

From the Sir Henry Royce Foundation Archives Amy Johnson's Rolls-Royce Identified

Gilbert M Ralph Hon. Archivist SHRF

In the 4-15 edition of *Præclarvm*, p6779, I contributed an article about Amy Johnson in which I suggested the Silver Ghost she was riding in was 65LK and asked if any reader was able to confirm that it was in fact 65LK. On the day I received my copy of *Præclarvm* I had a phone call from noted Silver Ghost authority, Robert McDermott (Vic), to say it was not 65LK but 34YG a 1922 Silver Ghost with a similar Waring Bros tourer body. The story about Amy Johnson remains correct but the owner was not Frank Austin but Geelong resident Lewis Hirst. Thank-you to Robert and Nick Lang (Vic) for your identification skills!

Ian Irwin in his marvellous book, *Silver Ghosts of Australia and New Zealand – Cameo Histories of the Post War Cars*, gives an interesting account of the history of 34YG which he has given permission for me to reproduce here.

"This short chassis 40/50HP was ordered through Dalgety & Company Limited of Melbourne. It was purchased by Lewis Hirst, of the family that owned G Hirst and Co and Excelsior Woollen Mills both of Swanston St, Geelong. After completing tests in October 1922 34YG was shipped to Melbourne to be bodied by Waring Bros. Its guarantee became effective on 7 October 1922.

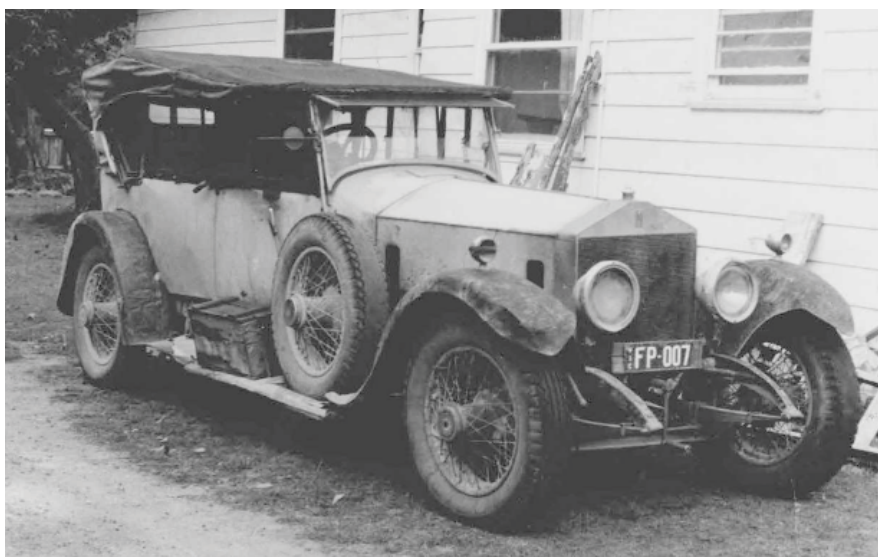
The tourer body fitted had two occasional seats to give the car seven-seat capacity. It was first registered in February 1923 as (Vic) 41.855. Hirst still had the car in c1932 and it is believed that it was kept by him or his family until just before World War II.

By the late 1950s 34YG was with Bill Vickery of Granya, Victoria. Records reveal that work was done to repair the steering defect and stripped rear wheel splines in April 1956, while in October of that year the valves were ground. The vehicle carried registration (Vic) FP.007.

When purchased by Fred Miller Robinson in January 1958 for £50, following an advertisement in the metropolitan newspapers, 34YG was missing its exhaust system, generator, magneto and road wheels while some major components were dismantled.

Wally Vears of the Melbourne suburb of Highett (and Foundation Member of the Victoria Branch - ed), bought the car in 1967, along with its clearly distressed, but intact, original Waring Bros tourer body. 34YG was purchased by John Ham of Mt Macedon in March 1987 and in c1994 by Robert McDermott in Melbourne.

As one of the few original-bodied chassis awaiting restoration, 34YG was purchased by its present owner in 2001. Rebuild of the



above: 34YG taken during the 1950s when owned by Wally Vears. (Vic)

original body was entrusted to R.A. McDermott and Co, Melbourne. Found to be in exceptional order despite its appearance, it has been rebuilt with only minor timber replacement. Panel damage following a 1950s accident has been repaired.

The car's original radiator was withheld when the car was sold in 1967. It has been recently recovered and returned to the chassis. Restoration is well advanced and it is anticipated the car will return to the road in the near future."

The above account was written in 2004 and I have ascertained that since about 2001 34YG has been owned by Achalen Holmes from Narrawong, near Geelong, and that it is currently under restoration. Achalen has kindly sent me some photographs of the car in its present state of reconstruction.

As an aside Achalen did mention that he also has five other Silver Ghosts in various stages of restoration. They are a 1920 high-speed Alpine Eagle 96AE, a 1921 short chassis former Barker limousine 179MG, a 1921 short chassis tourer 81NE, a 1923 long wheel base Chassis 25LK and another 1921 Silver Ghost tourer 96NE (of which I found a period glass-plate negative, when living in Kalgoorlie over 50 years ago, of 96NE parked in front of the Palace Hotel. This photograph has since been published in *Præclarvm* and in Ian Irwin's book). For the enthusiastic reader, descriptive histories, and photographs, of these motor cars appear in Ian Irwin's invaluable reference book, *Silver Ghosts of Australia and New Zealand – Cameo Histories of the Post War Cars* and the Foundation's book *Rolls-Royce and Bentley in The Sunburnt Country*.

below and right: The current state of 34YG: presently under reconstruction.

