

WHOSO overcomes his UNCLE by not freeing his TORSO

By Gavin Sandford-Morgan, 1970

The commencement of this codified form of communication was really quite innocent and simple.

I was experiencing some trouble with the carburettor of my Six Cylinder 40/50 Rolls-Royce and had come to the conclusion that the trouble might lie in a worn throttle body. I therefore cabled the Factory, asking them to send me a new throttle body. A day or so later, back came the reply:

ADVISE WHETHER PRAWN OR PAPAW

Well now, that's a good question. Leaving aside the somewhat unfriendly overtones (for an Australian) in the word PRAWN, there still lay the personal preference for seafood or tropical fruit. Since I happen to like both, there was a distinct danger of my being led off down an interesting gastronomical by-way, but I put these possibilities sternly to one side, and concentrated on the matter in hand.

Coming back to the carburettor, in some puzzlement I cabled back:

PREFER PRAWN TO PAPAW AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, BUT STILL NEED THROTTLE BODY AS WELL

I might have realised, of course, that I wouldn't have been let off so lightly, and true to Rolls-Royce tradition, the legendary insistence on detail, and correctly specified detail at that, back came the stern reply:

TIME OF YEAR NOT RELEVANT STOP DO YOU REQUIRE PRAWN WITH HUMAN PROBE PRONG AND PROOF?

SUGGEST YOU CHECK PATOR

Now, this is hardly the sort of cable one expects to receive from Rolls-Royce. While I grant that my dear departed Pater would have promptly grasped the subtleties of both the apparent and the real wording of the cable, I didn't quite see Rolls-Royce's justification for dragging him into it. After all, I've always been in the forefront of those who, rightly, debunk the story that one's antecedents are carefully studied by Rolls-Royce before a decision is made to let you have one of their cars or not.

Getting down to brass tacks (and being a Northern Firm, the choice of the adjective is deliberate), I firmly believe that the only research that Rolls-Royce ever did, or do, into a potential buyer's antecedents is to ensure that the cheque is likely to be met by the bank. And very prudent too.

Meanwhile, back at the carburettor. I'll thank you, gentlemen, to leave my Pater (even if you can't spell it) out of this PROOF or no PROOF.

I was about to consult my Solicitors, to see what grounds I had for a profitable libel action, before placing the whole correspondence in the hands of the Attorney-General for prosecution of the offending Company for "using Her Majesty's Postal Service for the conveyance of suggestive messages", when I decided to make a final check of my "Catalogue of Parts for Six Cylinder 40-50 H.P. Rolls-Royce Car".

It was then that I found that Rolls-Royce were in fact merely taking "advantage of using the code word, being that in the event of an error in a telegram [not R-R, you note] the word may be recognised, whilst an error in a number would probably [margin even here, for R-R to rise above even abnormal difficulties] lead to despatch of a part totally different from the one required".

Jolly good - ten out of ten for R-R - with, perhaps, one off for over confidence.

I then laboriously worked out the appropriate code-words and replied:

PATOR FITS WELL WITH REASONABLE TOLERANCE AND WITHOUT UNDUE INTERFERENCE STOP

WHAT PRICE PRICE?

Reply came back:

PRICE PRICE 3/6 SUGGEST NEW PROSY

From which I wondered whether R-R had referred my cable to their Controller of Modern English Usage (R-R Edition) for adverse comment on my choice of wording and phraseology.

From then on, of course, the temptation to couch all correspondence on R-R matters in terms of their own code, now that the potentials of such a means of communication had been glimpsed, was almost irresistible. After all, who could resist the temptation to replace his magneto on its FITLY, taking care to engage the FLOSS, and then tighten down the FIVES with the FLUES on the FLOUR?

Or to ponder the sober thought that the main screw which locates the petrol filter, and retains the essential air pressure is forever labelled UNDUN?

Shortly after this interchange with R-R a new man joined my service, his duties being, primarily, the care, maintenance, humouring, nurturing and operation of my 40/50 h.p. car. In his systematic way, he asked to be given detailed written instructions on his duties and responsibilities. In particular, he asked for detailed instructions on the actual operation of the Rolls-Royce car. In view of the obvious advantages of inculcating him properly into all the atmosphere of the R-R mystique, I therefore prepared the following instructions:

- Approach KNACK, unscrew KNEAD, and check water level.
- Move INCUR through 90° and see if oil emerges from HIPPI by way of INDEX screwed into DRONE.
- Undo RUDDY UNDRU.
- Peer down ROWDY to assess petrol level.
- Do up UNDRU, tightly, using VIBAC.
- Having set UNCAB correctly, to 'BOTH', pump vigorously on UNAKA, when, after a while a pressure reading should reluctantly appear on the SCENE - always assuming that none of your UNDUN are, in fact, undone.
- Set MUSER to MUSIC, and undulate PSALM. (Difficulty here if not C of E or Hebrew?)
- Grasp firmly JEBES, HUNGER or HURDLE, depending on Series, and pull engine over six times.
- Move MASON or AUBURN (Auburn? - how did that get in? - I thought this was a Rolls-Royce), to 'B' and the engine should rumble into life.
- Mount, seat, and check that JUPES is showing pressure, thus indicating that HUTCH is pumping and DRYLY is not operating dryly - a terrible thought.

- Grasp MUGGY, depress WHOSO (or ULTRA), give UNCLE a few preliminary jabs.
- Taking care not to press the VICAR, engage first gear with VIAND. Release TINGE with TORSO (or PICNIC, CHORUS), and as you release WHOSO you should move off, accompanied by a gentle choofing from your JELEE.
- In case of emergency, UNBAR!

Bibliography: Illustrated Catalogue of Parts for Six Cylinder 40-50 H.P. Rolls-Royce Car - Series 1100, 1200, 1300, together with some references to volume covering up to Series 2600.

ROLLS-ROYCE CODE

WHOSO - Clutch pedal	HIPPI - Crankcase lower half
UNCLE - Accelerator pedal	INDEX - Oil level cock
TORSO - Side brake release	DRONE - Oil filter inspection cover
PRAWN -Throttle body (Series 1100)	RUDDY - Petrol filler plug (Series 1100 and 1200)
PAPAW - Throttle body (Series 1200 and 1300)	UNDRU - Petrol filler plug (Series 1300)
HUMAN - Throttle body union	ROWDY - Filter for petrol filler
PROBE - Throttle cylinder end	VIBAC - Spanner for petrol filler plug
PRONG - Throttle linkage bracket	UNCAB - Three way air tap
PROOF - Throttle lever	UNAKA - Air hand pump
PATOR - Jet nozzle, low speed	JUPES - Oil pressure gauge
PRICE - Throttle piston valve	MUSER - Governor lever
PROSY - Throttle link	MUSIC - Ignition lever
FITLY - Magneto bedplate	PSALM - Carburetter float
FLOSS - Magneto bedplate steady pin	JEBES - Starting Handle
FIVES - Magneto clip	HUNGER - Starting Handle
FLUES - Magneto lock nut	HURDLE - Starting Handle
FLOUR - Magneto tie rod	MASON - Battery ignition switch
UNDUN - Petrol filler cap screw	AUBURN - Battery ignition switch
KNACK - Radiator	HUTCH - Oil pump
KNEAD - Radiator filler cap	DRYLY - Crankshaft
INCUR - Oil level cock lever	MUGGY - Steering wheel

WHOSO - Clutch Pedal

ULTRA - Clutch pedal

VIAND - Change gear lever

VICAR - Reverse trigger

TINGE - Side brake lever

TORSO - Side brake trigger

PICNIC - Side brake trigger

CHORUS - Side brake trigger

JELEE - Rear silencer

UNBAR - Foot brake pedal