

From the Sir Henry Royce Foundation Archives
Charles Sykes Revisited

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Since his retirement our enthusiastic Editor, Tim Dean, has been busy updating the websites of the not only the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia (Victoria Branch) but also that of the Sir Henry Royce Foundation as well. His skilled input has resulted in much improved and enhanced websites for both organisations and we are greatly indebted to him for the time and effort he has put into this challenging task. I can thoroughly recommend spending time browsing through the websites which can be found in Google on any computer by typing in *Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia* or *Sir Henry Royce Foundation, Australia*.

Tim tells me that currently there are about 10,000 visits to the RROC website and 4,500 to the SHRFA website each year, resulting in over three million 'hits' on the RROCA (Vic Branch) site

and 120,000 'hits' on the SHRFA site, annually. While many visits appear to be out of curiosity, some are seeking technical information, photographs, spare parts and services. There are also some directed to the webmaster seeking cars for weddings, cars to buy or sell, number plates to sell and a myriad of other minor topics. Very rarely does anyone contact the Club, or the Foundation, with a view to making a donation or gifting an item to either organisation.

One such event, however, did occur last November when a lady from Queensland emailed the Foundation to say, "I have a small figurine and I wondered if you would like to have it for your collection. I don't want it to end up in a dump". Signed Jenny Riley. I immediately made contact with her and learned that she was indirectly related to Charles Sykes, the artist who created the Spirit of Ecstasy, and that the figurine she was offering was a small statuette of Charles Sykes crafted by himself.

In a subsequent exchange of emails she went on to explain that, "Charles Sykes was the father of Josephine Sykes who married my step-brother (Eric Phillips). I met Charles Sykes when I visited my step-brother when I was 14 or 15. He was not keen on



younger people, in fact I remember him as being absolutely monosyllabic! His style of dress was very casual and it must have been cold when I saw him as he was wearing a sort of dressing gown as in the figurine and some of the paintings. I knew his wife, Jessica, much better because she used to stay with my mother. Jessica was the opposite of Charles; very smart, talkative and chatted to anyone. She was quite petite and grey haired when I knew her and she had a great sense of humour. I don't know if either Charles or Jessica drove a car or indeed, if Jo did. I certainly can't recall them owning one."

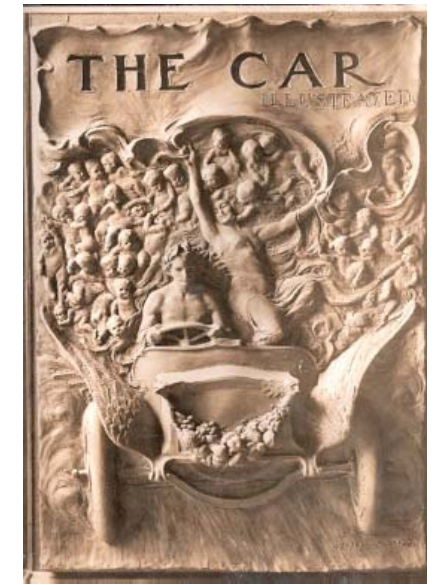
Jenny went on to say that the figurine which she was donating to the

above: Charles Robinson Sykes as remembered by his grandson, Howard Phillips

left and bottom: The figurine and detail of its face, of Charles Sykes, donated to the SHRF by Jenny Riley.



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Foundation was painted by Jo Sykes so that her mother, Jessica, would see it as a person rather than a plaster model. Later Jessica gave it to Jenny's mother and it subsequently passed on to Jenny. She explained that her mother married George Phillips (her step-father) in 1948 and his son, Eric Phillips, married Jo Sykes (who was also became a sculptor) and they had two sons, Howard and Bartholomew. Howard Phillips published a lengthy biography of Charles Sykes which can be found on Wikipedia under the title of, *The life and work of Charles Sykes, sculptor, graphic designer and cartoonist, 1878-1950*.

A great deal has already been written about Charles Sykes and his role in the design of the *Spirit of Ecstasy* for Lord Montagu of Beaulieu supposedly using his secretary, Eleanor Thornton, as a model and there is little need for me to repeat it here. RROCA NSW Branch members, Dr Barrie and Margaret Gillings, have written a very comprehensive booklet, *The Spirit of Ecstasy*, which was published by the 20 Ghost Club. Barrie also wrote in *Præclarvm* (p5882-3) that at the RROCA 53rd Federal Rally, Jo Phillips' granddaughter Justy Phillips displayed a Sykes bronze of Sykes that was given to her by her mother Carol Sykes. The coloured statue on the previous page, which was

donated by Jenny Riley to the SHRF is a replica of the original bronze (or perhaps vice versa). How many other copies of these figurines exist and where are they?

Rather than repeat what many of you will already have read about Charles Sykes I thought it might be worthwhile to look at some of his other artistic works, particularly those relating to motoring and I found a wealth of material browsing through the Web and attach a few examples to illustrate his capability as an artist. Whilst he was born Charles Sykes

he initially used the name Jacques d'Or, and later, Rilette for his commercial work. Jenny suggested Sykes used the French name when living and working in Paris early in his career.

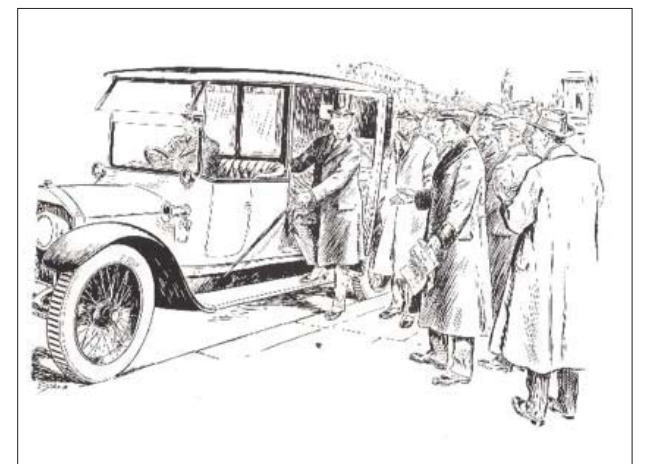
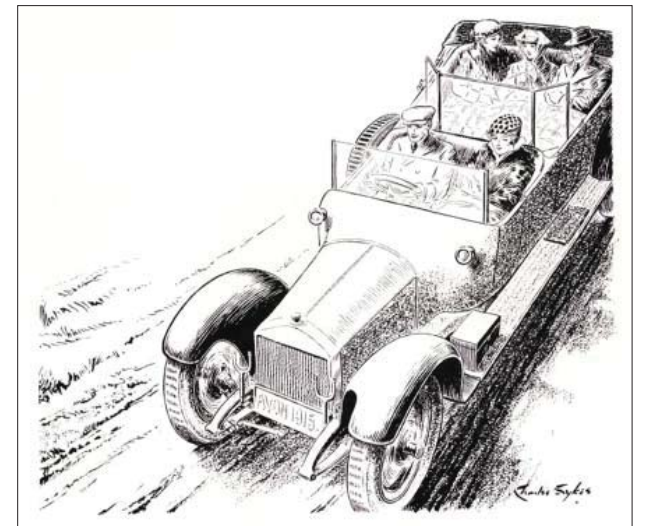
Jenny, who was born in UK in 1934, met her Marine Engineer husband, Bill Riley, in Scotland and they moved to Sydney where he was involved with shipping and boat building. In

retirement they moved to the Sunshine Coast where Jenny writes poetry, runs a writing group for the local U3A and designs patchwork quilts.

top left and centre: Sykes initial design for Lord Montagu was known as the 'Whisperer'. It remains on display at Beaulieu while its derivative *The Flying Lady* took wings on Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.

top right: A sculpted cover for *The Car* magazine by Charles Sykes.

bottom: Three car themed cartoons, drawn by Charles Sykes



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