nicholas Knight for the restoration of the engine and its donation to The Foundation.

BAH and LGSI Open Day

The Foundation is holding an Open Day at Bill Allsep House and the Lionel Gell School of Instruction for Rolls-Royce and Bentley and the SHRF Trustees join in extending an invitation to all members and friends of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia to join them on Saturday 10 September 2016 for the Public Open Day at BAH & LGSI in Rowville.

The collection of heritage artifacts in the 'Museum' and the collection of documents and publications in the 'Archive' will both be open for inspection at BAH.

The technical facilities and cut away engines on display at LGSI will be complemented by some of the finest cars in Victoria being judged for the Concours d'Elegance.

Morning and afternoon tea as well as lunch will be available at BAH and LGSI. There will also be the opportunity to join Victorian members for Saturday dinner in the CBD.

Members are invited to plan a weekend in Melbourne where you can also enjoy the Victoria Branch Concours d'Elegance on Sunday 11 September 2016.

If you plan to join us for dinner on Saturday night, please advise Eric Henderson.

Russell Rolls
Chairman Of Trustees

SHRF OPEN DAYS FOR BAH and LGSI

SATURDAY 10 September 2016 from 10:00 am

Bill Allsep House (BAH)

3/18 Laser Drive, Rowville 3178

Lionel Gell School of Instruction (LGSI) 3/3 Neutron Place, Rowville, 3178

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