



## The First Owner of 1926 Rolls-Royce Phantom I Chassis 44SC

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'Rolls-Royce and Bentley in the Sunburnt Country', by Tom Clarke and David Neely, records that chassis 44SC completed testing in February 1926. It then went to the English firm of Arthur Mulliner of Northampton where a saloon body was fitted. The first owner was "A J J Lucas". There was, however, no photograph of the original coachwork when the book was published in 1999, and nothing further about the first owner, other than he lived in Melbourne.

ACT Branch member Alastair Kinloch, and former owner of 44SC, received a photograph from the grandson on the original owner - pictured above. It shows the Arthur Mulliner coachwork and A J J Lucas standing proudly in front of his new Rolls-Royce in 1927. Photographs from this time of Rolls-Royces when new are always a delight to discover and more so when the first owner is included, as is the case here. Now we have a photograph of A J J Lucas we need to find out more about him. These cars were expensive so it's always interesting to discover where the money came from.

Behind this string of initials, A J J L, is the quintessential migrant success story, a Greek-Australian, enterprising restaurateur, highly respected leader of his community and noted philanthropist. He was born Antonios Ioannis Gerasimos Lekatsas in 1862 on the Greek island of Ithaca. He left his hometown in 1886 and quickly began to build his fortune in Melbourne, starting with a confectionary store. On 7 December 1903 the name with which he was naturalized in the State of Victoria was Antony John Jerus Lucas.



**Above left:** Antonios Ioannis Gerasimos Lekatsas (1862-1946) was naturalized in the State of Victoria in 1903 with the name, Antony John Jerus Lucas. [Ancestry.]



**Above right:** Margaret Wilson (1872-1942) was born in Melbourne. Her father, Robert Wilson, was an auctioneer and estate agent. [Ancestry.]



In 1893 Lucas married Margaret Wilson (1872-1942) and they had six daughters. Margaret was the head of the fur department of Foy & Gibson. A thrifty, shrewd businesswoman, she and Lucas opened the Town Hall Café in Swanston Street, Melbourne in 1894. It occupied two floors, accommodated 650 diners and employed a mostly Greek staff of 70. Encouraged by the success of the Town Hall Café, Lucas opened two more restaurants in Melbourne. The Paris Café in Collins Street in 1904. In 1908 Lucas took over the Vienna Café in Collins Street and operated it to 1927. In 1938 the Hotel Australia opened on the site of the former Vienna Café.

**Left:** The Town Hall Café opened in 1894. [Ancestry.]



In 1904 Lucas sought restaurant opportunities in Sydney. Announced in the Sydney press, in September 1904 Lucas acquired the Vienna Café in King Street and renovated it with seating to accommodate 350 patrons. Elaborate gold-framed mirrors adorned the walls and 420 chairs were specially made and upholstered in Morocco leather. A total of 104 tables were also made to order. A permanent orchestra was to be retained, “and the most popular selections will be rendered for the pleasure of patrons of the new café.” At the same time Lucas secured premises in Hunter Street for a bake-house, in which three first-class pastrycooks were employed.

In Melbourne during World War I, when anti-German sentiment was rife, a group of drunken soldiers, incensed that the Vienna Café bore the name of the enemy, stoned the premises and threatened its patrons. Lucas closed the café and hired Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony Griffin to remodel it. Griffin was in Australia to oversee the building of Canberra. The contract allowed him to set up private practices in Melbourne and Sydney. Responding to the prevailing mood, Lucas named the venture the Australia Café. The gala opening in November 1916 was attended by prominent Melburnians, including opera singer, Nellie Melba.



*Above: The Paris Café opened in 1904. [Ancestry.]*



*Left: The Australia Café. [Story of Melbourne.]*



**Above:** The Australia Café Fountain Court with furniture designed by Walter and Marion Griffin. [Story of Melbourne.]



**Left:** Walter Burley Griffin (1876-1937) and Marion Mahony Griffin (1871-1961) at Castlecrag, Sydney, in 1930. [Wikimedia Commons.]



**Above and right:** Australia Café chair and table (1916) designed by Walter and Marion Griffin for the Australia Café. It was manufactured by H Goldman Manufacturing Co., Melbourne from Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), plywood and leather. [National Gallery of Victoria.]



***Above:*** The Australia Café stairs to the main balcony. [Story of Melbourne.]

***Below:*** The Australia Café Greek Muses. [Story of Melbourne.]





In early 1920 Lucas with partners oversaw the demolition the Town Hall Café and the construction of Melbourne's first large scale elaborate picture palace, known as the Capitol Theatre, which is now heritage listed. Lucas again employed the Griffins to design both the theatre and the ten-storeyed office building placed above. The Capitol opened in November 1924.



**Above:** A pen and ink drawing of the Capitol Theatre Building, Swanston Street, Melbourne. [Wikimedia.]



**Left:** The ceiling of the theatre. [Wikimedia.]

**Below:** The entrance lobby. [Wikimedia.]



The Lucas family “lived above the shop” of the Town Hall Café. With rising wealth their accommodation took a marked upswing and in 1918 Lucas purchased the Toorak property, ‘Whernside’, a two-storeyed, 20-roomed brick mansion. In 1928 they moved to the grand estate of ‘Yamala’ on the Mornington Peninsula. ‘Yamala’ described at the time as a fourteen-roomed early English-style mansion, with electricity, on 32 acres with its own beach front and magnificent lawns and gardens. Lucas again commissioned the Griffins to redesign the house and gardens.



**Left:** The Toorak mansion, ‘Whernside’. [State Library of Victoria.]



**Left:** Antony and Margaret Lucas. [Ancestry.]



**Below:** ‘Yamala’ on the Mornington Peninsula. [State Library of Victoria.]



When in December 1920 Lucas departed for an extended tour of Europe he left instructions that a number of his cars be sold: a Hotchkiss 30 h.p., laudaulette; a Delaunay Belleville 30 h.p. tourer; a 1919 Dodge 25 h.p. double-seater; and, a Talbot 15-20 h.p. also a double-seater.

One of the founders of the Greek Orthodox community in Melbourne in 1897 Lucas was many times its president. He played a prominent role in the Greek Orthodox Church and undertook many philanthropic activities. The Ithacan Philanthropic Society was formed in 1916 to support and assist Ithacan Greeks, at the time mainly men, who settled in Melbourne. Lucas was an avid supporter of the Lord Mayor's Hospital Appeal and from 1931 was well known for donating £100 every year on his birthday.

Lucas was the Greek Consul General to Australia from 1921 to 1925, then Consul of Greece in Victoria from 1931 to the time of his death in 1946. Margaret was killed in a motor accident four years earlier. Lucas left an estate of £133,129, equivalent to 32 of the then brand-new model Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith. Using Rolls-Royce "currency", with 32 present-day model Rolls-Royce Phantom VIIs the estate would amount to about \$30 million.

The Phantom I was rebodied by the Melbourne firm of Martin & King in 1939. 44SC was later registered with the eldest daughter, Eirene Palinas Lucas (1893-1970) and the fourth daughter, Marea Victoria Penelope Lucas (1901-1985). It remained in the family until Lucas's death in 1946. Amongst the next owners of 44SC were RROCA Victoria Branch members, Val Stocks, from 1967 to 1973 and Colin Haeusler from 1973 to 1981. As mentioned, Alastair Kinloch was also a previous owner. He acquired 44SC in 1989 and had it for about 30 years. The car then went to Malaysia.

***Below:** This photograph of 1926 Phantom I, chassis 44SC, with the Martin & King body is from 'Rolls-Royce and Bentley in the Sunburnt Country'. It was taken in 1959 by Wally Vears, who founded the Victoria Branch of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia in 1957.*

