

# Gilbert steps down, ending an era

Geoffrey Down is our new Honorary Archivist

**G**ilbert Ralph MBE OAM has decided to retire as the Honorary Archivist of the Sir Henry Royce Foundation, a position he has held since the Foundation's establishment some 24 years ago.

During this time Gilbert has established the Archive as the pre-eminent repository of Rolls-Royce and Bentley historical documents and heritage artefacts in Australia. The Archive is recognised internationally for the depth of its Australian collection.

Gilbert has led the team of dedicated volunteers who attend Bill Allsep House on a regular basis to sort, collate and identify many of the photographs and other donated material in the Foundation's Archive.

In his retirement, he will continue his research and writing on matters Rolls-Royce and Bentley, albeit in a deservedly more relaxed manner.

Gilbert's deep interest in Rolls-Royce and Bentley history and his expertise in archive curation and management have been of significant benefit to the Foundation. The Trustees wish to recognise publicly Gilbert's devotion to the position of Honorary Archivist and wish him well in his retirement.

With Gilbert's retirement we welcome Geoffrey Down as the new Honorary Archivist. Geoffrey is a long-standing member of the Victoria Branch of the RROCA and of the 20-Ghost Club. Geoffrey is a professional

museum curator. He has held curatorial positions with several collections of the University of Melbourne and is currently the curator of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' extensive collection of surgical instruments and related heritage material.

With his background in museum and archive management and his deep interest in Rolls-Royce and Bentley history Geoffrey is well placed to take over the Honorary Archivist position from Gilbert.

The Trustees and the volunteers look forward to working with Geoffrey in the further development of the Archive.

## A GENEROUS BEQUEST

The Foundation has received a generous bequest from the late Andrew Alford, of Brisbane. An only child born in 1956 in the Channel Islands, Andrew migrated to Australia with his parents at 19 and was raised in the Catholic faith by his parents, Bob (a carpenter) and Gwen (a hairdresser).



■ **Outgoing Honorary Archivist Gilbert Ralph spent 24 years surrounding himself – sometimes literally – in the treasures of the SHRF Archive. (SHRF photo)**

In Australia, he enjoyed recreation in the Boy Scouts and a state school education where his favourite pastime was reading – he won awards for essay writing.

Though obsessive-compulsive disorder interfered with regular employment as a kitchen hand, his generous nature led him and his mother (till her death in 2010) to be active in church events, after his father died in 1987.

For the last few years, Andrew had worked three to five days a week at the

Holland Park Meals on Wheels kitchen as a volunteer.

Andrew gave careful consideration to a number of charities he'd supported, when drawing up his will in 2020, including the Sir Henry Royce Foundation. He'd read much about Rolls and Royce and wanted to support this charity, whose chief objective is to encourage young people to achieve excellence in engineering. Andrew expressed the wish to see other young men have a better chance in life than he did.

An avid reader, Andrew spent all of his spare time reading as well as buying and selling secondhand books. He died suddenly at the age of 65 years on 9 July, 2021, due to several physical health problems.

This major bequest from Andrew Alford will be used, as per his request, to promulgate Sir Henry Royce's engineering ethos, particularly among young people interested in following a technical/engineering career.

Using Andrew's bequest, the Trustees have decided to establish an investment trust to preserve the capital with only the income being used for the educational outreach.

## FOUNDATION WEBSITE

As a part of the educational outreach of the Foundation the Trustees have a policy to upload to the website research and historical material on Rolls-Royce, Bentley and the associated personalities.

As an example, a series of short notes across a range of topics, written by David Neely, are available to view. There are some interesting research papers on the Spirit of Ecstasy, written by NSW Branch foundation member Barrie Gillings and internationally renowned author Paul Tritton.

We recently uploaded an article on Percy Northey, a famous racing car driver who successfully drove early Rolls-Royce cars in the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy races. This article is well worth a read. ■