

A Dozen Rolls-Royce Owners in South Australia in 1926
“Miss M. F. Simms, Moseley Street, Glenelg”
1923 Twenty, Chassis 76A5, Smith & Waddington (NSW) Tourer

David Neely, Historical Consultant, Sir Henry Royce Foundation, Australia, 2022

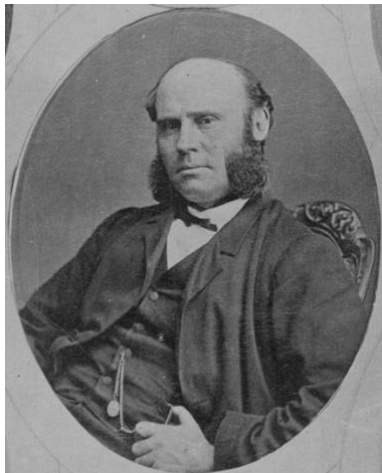
“Rolls-Royce Owners – Twelve in State” was the heading of an article in the 26 January 1926 edition of the Adelaide newspaper ‘News’, which was published from 1923 to 1954.

It continued: “There are 12 owners of Rolls-Royce cars in this State so far as can be ascertained from records. On account of this rather small number casual observers usually look twice if they happen to see a Rolls-Royce purring along. Among those who are stated to own one of these cars, which are regarded as the aristocrats of the road so far as the British automobile industry is concerned are Messrs T. E. Barr Smith, Glen Osmond: T. Tait, Oaklands: C. H. Angas, Angaston: G. Milne, Brougham Place, North Adelaide: J. M. Reid, Victoria Avenue, Unley Park: J. P. Lewis, Nelyambo Station, Wilcannia: Napier Birks, Park Terrace, Parkside: Mesdames W. T. Mortlock, Martindale Hall, Mintaro: L. Hughes, Lee Lodge, Strangways Terrace, North Adelaide: M Symonds, Walkerville: T.R. Scarfe, Eden Park, Marryatville: and Miss M. F. Simms, Moseley Street, Glenelg.”

Muriel Faulkner Simms (1891-1963) was the daughter of Edward Simms (1864-1909) and Emma Louisa Noltenius (1862-1909). Muriel had a twin sister Lorna Faulkner Simms (1891-1972). In 1923 Muriel was living in the former home of her parents at 16 Moseley Street, Glenelg. The population of Glenelg in 1923 was 9,500 and there were 1,760 houses.

Miss Simms’s father’s estate amounted to £80,000 in 1909, equivalent to about 30 new Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost limousines at the time. The Hon William Knox Simms MLA (1929-1897) was Miss Simms’s grandfather. Faulkner in her middle name came from Jane Faulkner (1826-1905) her grandmother.

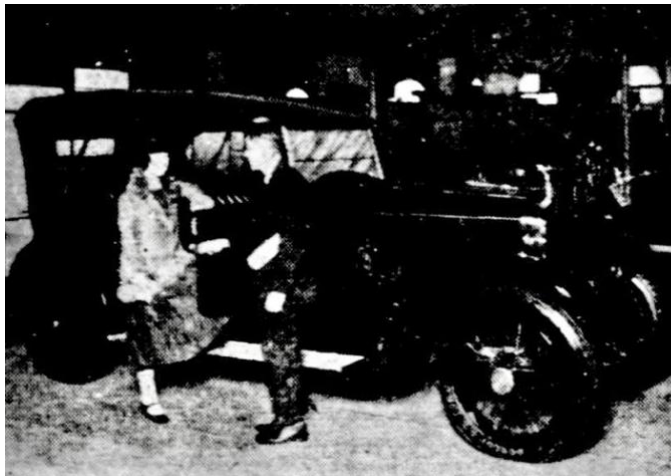
The family’s wealth originated with William Simms, who was a brewer, businessman and politician. Born in England he arrived in the colony in 1845. Six years later he started a brewery



business. Simms became the principal of the brewing firm W K Simms and Co. In 1868 he was elected to the House of Assembly and in 1884 to the Legislative Assembly. The family lived in Colley Terrace, Glenelg, opposite Colley Reserve. “Reputedly the wealthiest man in the colony” by 1897, he left an estate valued at £345,000. No Rolls-Royces in 1897 of course but in present day “Rolls-Royce currency” it would be equivalent to 500 new Rolls-Royce Phantom Vllls!

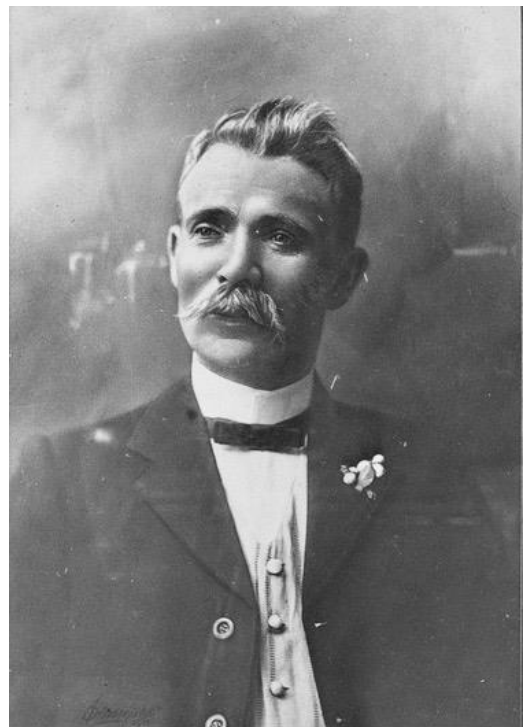
Left: Muriel Simms’s grandfather The Hon William Knox Simms MLA (1929-1897) created the family’s wealth. Simms is pictured here from among the 36 portraits of members of the South Australian House of Assembly in 1872. [State Library of South Australia.]

The testing of the chassis of Twenty 76A5 was completed in July 1923 and delivered to Motors Limited, Adelaide in November of that year. Rather than being bodied in Adelaide, 76A5 was sent to Sydney to be bodied by Smith & Waddington. It took some time from the arrival of the chassis in Australia to the completed car being delivered to Miss Simms. However, it was with Miss Simms in February 1925 and its arrival was greeted in the Adelaide press. "Motors, Limited, report that Miss M F Simms, of Glenelg, has purchased a 20 h.p. Rolls-Royce, with a special body design, built by Smith & Waddington, of Sydney. The car is exceptionally beautiful, and Miss Simms states that she is extremely pleased with its performance.", reported 'The Register' 18 March, 1925. Miss Simms had been driving a 12/16 Sunbeam, which was registered with the number 5407 on 1 April 1915. Most likely it was supplied by the local Sunbeam agents Eyes & Crowle, Ltd.

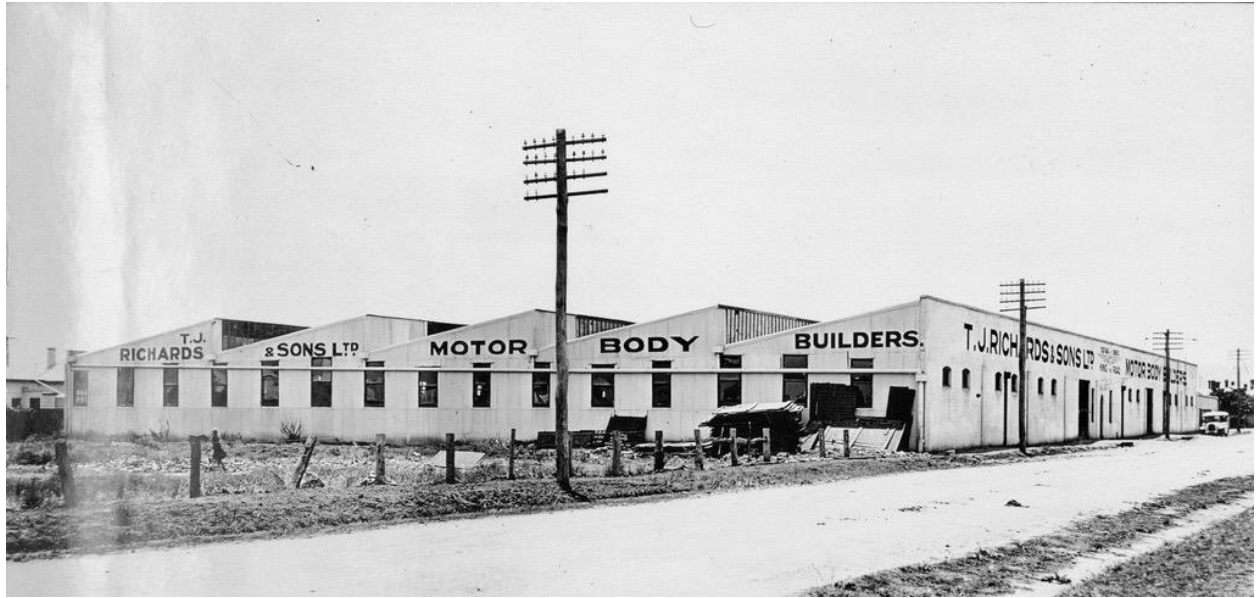


Left: Miss Simms's Twenty 76A5 with the Smith & Waddington body is believed to be in this photograph from the All-British Motor Show from the Adelaide newspaper 'The Register' on 30 July 1925 March. Pictured are Miss Stella Power who was escorted around the show by the organizer, Mr F Leslie Bruford. [Via Ian Irwin.]

Miss Simms had 76A5 re-bodied as a fixed-head coupe by the Adelaide firm of T J Richards & Sons in 1930. She probably kept it until 1946 when it was with T Watson in Adelaide. William F Harrison owned 76A5 in the 1950s. Bill Harrison was a Foundation Member of the South Australia Branch in 1958. George Boseley had it in the 1970s.

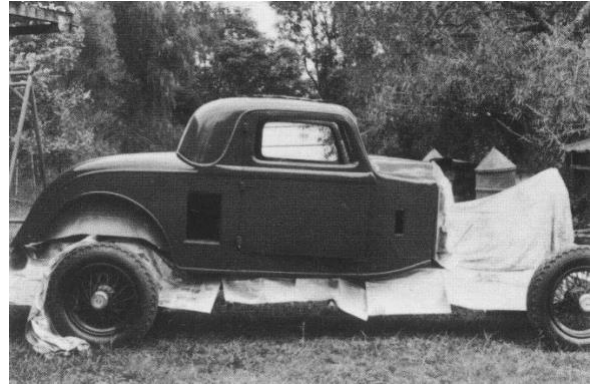


Right: Tobias John Martin Richards (1850-1939) invariably referred to as "T J Richards" opened a small coachbuilding shop in 1885. T J Richards & Sons Ltd began making motor bodies in 1913. The company would eventually form the manufacturing base for Chrysler Australia. [State Library of South Australia.]



***This page:** T J Richards & Sons Ltd 'King of the Road' Motor Body Building factory and premises, Keswick, in 1922. [State Library of South Australia.]*

John Carter joined the NSW Branch in 1976. He bought 76A5 in 1980 and restored the chassis. Alex Brown a former York Motors mechanic and proprietor of Marvalex Motors carried out a complete mechanical overhaul. Carter restored the Richards fixed head coupe at this time. Bill Cutts (NSW HLM-1985) generously offered garage space and his extensive knowledge of Twentys to Carter during the restoration of 76A5. The restoration was completed in time for the June 1981 Federal Rally at Shepparton.

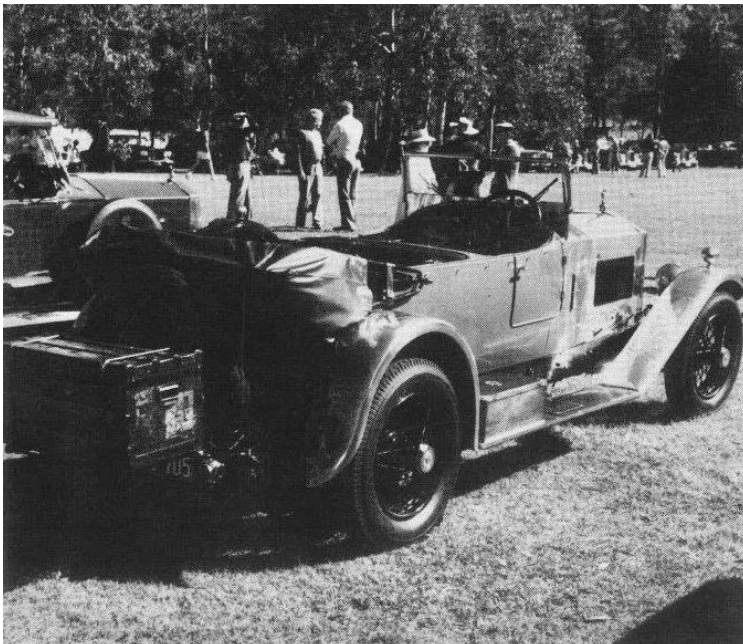


***Above:** The Richards body was restored by John Carter. [June 1983, 'Præclarvm'.]*

***Below:** Twenty 76A5 with the T J Richards & Sons fixed head coupe restored by John Carter. Seen here at the 1981 Federal Rally at Shepparton. [August 1981 'Præclarvm'.]*



John Carter later recounted the restoration in an article published in the June 1983 issue of 'Præclarvm'. He concluded the piece with, "I'm tired of looking at Roger Johnson's Tail Pipe! Big Decision!! - New Body." It was a reference to Roger and Esther Johnson's 1923 Twenty chassis 83K5 with a Smith & Waddington tourer body, which Johnson drove with great gusto. True to his word Carter removed the Richards body and had a tourer body built.



Above: The third body on 76A5 during construction. [Courtesy of Adrian Akhurst.]

Left: Twenty 76A5 at the 1982 Federal Rally at Brisbane with the tourer body commissioned by John Carter. It was awarded the Company Trophy for the best restoration. [August 1982 'Præclarvm'.]

The T J Richards fixed head coupe body went to Philip Grant in Clunes, Vic., for possible use on his GH67 but he then opted to retain the Maddox/Martin & King body always on that chassis and so the Richards was sold to a Phantom II owner in Victoria for use on a Special.

John Carter attended the 1982 Federal Rally in Brisbane and was rewarded when 76A5 with its new tourer body was awarded the Company Trophy for the best restoration. Twenty 76A5 was with Steve Driver in 1985 and Adrian Akhurst (SA) purchased it at a Shannons auction in 2018. In 2022 it passed to Greg Baynton.

Below: Twenty 76A5 nearest in the line-up at Mt Gambier in 2022 celebrating 100 years of the Rolls-Royce Twenty. [Courtesy of Adrian Akhurst.]

