

Researching B365GT

As Sir Humphrey would say, "It was all in the files, Minister....."

Greg Johnston (Vic)

Any enthusiast who has researched the provenance of his car will agree that this process has the potential to lead you down unexpected paths and throw up the occasional mystery which demands resolution and so it turned out to be the case when researching the history of B365GT.

Immediately following the purchase of the car, I consulted that wonderful repository of information published by The Sir Henry Royce foundation for Tom Clarke and David Neely: **Rolls-Royce and Bentley in The Sunburnt Country**. Details on my new purchase were few: Sydney delivery, 3 owners shown and an 11-year gap between the second and third owners, with the last entry January 1977. I recalled that the Sir Henry Royce Foundation, which had been established in 1996, had acquired the service records of York Motors of Sydney who had been appointed Authorised Dealer by Rolls-Royce in 1947. A quick phone call to David Jones who was one of the founding Trustees confirmed that this was indeed the case and he kindly invited me to visit him at his St Kilda Rd Melbourne office – at that time the home of the SHRF - to inspect the records in the hope that B365GT's service records would be included in the trove.

And indeed, there were some. Only the service records from 1969 - 1975 were to be found but at least it was a start and by great good fortune there was also the complete list of owners whilst the car remained in New South Wales and the A.C.T which accounted for the years 1950 - 1975. I was therefore able to not only confirm the ownership records in **Sunburnt Country** but also add to them considerably. Having the full owners' list I now set about contacting all and sundry for further information about my purchase. This I did and there matters rested for several years until, with time on my hands and a published history of my wonderfully original 1935 20/25HP, GPG23 under my belt, I decided to return to assembling the history of B365GT for publication.

Upon re-reading my notes and examining the records from York Motors and in **Sunburnt Country** again, some anomalous entries presented themselves:

What was the grey Bentley referred to? The letter clearly suggests that Dr Russell-Jones now owns two cars, yet **Sunburnt Country** didn't list Dr Colin Russell-Jones on the list of owners at all for B365GT or anything else and here he is referring to "my grey Bentley". To add further confusion, there is a Dr Russell-Jones listed in the **Sunburnt Country Owner Index**, but that is Dr John Russell-Jones of Randwick listed as owning B351LH, not Dr Colin Russell-Jones of Canberra. Was this a

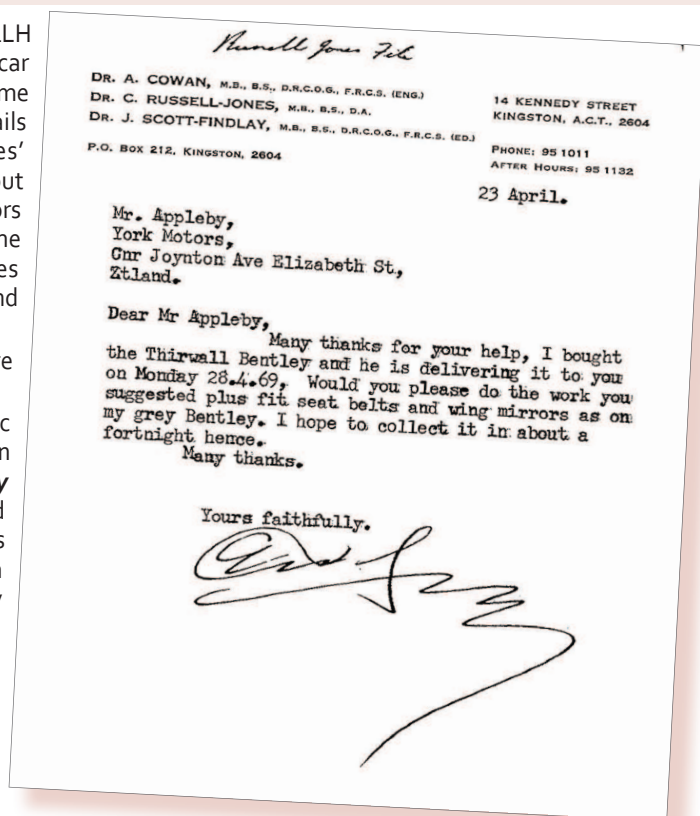
mix-up and was B351LH somehow the second car referred to above? Some phone calls and emails to Dr Russell-Jones' sons sorted things out quickly. The two doctors were brothers and the Randwick Russell-Jones is still alive and well and owned B351LH.

There is one more twist to the tale:

So, what is the cryptic entry "MKVI 1960s" in the **Sunburnt Country Owner Index** attributed to Dr John Russell-Jones referring to? Dr John confirmed that he only owned B351LH, so yet another anomaly needed to be cleared up. Would the files at SHRF solve these questions?

From its modest origins at the St Kilda Road offices of SHRF Trustee David Jones, the Sir Henry Royce Foundation had grown to the extent that it required much more expansive accommodation and, thanks to the generosity of the Allsep family, now occupies a spacious and well-fitted suite at Bill Allsep House,

OWNER INDEX
Russell, Phillip, 67LK?
Russell-Jones, Dr. John, B351LH,
& MkVI 1960s
Russian Embassy, 3AX99

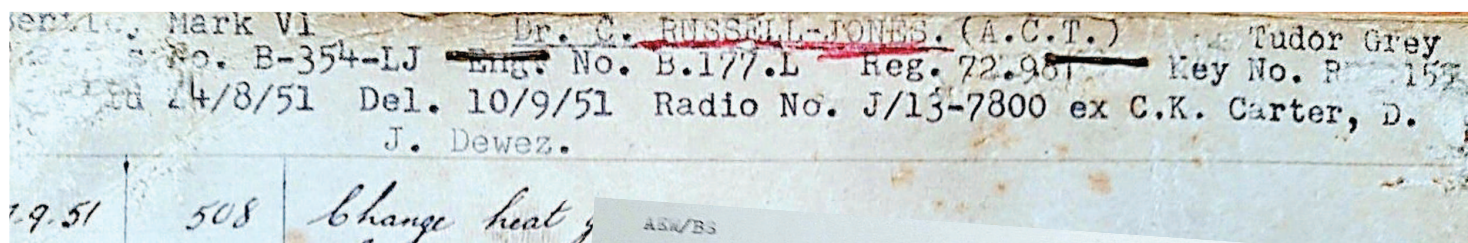


also housing the RROCA Victoria Branch headquarters and it was to this address that I proceeded at the kind invitation of the facility's manager, Life Member Gilbert Ralph. With only the memory of the St Kilda Rd hutch as a reference, I must say that I was completely bowled over by the most extraordinary array of Rolls-Royce and Bentley memorabilia

above: The letter from Colin Russell-Jones to York Motors mentioning his possible ownership of a "grey Bentley".

left: The entry in the Owner Index in **Sunburnt Country** with its erroneous entry concerning the MkVI 1960s owned by John Russell-Jones.

below: Decades of Rolls-Royce and Bentley history embodied in these volunteers: (l-r) Brian Harper, David Macarthur, John Reis and David Kenway. Honorary Archivist, Gilbert Ralph, wielding the Kodak, I presume.



above: The top detail of the service card for B354LJ from the York Motors service records held by the SHRF Archive at Allsep House in Rowville, Melbourne.

imaginable – Club archival material, a wealth of original and exceedingly rare company sales brochures, original factory blueprints and drawings (some of which are not even held by the RREC!), tools, books and so the list goes on. Clearly much thought and hard work had gone into assembling and cataloguing such a prodigious collection and it came as no surprise to learn that a team of dedicated volunteers meets there on a monthly basis to access and curate the archive.

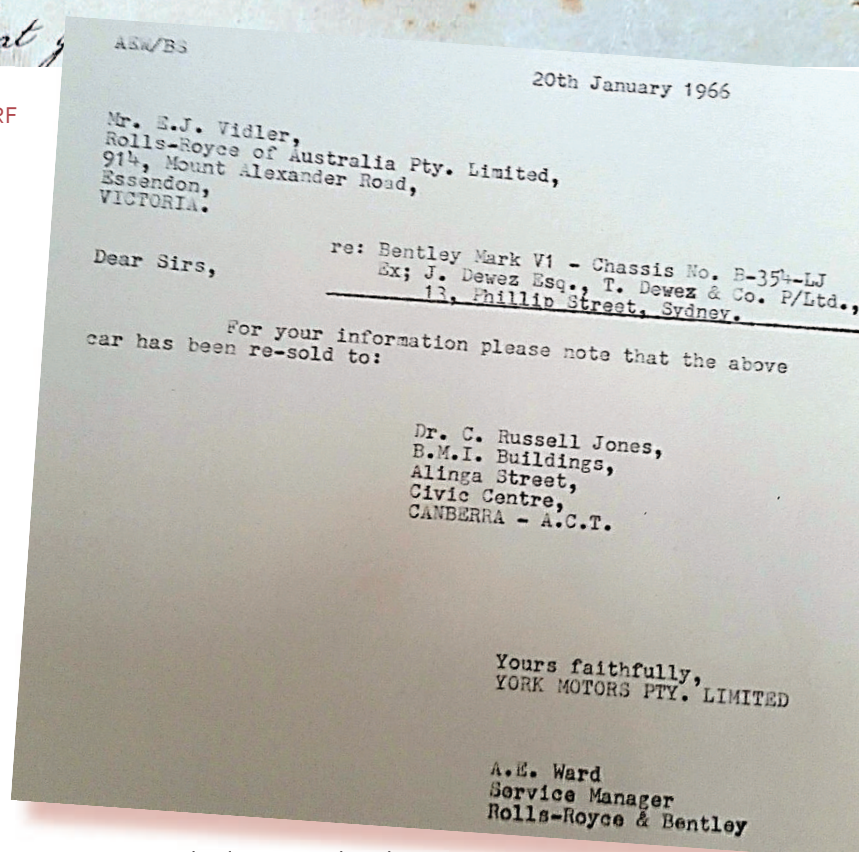
The ever-helpful Gilbert Ralph put the Foundation's resources at my disposal not only to research these points but also to complete my entry for Sir Lionel Hooke by tracking down details of his S1 Bentley – purchased to replace B365GT – and his T Series Bentley. I have omitted to mention that not only does SHRF hold the York motors service records, it now also holds the chassis cards and in most cases, they substantially augment the service records. An initial inspection of the cards two years ago yielded another terrific batch of detailed service history for my car because it spanned the entire ownership list from 1950 to the final entry in 1975 to the point that only two years of history – 1975 & 1976 - remain unaccounted for.

An hour's search of the files and all anomalies resolved! Gilbert and his team have sorted all the York Motors chassis cards by model, so I took the dauntingly large card tray for Mark VI Bentley and set to with a will. By great good fortune I quickly noticed that almost invariably the chassis card for each car listed its colour on the top right-hand corner. All I had to do was search and ignore all cards without the magic word "grey". Ignoring all the other chassis cards was easier said than done however, as my

eyes were constantly drawn to the chassis card details of a surprisingly large number of coach-built Mark VI's – saloons, coupe's and dropheads – serviced over the years by York Motors. Where are they now? See the relevant Service Card at the top of this page: "my grey Bentley" is now identified as B354LJ.

Now that the mystery of "my grey Bentley" has been solved, could it be the "Mark VI 1960's car mistakenly attributed to brother John in Sunburnt Country? Again, the foundation's records provide the answer:

Note the letter's date: I'm certain that this is the "Mark VI 1960's" car referred to and mistakenly attributed to Colin Russell-Jones' brother John. The puzzle is also now resolved, thanks to Gilbert and the team at SHRF.



above: The York Motors letter identifying the identity and owner of "my grey Bentley" in January 1966.

The results of my research were speedily forwarded to Tom Clarke and David Neely for inclusion in the next update supplement of Sunburnt Country.

Finally, a memo to all enthusiasts: I strongly recommend that you research the history of your car(s), firstly because you never know what you're going to find, secondly because to do so will add immeasurably to the pleasure of ownership and finally because a visit to Gilbert and the team at the archive is an experience not to be missed.

The Sir Henry Royce Foundation Research Award

The Foundation "Archive" has a significant collection of historical material on both Rolls-Royce and Bentley in Australia in general and on RROCA and individual Branch activities in particular.

To encourage the publication of research based on this important archive material, the Trustees have initiated The Sir Henry Royce Foundation Research Award. This Award, with a prize of \$500, will be awarded annually to the person who, in the opinion of the Trustees, has made the best use of The Foundation "Archive" to research a topic of Rolls-Royce and Bentley interest and who has published this research in "Præclarvm" or in wider distribution, publicly available media.

The key driver of this award is the use of The Foundation "Archive" as the basis of the research and the publication of the results of this research. The Award is open to all, not just Members of the RROCA and closes on 28 February 2021

Awarded annually, the Winner for 2020 will be announced at the 2021 RROCA Annual Federal Rally

The Sir Henry Royce Foundation F J English Award for Club Photography for 2020

Entries are invited for the 2020 F J English Award for Club Photography. The winner receives a cash prize of \$500.

The competition is open to members of the RROCA and the photograph must be taken at a RROCA event in 2020 with one photograph per member. The criteria being a photograph that exemplifies the "spirit" of Rolls-Royce and Bentley motor cars and of the "friendly atmosphere" of Club outings; taken into account will be the "artistic composition" of the subject material.

Entries close on 28 February 2021.

The Winner will be announced at the 2021 Federal Rally in Mildura, Vic, in May 2021.

Please email entries to the Præclarvm Editor at editor@rroc.org.au