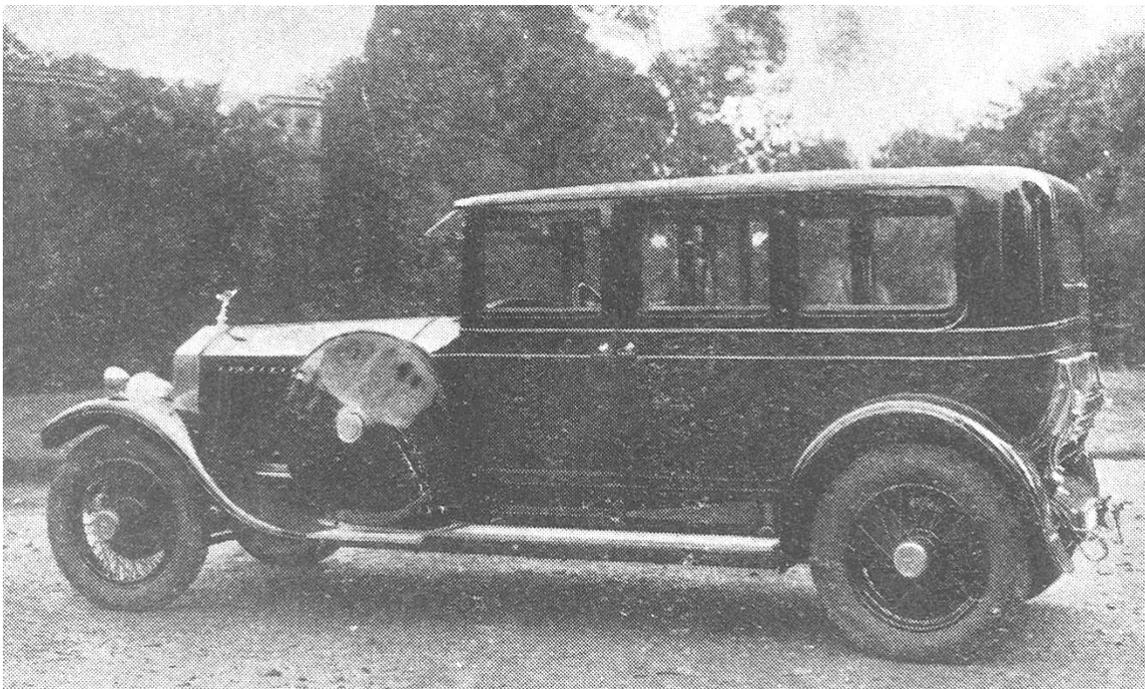


IN THE
REAR-VIEW MIRROR

ROLLS-ROYCE SMASH - TWO KILLED



The Smith & Waddington limousine body shown here on 1926 Phantom I, 111DC, was destroyed in the horrific accident on 1 November 1931.

This photograph was published in 'Motor Life', 21 May 1927 and was reproduced in 'Rolls-Royce and Bentley in the Sunburnt Country', page 186 along with the chassis history.

"TWO KILLED IN TERRIFIC CAR SMASH. GREG. MCGIRR'S ROLLS-ROYCE WRECKED."

was the alarming headline in 'The Canberra Times', 2 November 1931. The shocking incident, which took place on Sunday 1 November 1931, was widely reported around the country, in 'The Mercury' (Hobart, TAS), the 'Barrier Miner' (Broken Hill, NSW), the 'Examiner' (Launceston, TAS), 'The West Australian' (Perth, WA), 'The Brisbane Courier' (QLD), and the 'Western Argus' (Kalgoorlie, WA). There are some slight discrepancies in the reports, particularly with spelling of names, but essentially this is what happened.

Two persons were killed and five injured, two critically, when a Rolls-Royce car belonging to Mr. Greg. McGirr, and a Studebaker service car, plying between Orange and Sydney, collided with terrific force on the Western Road near Marrangaroo, near Lithgow. "The body was torn from the chassis of the Rolls-Royce while the front portion of the service car was telescoped. The crash was witnessed by residents of a house a few yards from the road."

Among the casualties the two killed were Miss Mary McNamara, of 'Beechwood', Allathorne Avenue, Drummoyne, with a fractured skull and Ian Tully, of 2 Bridge Street, Orange, also with a fractured skull.

Those injured were William (elsewhere given as Cuthbert) Murray Gibbes, of Sydney, a well known singer and composer, who suffered a fractured skull and was in a critical condition, Miss Kattie (elsewhere given as Lottie) Derwin, 29, of The Boulevard, Lewisham, fractured skull, abrasions to the body and also in a critical condition, Miss Merle Cox, of Helen Street, Westmead, fractured arm, injuries to the ankle, abrasions to body and shock. William Rourke, 33, the driver of the Rolls-Royce, of 214 Falcon Street North Sydney, suffered head injuries and abrasions to the body. Edwin Dooley, 31, the driver of the service car, of 7 Marcel Avenue, Randwick, sustained a fractured arm, head injuries, shock, and abrasions.

The accident occurred shortly before one p.m. Both vehicles met head on while travelling at a high speed over a long stretch of concrete roadway. The Rolls-Royce was proceeding to Parkes, where the occupants, Mr Gibbes, (some reports add Miss M. Gibbes though there is no mention of her injuries) Miss McNamara and Miss Derwin were to take part in a concert. The driver was William Rourke. The other car was proceeding to Sydney. The driver was Edward Dooley, and beside him on the front seat were Tully and Miss Cox. The passengers in the service car stated that the driver did not appear to notice the other vehicle until they were within 30 yards of each other. The driver of the Rolls-Royce, was stated to have immediately applied the brakes, "the vehicle skidding over the whole distance without diminishing its speed to any appreciable extent."

Some reports added, "A tragic circumstance was the discovery among the debris of a wreath bearing the letter R.I.P. Tied to the wreath were black ribbons. The wreath was placed on the service car when it left Orange as a sardonic thrust at the Transport Board in restricting motor services, for it was to be the last trip of the car in the service before the new regulations came into force. No one dreamed that the last journey would end so disastrously."

The 'Windsor and Richmond Gazette' (NSW) reported on 6 November 1931 that Dooley, the driver of the service car, had been "discharged from hospital, and charged with manslaughter and dangerous driving."

The 'Windsor and Richmond Gazette' (NSW) again reported on 11 December 1931 on an inquiry held at Lithgow by the Coroner, Mr. J. A. Bamber. The article was headed "CONCRETE ROAD SMASH THREE PEOPLE KILLED". In addition to the deaths of McNamara and Tully reported at the time of the accident Cuthbert Murray Gibbes died after admission to hospital. Edwin Lee Dooley (elsewhere Edward Leigh) was charged with manslaughter.

Sergeant Purden, "stated that on examination of the scene of the accident he saw no brake marks on the road which could have been caused by the service car. The Rolls-Royce had been pulled off the road when he arrived, and the body appeared to have been knocked off it. Skid marks for about 5 yards had apparently been caused by the Rolls-Royce. The accident occurred at a spot where there was a clear vision for both drivers." Claims and counter claims were made, however, "The coroner committed Edwin Lee Dooley, the driver of the service car, for trial to any Court of Quarter Sessions which the Attorney General might appoint and allowed him bail of £25 and one surety in £25."

'The Sydney Morning Herald' 7 December 1932 reported in the heading, "MOTOR CAR COLLISION", "McGirr v Dooley. John Joseph Gregory McGirr sued Edward Leigh Dooley to recover £1000 damages for alleged negligence resulting in the collision between the plaintiff's Rolls-Royce motor car and the defendant's car on the main road between Lithgow and Parkes at about 1 p.m. on November 1, when the plaintiff's car was being driven from Sydney to Parkes by the plaintiff's driver. Defendant pleaded that he was no guilty. The action is part heard."

The Rolls-Royce was 1926 Phantom I, 111DC, a Smith & Waddington limousine, owned, as mentioned, by Greg McGirr, M.L.A., Parkes, NSW. John Joseph Gregory McGirr (1879-1949) was a pharmacist and owned 43 country hotels, which might explain why the group of entertainers were travelling in his Rolls- Royce from Sydney to Parkes.

[Acknowledgement: This item comes from 'Trove', a National Library of Australia website (trove.nla.gov.au), which provides access to digitised newspapers.]

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The Sir Henry Royce Foundation - Australia
2020.