

Members and visitors to Bill Allsep House will no doubt have admired the unique models of a Silver Ghost and a 20H.P. on display amongst the Foundation's collection. These two, two-metre long models are the work of one man – the late Claude Mason. He was a member of the Victoria Branch from 1962 until his death. During his period of membership he owned four Rolls-Royce motor cars; a 1925 20H.P. GNK63, a 1925 20H.P. GSK34, a 1926 20H.P. GMJ9 and a 1951 Silver Dawn SDB66. Several of these cars were later owned by other members of the RROCA but according to *Chassis Plate* none are now listed as being held by members of the Club.

Some of the longer-term members will recall Claude as a quietly-spoken gentleman of short stature with a well trimmed greying beard. He attended many Branch functions and several Federal Rallies of which the first was that held in Mildura in 1962 when he participated in GMJ9 with its second body – a four-light Saloon by Southern Motors. This was no ordinary 20H.P.; it had been extensively modified by Claude to enhance its performance. He had purchased GMJ9 in 1955 and spent several years restoring the body and overhauling its engine. He explained his philosophy in an article in the RROCA *Quarterly Magazine* of Autumn 1964 in which he wrote:

*On completion of the body and chassis restoration which included major work on the engine, it occurred to me that since the period 1922/28, during which the 20 h.p. was produced, a number of improvements and modifications had been introduced and incorporated in the later models of Rolls-Royce and Bentley.*

*I therefore considered it reasonable to expect that introduction of some of the later developments would improve the 20 h.p. model's performance, increase its efficiency and make it more pleasant to handle by eliminating most of the manual controls.*

*The following is a summary of replacements and additions.*

*Two SU carburetters and a new manifold*

*An air cleaner and silencer*

*A filter built into the oil filler cap*

*A tool box in place of vacuum tank*

*The original starter motor switch was replaced with a Lucas solenoid type*

*A full flow oil filter*

*A vacuum operated distributor*

*Two SU fuel pumps*

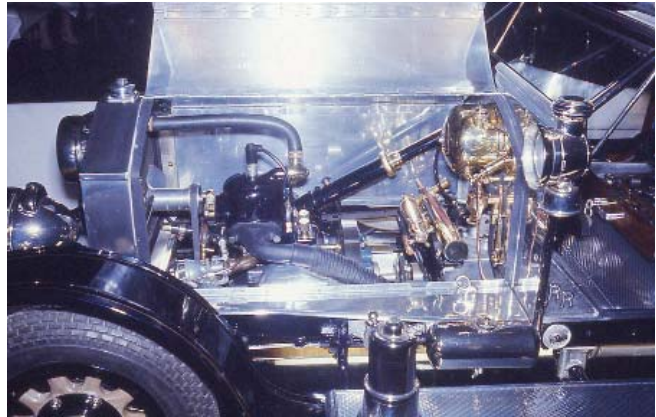
*A breather pipe from rocker cover to the air cleaner*

Claude went on to describe these modifications and the improvement in performance which resulted. He added a note that he had *kept the original parts in case some future owner may*

## From the Sir Henry Royce Claude Mason Gilbert M Ralph



above: Claude Mason's 1907 Silver Ghost which was the winner of the Federal Rally in Shepparton.



above: Detail of the wheel and front axle of the Silver Ghost model

above left: The two-cylinder horizontally opposed Velocette engine in the 20H.P. model  
above right: The 3hp Master Pup two-stroke engine in the Silver Ghost model (photo: B Gillings)



above: An underside view of the rear axle and differential of the Silver Ghost model



left: Detail of rear wheel of the Silver Ghost model (photo: B Gillings)

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centre of attention at the 1971



above: David Kenway demonstrating the driving position on the Silver Ghost

below: Portrait of Claude Mason late in life



above: unveiled at the Ninth Federal Rally in Mildura in June 1967 was this model based on a 1922, 20H.P.



above: the view from the driver's seat of the 20H.P. model



right: the detailed tool kit

wish to replace them. Does any reader know the present whereabouts of this car?

An outstanding feature of the Ninth Federal Rally at Mildura in June 1967 was the unveiling of a two metre-long drivable model of a 1922 20H.P. which had been built by Claude Mason over a period of a couple of years. Apart from the 198cc horizontally opposed, water cooled engine, Claude manufactured most of the other components including the chassis, wheels, axles, differential, steering and the body work. Even the tool kit is made to scale. The attention to detail must be seen to be believed.

In retirement Claude continued working on another model – a 1907 Silver Ghost which was the centre of attention when unveiled at the Formal Dinner at the 1971 Federal Rally at Shepparton. The Silver Ghost model, which has a Master Pup single cylinder two-stroke engine No P746, is heavier and more complex than the 20H.P..

To enable these model cars to be driven by adults Claude hinged the front seats in such a manner that they folded back to allow enough leg room to operate the foot pedals. The steering is said to be light and direct. Whilst each car has a gear lever it appears that the levers are more for show than functionality.

Both models are outstanding examples of a skilled artisan. Claude was a capable pattern maker and his skill as a tool maker, moulder, machinist, metal worker, electrician, carpenter, upholsterer and painter are self evident. He executed most of the work in his own well-equipped workshop at Coburg. When finished he proudly displayed the fruits of his extraordinary talents in the lounge room of his home in Bell Street, Coburg. After his death Claude's family kindly offered the two cars to the Sir Henry Royce Foundation on permanent loan for display at the Fox Museum and subsequently at Bill Allsep House.

Claude Mason was awarded the Victoria Branch Clubman of the Year Trophy in 1966 presumably in recognition of his outstanding achievement in producing the first of his two models. He was also a highly regarded member of the Coburg Historical Society and I am indebted to them for providing some detail of his life in an article published in their periodical, Search, in June 2001. They record that, *Claude Mason was born in 1911 in Coburg and attended the Coburg State School...he gained an apprenticeship at Melbourne Motor Engineering, a car repair shop in South Melbourne.* In the 1930s an influential uncle assisted Claude in taking control of Alpha Engineering which operated a foundry at Coburg and it was here that he developed his skill in pattern making and casting intricate alloy and aluminium components.

Claude and his brother, Tom, shared an interest in motorcycles and they had an extensive collection of beautifully restored machines which were displayed in the house with the two model Rolls-Royce cars. There is a comprehensive description of the C and T Mason collection in *The James Flood Book of Motorcycling in Australia.*