

Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia

Without Peer

Bentley Turbo R

by Martin Bennett, 1988



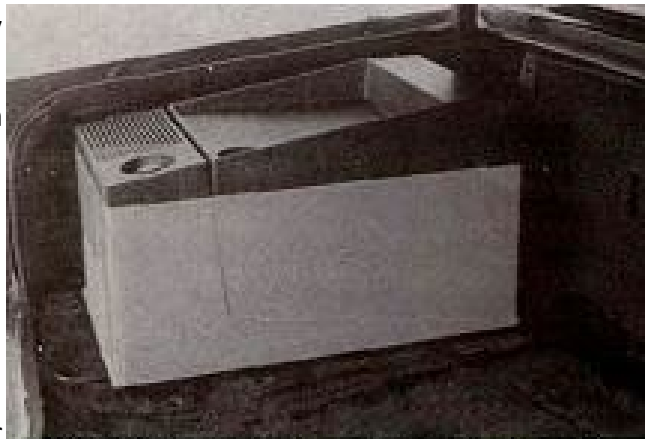
Few Rolls-Royce and Bentley enthusiasts would argue with an assertion that the Bentley Turbo, and more specifically the current Turbo R, is the most remarkable development yet seen from Crewe. It is, in fact, quite unique in that it is the only car in the world of such bulk and weight to be capable of such tremendous performance. Indeed, if performance of the order offered by the Turbo R is what attracts you to a car and you want to be able to see out of it clearly all round, carry your family or friends and their luggage in extreme comfort and not have to bend double to get in and out, then it is the only car that will fulfil your requirements.

York Motors recently delivered a very special Bentley Turbo R of the latest specification to a New South Wales Branch Life Member and former Federal Secretary. I was invited by the owner to view this car at Brian McMillan's Prestige Vehicle Painting who, at the owner's request, had been entrusted with the pre-delivery preparation which was carried out while he was in the U.K. attending the RREC Annual Rally. Subsequently, I was able to photograph the car at the N.S.W. Bentley Drivers Club Concours d'Elegance.



Finished in Moorland Green, this impressive but subtle looking Bentley is the epitome of quiet good taste. The dark green Connolly hide upholstery is extended to the facia padding and kneerolls and the dark green carpets are protected by green lambswool over-rugs. the owner says that he agonised over the choice of colour schemes for a considerable time, wanting something "different", but not loud or ostentatious.

There are several intriguing and beautifully hand-crafted "extras". Below the usual picnic tables which sadly disappeared from Rolls-Royce and Bentley saloons around 1969 - only to enjoy a resurgence in recent years - are two opening compartments containing Staffordshire lead crystal decanters and glasses. Each compartment is lavishly padded and lined with Connolly hide and panelled on the outside with burr walnut and clicks shut with reassuring crispness. The rear seat centre armrest has a hinged lid which when opened reveals a



Keeping the champers cold — a refrigerator in the Bentley.

hallmarked sterling silver vanity set including a long handled mirror, comb, hairbrush and clothes brush. These bespoke additions were carried out by the Special Features Department at Crewe, where craftsmanship of a high order is far from dead. The photographs show these and some of the other extra fitments.

With or without these attractive and practical additional features, the Bentley Turbo R is, of course, a most amazing motor car by any standards. It repeats and brings to perfection a theme which has recurred throughout the post-1931 development of the Bentley car. Before World War II the Bentley was a smaller, lighter, higher-performance version of the concurrent "small horsepower" Rolls-Royce models. A special streamlined high-performance variant of the 1939 Mk V Bentley,

called the "Corniche", aimed at those who wanted something extra in performance, was the forerunner of the Continental, introduced in 1952. The Continental reestablished Bentley as a fast, luxurious touring saloon. Not that the standard Mk VI and R-type saloons didn't qualify - they were faster over long distances than practically any other car of the period - but the Continental was something exceptional, even for a Bentley. In fact, it was the fastest genuine four-seater car in the world.



The car phone — almost indispensable these days — is fitted neatly into the front passenger seat armrest.

The approach taken then to achieve the desired performance, that is by slightly higher effective horsepower gained through use of a larger bore, more efficient exhaust system, higher rear axle ratio and painstaking attention to minimising coachwork weight and maximising aerodynamic efficiency within the necessary styling constraints, was very different from that adopted thirty years later for the Mulsanne Turbo. The higher final drive ratio was still utilised, for effortless low-RPM cruising, but there was no concession whatever to weight saving and the coachwork was the relatively bluff shaped standard saloon body

used for the Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit. The spectacular performance was achieved literally by brute force - by turbo-charging the 6.75 litre V-8 engine.

The Turbo R followed in 1984 and was a natural progression, matching handling and road-holding more closely to the performance capabilities and providing a sportier facia and instruments, complete with tachometer, and new "grippier" seats. Stylish alloy wheels, for the first time on a Rolls-Royce or Bentley car, completed the sporting image. The original Mulsanne Turbo was quietly dropped.

The appeal of the Turbo, and vigorous promotion of the Bentley marque in general, have seen Bentley sales increase from a derisory 5% or so of total Rolls-Royce and Bentley production, to the 50% of today. This is as far as the Company would like it to go, as the Rolls-Royce must, of course, remain the "flagship".

A considerable number of Club members have taken delivery of new Rolls-Royce, and in particular, Bentley cars in recent times, culminating in this especially fine example for the owner .

The Bentley Turbo R - a car Without Peer.



Staffordshire lead crystal decanters and glasses in compartments below the picnic tables behind the front seats