

Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia Library

Silver Ghost 38MG, "Tatania"

by J.G.G. (Sydney), 1971

The car in question is a Silver Ghost, Chassis No. 38 M.G., which was despatched from England as a chassis in August 1921, consigned to Dalgety & Company, Sydney, who were then agents for the makers.



38 M.G. "WEARING" THE JACKSON, JONES & COLLINS LTD. 7-SEATER BODY.

The chassis was fitted with a California top body by Smith & Waddington Limited of Camperdown to seat five people, was painted a medium blue (which was a particular colour made-up by Smith & Waddington and called Rolls-Royce Blue"), with black mudguards and valances. It was sold to Mr. A. Mullens of Strathfield and driven by him and later by Mrs. Mullens who also at times employed a driver, Wilson. After a few years Mrs. Mullens decided to purchase a high-class American car with a saloon body and 38 M.G. was left in the garage and only used as a luggage and hack car.

As could possibly be expected, the high-class American car gave a lot of trouble and consequently 38 MG had to be used a lot more than had been anticipated. So much so, that Mrs. Mullens decided to recondition 38 MG and sell the American car!

In 1935 the existing body was removed and the chassis completely overhauled from front to rear by Appleby & Ward. Whilst this was in progress a new 7-seater limousine body was built and fitted by Jackson, Jones & Collins Limited, again being painted a dark blue with black mudguards. It was used by Mrs. Mullens until after the finish of World War II and Appleby & Ward sold the car for Mrs. Mullens to W.H. Bull Pty. Limited, undertakers of Newton, for the sum of £250.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to establish many exact dates from hereon, but I have been able to trace, I think, all intervening owners, with much help from Mr. Bert Ward.

W.H. Bull Pty. Limited sold the car to Mr. S.E. Watkins who in turn sold it in July 1946, to Mr. Allen Ricketts of Chippendale who lavished care and attention on it until he sold it in November 1950, to a Mr. R.J. Field.

Mr. Field had some ideas of using it as a tourist hire car in the Blue Mountains but was unfortunately unable to do so because the type of upholstery did not meet with the approval of the licencing authorities. He therefore sold the car to a poultry farmer at Kellyville whose name I have been unable to trace. At this stage the car was known to several members of the Club, and I believe was always referred to as "the Kellyville Rolls". The Kellyville owner was not a very sociable gentleman and had some rather unfriendly dogs, therefore, not many people had the opportunity to discuss the car with him!! From the time that Mr. Ricketts sold the car it went steadily downhill. The Kellyville owner sold it to a Mr. Zane Yalaski who apparently intended to work mechanical marvels on it. He went so far as to remove the valves, before one day, whilst engaging in his favourite pastime of using an unauthorised railway crossing, miscalculated and the resultant collision with a passing train led to his sudden demise. Very considerably he was not driving 38 M.G.

Mr. George Willianns bought the vehicle from Yalaski's relics and transferred it to his business premises at Glebe.

On the 30th of October, 1960 I heard quite by accident that Mr. Williams had one Rolls too many for the space available and wanted to sell one, and on the 31st October, 1960, I visited his premises where 38 MG, run-down and dilapidated, minus valves, was standing forlornly if rather majestically, making the surrounding vehicles look like Minis in a parking lot in company with a double-decker bus. Business was soon done, since Mr. Williams required that the vehicle be removed forthwith to give him valuable space, and in due course was safely housed in my garage.

Although in 1935, when the saloon body was commissioned by Mrs. Mullens, it was no doubt considered a thing of beauty, the more I looked at it the less I liked it, so much so, that before long at a Club meeting I announced that should anybody wish to have a 7 seater, aluminium limousine body for a Ghost, they could have one free of charge provided they removed it from the chassis. Very promptly indeed this offer was taken up by the owner of a Rolls-Royce chassis in Canberra who I understand is still driving his car to which this body has been fitted.

Under the front seat of the vehicle was an amazing selection of valves and valve springs, the best of which I sorted out and fitted. The engine was then cleaned and most of the road metal which had accumulated in it removed and then checked over with a view to seeing whether or not 38 MG would in fact run. There came the day when I decided to drain the sump, out of which I obtained a cup of oil and about half a gallon of water, which certainly gave me to think if not to worry. Fillings and flushing's took place and in due course with a

jury rig for petrol to the carburettor after three pulls on the handle she started - she ran like a chaffcutter.

The smoke screen that was sent up would have hidden a whole navy and I did think the mixture was a little rich, since petrol was pouring down the valve stems. I might mention that my battle with the carburettor has not even to this day resulted in victory for me but now I feel I am leading on points.

With much fiddling and help from other Ghost owners, smoother running was achieved, and I was able to drive the vehicle up and down the road to check that transmission etc. was also in working order.

Thirty-eight MG remained a chassis for many long years until 1970 when Graham Wilkinson of Brisbane wrote to the Club stating that he was removing a 7-passenger touring body, circa 1922, from his 1913 chassis and that he was prepared to sell it. I was in Darwin when this announcement was made but fortunately, I was told of this immediately I returned and I was able to acquire it complete with mudguards, hood and windscreen. When the Queensland body was built the bonnet of his car was also modified and the front of the scuttle was therefore not suitable to fit an original firewall.

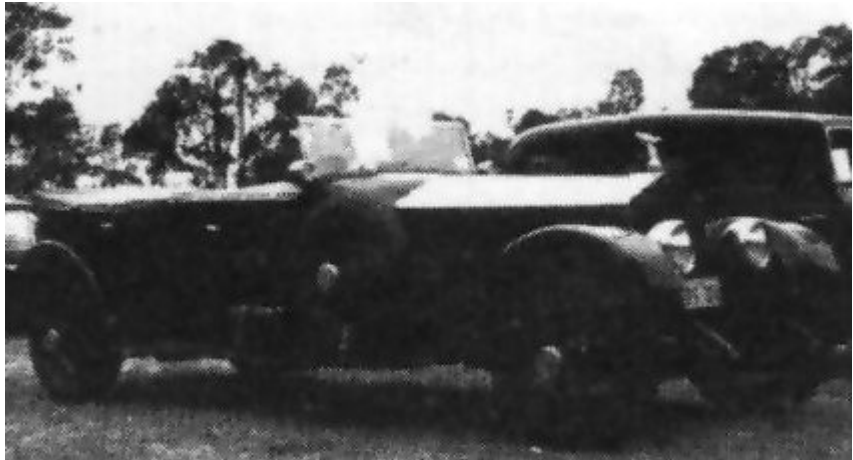
At this stage, therefore, we have 38 MG as a chassis capable of running reasonably well with an almost suitable body in the next bay of the garage. In March 1970, I rashly stated that we would take 38 MG to the Federal Rally in Canberra on the June weekend, completely overlooking the fact that we had some house guests arriving to stay with us until early May. During the first week in May battle was joined, a new scuttle was fitted to the body, body fitted to the car, mudguards, running boards and windscreen and wiper, brakes relined, new king-pins and bushes, new tyres, new wheel bearings, new head and sidelight mountings, generator overhauled, completely rewired and by working every available moment with considerable assistance from my family and other interested members of the Club I was able to present 38 MG to the Waitara Registry Office on the Tuesday before the June weekend where it was passed as roadworthy and issued with Registration No. BDS 701.

Unfortunately, I did not manage to get home from the Registry Office without some trouble which again was carburation. When I did finally get home under my own steam, I found that the whole of the fuel system was completely impregnated with silt and residue from the petrol tank. Here I must thank Mr. George Green very much indeed because on hearing of my dilemma he offered the loan of a tank off one of his cars which I picked up and fitted on the Wednesday and then proceeded to clean the fuel system thoroughly.

Greasing, oiling, draining and refilling and everything else that could be thought of went on, on the Thursday and Friday nights and at 1.30 am. on the Saturday morning I stepped out of the boiler suit in which I had lived every night for weeks and so to bed. We packed the car at 7.30 am. to leave for Canberra, got halfway up the driveway before it stopped, fiddled with the carburettor, got nearly to the top of the driveway before it stopped again, fiddled again

and on the third attempt left the confines of home en route for Canberra. Under the rear tonneau was my insurance - about 1 cwt. of tools, drums of petrol and oil, jack, wheel spanner and for good measure a tow rope and a new boiler suit.

Roger, in his 25/30, followed as mother ship as we breezed along up Razor Back as though it did not exist and it was only just before entering Goulburn that once again 38 MG stopped. By this time I was getting rather expert at fiddling with the carburettor, although while



not knowing exactly what I was doing, by giving it certain treatment the trouble seemed to clear up and from that stop with only a couple of minor checks we drove to Canberra where, although not looking the best of cars it certainly was able to hold its head up as a celebrity convalescing and with every prospect of becoming once again a thing of beauty. My long-suffering wife rode happily in the open front seat, no hood but sporty tonneau, wearing fur boots, hat and coat, ski gloves with a rug overall. The run from Canberra to the Sports Ground was not the happiest because here again certain troubles were experienced with fuel, but in due course we joined the happy throng, although being prudent left a little earlier than most to return to Canberra, as it happened with groundless fears since 38 MG ran beautifully, not only to there but also all the way home to Sydney. Petrol consumption for the round trip 5 mpg - still a trifle rich.

On return to Sydney it was rather interesting to discover under just what circumstances the Silver Ghost will provide locomotion up to 50 mph plus, because on stripping completely the carburettor for the first time since I bought the car I found that not only was the high speed jet seized completely shut but also that the grooves of the jet were solidly packed with petrol residue and that from the moment that I first started the car until this time the high speed jet had been totally inoperative and that the only method of obtaining fuel for the engine had been through the low speed jet. This trouble has now been cleared up which is why I now feel I am leading on points in the battle with the carburettor and feel certain that I will soon achieve 10 mpg.

Stage two of the rehabilitation of 38 MG is currently under consideration, and I am hopeful, although cannot guarantee, that I will be able to attend the next Federal Rally at Shepparton in her new livery, properly upholstered and I hope pleasant to the eye as well as the ear.

Stage three therefore, which is the future, will be reconditioning as required of the mechanicals after which I sincerely hope she will be fully restored to her original excellence.

It is I think usual for people who own such vehicles to name them. This was considered at the time the body was being fitted, and it is a subject to which I think most owners give considerable thought. I felt that a vehicle of this type required a rather regal name and therefore, after much contemplation I decided that I could do no better than call her "Titania".

After all Titania was a queen, Queen of the Fairies, but my selection of this name was influenced by two things which she is imagined having said, in description of herself when she says

I am a spirit of no common rate

second and more important I feel is that she says to the man she currently loves

I will purge thy mortal grossness so that thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

What better description could there be of driving or riding in a Silver Ghost.