

# SHRF Phantom V (5VF159) A Brief History

By: Jeanne Eve / Updated August, 2018

The royalty connection and lack of armour plating in Rolls-Royce was not a good look for the then Prime Minister of Australia, Paul Keating. So the 1967 ex vice-regal Phantom V was sold off at a Sotheby's auction one Sunday morning in Sydney in Hyde Park Barracks. And that was how it ended up in the garage of John Matheson and Jeanne Eve in 1995. Soon after, they read about the Peking to Paris Motor Challenge to be held in 1997. 'Definitely NO more Rolls-Royces can apply as there are already too many. Cars must have charisma' stated the British organizer. John and Jeanne persevered, highlighting its place in Australian history with carrying royalty, Heads of State and VIPs in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. Once accepted, the car's special characteristics remained untouched; blue police light, three flagpoles, cocktail cabinet, silk blinds, intercom system and glass interior partition. On the Challenge, competitors nicknamed it 'Lizzie's Taxi', due to former royal occupants.



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This colonial model limousine with its Mulliner Park Ward body weighs nearly three tonnes with a 6.2 litre engine and 8:1 compression for slow processions. Plus a strong chassis, twin carburettors and drum brakes. For the motor challenge of 16,000 kilometres in 45 days across the snow-capped Himalayas at almost 5000 metres and three deserts under scorching sun, only a few special modifications were added. Namely three plates for undercarriage protection, raised suspension, a trip meter, an extra fuel tank, an extra passenger horn, beefed up headlights, extra radiator fans and radial tyres. Flags for every country were fabricated, two oxygen tanks installed behind the front seats and a specially fitted, quilted sleeping bag made for the car. All were used.

Three cars comprised 'Team Australia' with Gerry Crown and John Bryson in their 1964 Holden EH and the Sackelariou trio in the 1966 Wolseley 24/80. They all finished on time in Paris: the Holden first in its class and fifth overall, the Wolseley came seventeenth and the Rolls-Royce was fifty seventh. Team Australia came 4th out of 23 teams. Ninety four cars departed the Great Wall of China representing twenty three nationalities and only 12 cars failed to finish. Many lost bets on the outcome for the 'most unlikely entry is a gigantic Rolls-Royce' Daily Telegraph, UK. There was no sponsorship and John and Jeanne fundraised for the National Epilepsy Association, Australia.

Once back on home ground, the Phantom V was panel beaten after its week of Iranian stone throwing and misadventure on the Tibetan Plateau, spray painted back to glossy black, dickey seats re-installed and rally equipment removed. It was then donated to the Sir Henry Royce Foundation Australia where it now resides in NSW, under the care of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club and driven regularly to motor events and public display days, as part of Australia's proud motoring heritage.