

An Interesting Episode in the History of Rolls-Royce Clubs:

A Proposed Technical Federation of Rolls-Royce Clubs

Margaret Gillings

World War II had seen the rapid development of aviation technology and it was not surprising that this continued in the post-war period. Of course, Rolls-Royce Limited was well and truly in the forefront of this industry. The late 1960s and early 1970s were often referred to as 'The Jet Age'.

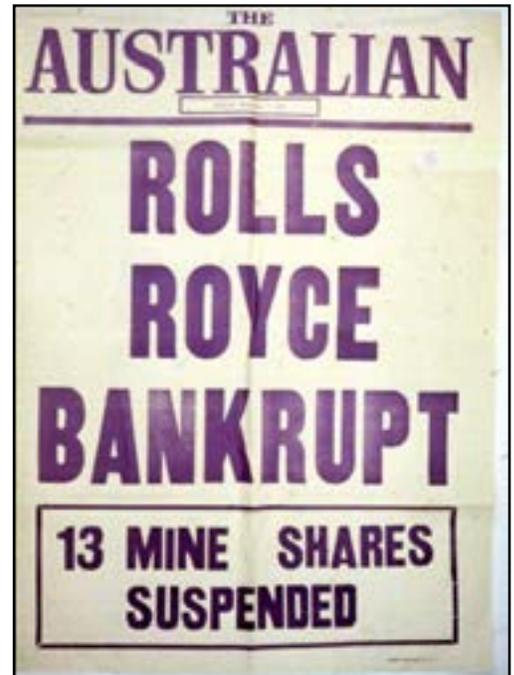
What we may now refer to as 'The A List' was then 'The Jet Set'

It must be remembered that Rolls-Royce Limited included both the Aviation and the Car divisions. In 1971 the Car division was producing both the incredibly successful and profitable Silver Shadow and the Bentley T. But all was not so well in the Aviation division.

This story is best told with extracts from various publications at the time:

Praeclarum Vol5. No. 1 April 1971

On 5th February 1971 the House of Commons was informed that Rolls Royce Limited was in serious financial difficulty because of its inability to produce working capital for the R.B.211 Tristar contract with Lockheed in the United States. Since Rolls-Royce Limited supplies the air forces of most of the democratic countries with engines and components, it was announced that the United States Government would purchase the essential assets. No liabilities would be inherited by any nationalised United Kingdom Company for claims by Lockheed or other companies.



PRESS STATEMENT - by D.A.S. Plastow.

Managing Director Rolls-Royce Limited Motor Car Division, Crewe. 22nd March 1971.

ROLLS-ROYCE MOTORS LIMITED

The formation of a new company Rolls-Royce Motors Limited is announced today by Mr.E.R.Nicholson the receiver and manager of Rolls-Royce Limited. He also announces that he has entered into an unconditional contract for the transfer to Rolls-Royce Motors Limited, from Rolls-Royce Limited of the assets and undertakings comprising the businesses of the motor car division and the oil engine division. The latter will in future be known as the diesel division. These arrangements will be effective from 24th April 1971.

The transfer also includes the coachbuilding business of H.J. Mulliner Park Ward Limited and the business of Bentley Motors.

The receiver has appointed the following persons to be Directors -
Dr. F. Llewellyn Smith - Chairman; Mr. N. Parry; Mr. D.A.S. Plastow.

However:

In March 1971 a new company was incorporated to take over the manufacture of the Car division – it will produce Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars, diesel engines, specialist engines and transmission equipment.

In 1973, the British government sold the Rolls-Royce car business to allow nationalised parent Rolls-Royce (1971) Limited to concentrate on jet engine manufacture. This company is Rolls-Royce Motors.

But what did all this mean for existing Rolls-Royce and Bentley owners with the need for spare parts?

Nigel Hughes from the UK recently commented:

“I seem to remember that R-R had not realised that many potential customers for Silver Shadows were also owners of pre-war cars and linked continuing spare parts availability to their potential purchase.”

In January 1971, **Tony Guerrero**, International Relations Vice President of the American Club wrote to Barrie Gillings to establish contact with the RROCA with a regard to forming a Technical Federation of RR Clubs.

This is an extract from his letter. It probably came as quite a surprise to the company management to find that there were enthusiasts who would go as far as travelling around the globe to secure the future of their cars.

First: I am going to call a Meeting for the purpose of creating a Technical Federation of RR Clubs. The time Thursday the 10th of June 1971. The place probably the offices of R-R Ltd, Conduit Street, London. This place is tentative pending the approval of Dennis Miller-Williams of R-R. I sincerely hope that you have somebody there to represent you. Otherwise I shall do it, if you wish, if I can get exactly your position by means of some corresponding. You have my tentative schedule but just in case I am enclosing one for your consideration. Please let me know your opinion on the different items.

Our Australian representative at the first meeting in 1971 was **Tom Clarke**, a Western Australian member and Barrie Gillings was there for the second one in 1972. Barrie took the photo below.

Present in 1972 were:

Colonel E. Barrass, Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club
Mr. J Craig, Rolls-Royce Motors Limited
Mr. H. Ferguson-Wood, Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of America
Dr. B. Gillings, Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia
Major A. Heathcote, 20-Ghost Club
Nigel Hughes, Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club
Mr. D.E.A Miller-Williams, Rolls-Royce Motors Limited
Mr. A Murgatroyd, Appleyard Rippon Limited
Mr. S. Sedgwick, Bentley Drivers' Club
Sir A. Stamer, Bentley Drivers' Club
Miss S. Taylor, Midlands Rolls-Royce Club
Mr. R Young, Rolls-Royce Motors Limited

(Except for Nigel Hughes, in the foreground with his back to camera, I am not certain of who is which)

As far as I know, no Technical Federation was ever actually formed but the attendance of Mr. Murgatroyd from Appleyard Rippon may offer some explanation. Was it then that the commercial spare parts dealers saw the opportunity?



Anyone who is interested in seeing the original correspondence and/or the minutes of these meetings could go to:

<https://www.henryroycefoundation.com>