

Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club



No 66

July 2012

TRANSMISSION

If you find you need more information about this club or just can't wait to join ring Peet Menzies on 0417855222.

GPO Box 911 Darwin 0801
In Katherine call 89710605 .
Newsletter enquiries to Ted propellers@bigpond.com

ARE YOU

SCARED OF

GHOSTS?



Ghosts, Phantoms! There is a place where they, and bits of them seem to fill every available nook and cranny. Read on if you dare.....

1931 Phantom ,completely surrounded by Ghosts

Long time readers may remember the story of Rick Brown and his adventures driving his 1923 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost around the world and closer to home across the Simpson Desert and most places in Australia where bitumen is missing. (if you missed it contact the editor for a back copy) But recently I was able to enter the inner sanctum of Ricks amazing collection. His collecting is aimed entirely at Rolls Royce Ghosts and Phantoms but it isn't just a bunch of shiny cars. Rick knows the vehicle so intimately he can spot any part off them a mile away. He frequents the large swap meets in the USA such as Hershey and will spent the whole long weekend searching boxes of miscellaneous stuff always on the lookout for anything relating to the Ghosts. The result is a collection that makes the eyes boggle. Auctions are another source, Rick seems to have the ability

to sense where these parts are. You can't just race down to the local auto parts store to buy bits for these cars so he is well prepared. He has quite a collection of cars, some of them pristine, some of them not and others in the process of being painstakingly rebuilt. Some of them however, have quite an interesting story to tell about their past history. And the premises Rick has the collection stored in is a happy story in itself. Rick built the set of industrial sheds as a premise to run his construction business from. When it was time scale back his interests, he replaced the industrial machinery with vintage Rolls Royce. A great idea and he has serious amounts of room to work on the collection and room to allow it to grow.



These cars don't always present themselves in pristine condition either. This Silver Ghost was ordered by the chief engineer at Packard in 1914. Due to World war 1, production at the factory ceased till hostilities were over. They then contacted him to see if he still wanted it. He did and it's serial number was 8PP, the 8th car postponed because of the war. The idea of Packard was to dismantle it and see how it was built.

They only owned it for a short while and it was then owned by the 5th Ave New York up market fashion store, Tiffany's . It's whereabouts from then are unknown until it was purchased in the state of Ohio in recent times.



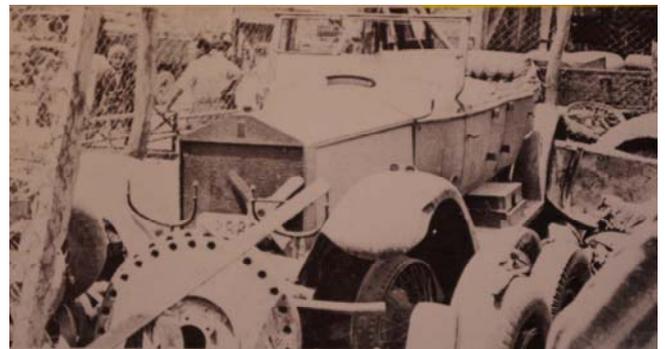
Somewhere during its life this vehicle shrugged off its snazzy 5th Ave image along with its limousine body and was converted to a ute. Then it earned itself a less glamorous but honest living.

This Silver Ghost became close to actually dying when a Major Charles Lambton discovered it in a wreckers yard in Tel Aviv in Israel, in 1947. This was a U.S. built Springfield Rolls Royce (yes, they did build Rolls Royce in USA)

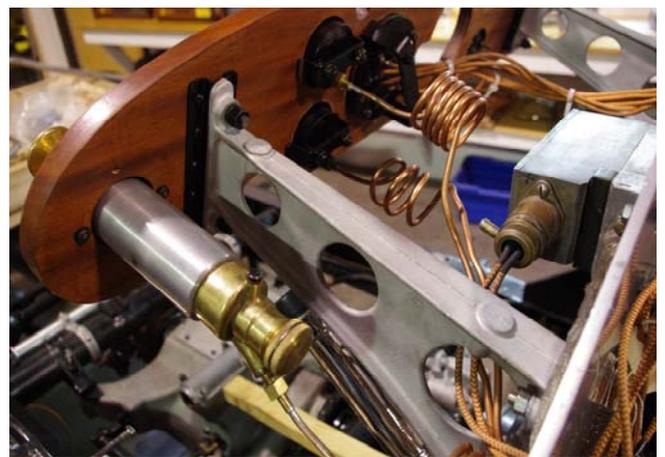
The owner of the car from new had, at the outbreak of war, offered it to the British military for spares for the old Allenby armoured cars. This offer had been declined and the vehicle had found its way into the wreckers yard.

Major Lambton then bought it and towed it back to Jerusalem where he was based. He then spent the best part of a year making bits off other vehicles fit, so he could drive it back to sunny England, which he did via Alexandria, Tripoli, Spain and France in 1948. Not a bad effort. Roads were at best sandy tracks back then. Eventually it made its way back to America. The gent that brought it into the country attempted to avoid paying taxes by pulling the engine and gearbox out of it. The Authorities decreed he could avoid paying the taxes but insisted it be *totally* dismantled, to the last nut and bolt. Consequently this Ghost became many boxes of bits and pieces and it was never assembled, and naturally many bits managed to go walkabout over the years of lying around.

Then along came Rick. He has painstakingly been putting it all back together. Having several other similar cars makes it all a lot more easy but it is still a massive task . To some, the list of missing parts would be a brick wall. Not so in Rick Browns workshop. The walls are lined with Ghost parts he has collected from anywhere they might bob up, and the ones he doesn't have and can't get, he manufactures himself, with the parts on the pristine cars used as patterns. And because these vehicles were hand made, certain parts from another similar car may not necessarily fit. Rick showed me part of the gear shift mechanism where he had gone to great pains to build up and remachine the bearing surfaces only to find it was the wrong length, because these parts are crafted individually for each car. A gent was checking out this car one day and pointed out to Rick that the front axle has a serial number and it did not match that of the rest of the car. Some where in its life the axle had been changed. This front axle serial number business was news to Rick so he went around checking the numbers on his other projects. By coincidence he had bought the axle his car had been originally built with, when he purchased another Ghost- which came with spare axles.



*The Ghost in the wreckers in Tel Aviv.
Below: Detail behind the dash and engine bay.*





That is yours truly, chauffer for the day. With snow floating around the day before, the ladies had to rug up in the back, I was so excited I was the only one that didn't need a beanie and gloves.

Ringling Bros was the big name in circus in America. The owner of this vehicle from new was the founder of the circus and he was rich and famous. The great depression changed all that and with severe tax problems troubling him he died in 1936. He was declared bankrupt and his estate was confiscated by the government, but somehow they managed to miss the Rolls as it was found a week later in a shed someplace. The government never found it and there it sat till 1959 derelict. A person from across the country then bought it in it's sad state, it even had to bear the indignity of being pushed onto the truck. For the next 45 years it didn't get used a lot. The longest trip it managed in that time was 60 miles but the engine had been rebuilt in England during that time.

When Rick came by "Betsy", as it was named after one of the circus' elephants, the mechanicals were sound and he has not had to touch them, but it was shabby. He has rewired it, sorted the electrics, reupholstered and repaired some panel damage and repainted it. The result is one lovely car. So lovely in fact that when Rick offered me a chance to take one of the cars for a Sunday drive in the country, this is the one I chose. You can never go past a red car after all. With me as chauffer, Rick as doorman, Shirley and Rick's wife Dawn were in good hands on this sunny but freezing spring day in New Hampshire.



Historic vehicle amongst historic buildings from the very early days of America.

Everywhere you go with these vehicles, people love to photograph them.





Rick attended an auction that listed a Ghost he was interested in. He had decided on a maximum price to bid up to. When the bidding started at his maximum valuation he shifted his attention to something else so the day wouldn't be a total loss. When the auctioneers brought out this 1931 Phantom roadster they pointed out that although it had sounded fine yesterday, it now had a strange noise in the engine, but this was one of those auctions where everything gets sold regardless of the price. They started it and it did have a knock, but Rick took a punt that it wasn't an expensive one. Bidding was very quiet and he left as the proud owner of a Phantom and at a seriously discounted price. The knock turned out to be one internal bolt had been inserted from the wrong side and was touching a cover . Cost of repair? Nothing.



Every other car with a dicky seat you have to climb over the side to get in. Not so with the Phantom. It has a dicky sized door!

The ninth Marquis of Huntley was a very wealthy man. He owned more land in England than the king. The tenth and eleventh Marquis were more skilled at spending the family fortune than making money and by the time number 12 came along he had made gambling and general living it up down to a fine art. After buying a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost his fortune was dwindling so he travelled to the United States to find a rich wife. He met her in the form of the first lady of the Ritz hotel in New York. She was Al Capone's sister. She asked the Marquis what he was doing in America. He explained he was looking for a rich wife to which she replied "look no further, you have found her". She had plenty of money but no title. Marriage to the Marquis would fix that problem..
The connection to this article? Rick owns that vehicle. It is a 1913 model and still runs its original paint and trim at 300,000 miles. This one is garaged in England. He toured England in it last year. It awaits his next trip.



Not everything is pristine. The Phantom (above, in a bubble) has a bent chassis (replacement is hanging from the rafters). Ghost (below) had it's body destroyed in a fire.



Only Rick Brown could pick out Ghost parts amongst a sea of miscellaneous stuff. A lot of the time the people selling this gear have no idea what it is. That helps keep the price down. Here Rick is holding the front exhaust pipe hanger from a Ghost. He can pick it at fifty yards!

There are shelves after shelves full of various Ghost parts, from little brackets and bits to complete diffs, gearboxes and engines. Everything here is Rolls Royce.

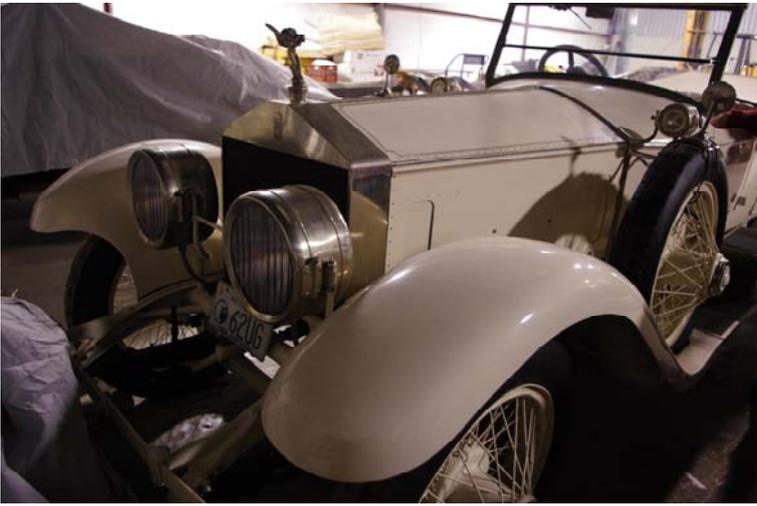


This is where Rick discovered the correct front axle for the vehicle from Israel

And it's not all old school stuff. This is the test bed for magnetos . Variable speed electric motor spins the Maggie, LCD readout gives you the revs and you can watch all 6 plugs firing, or not.

Naturally there is a need for a body or two amongst the projects.

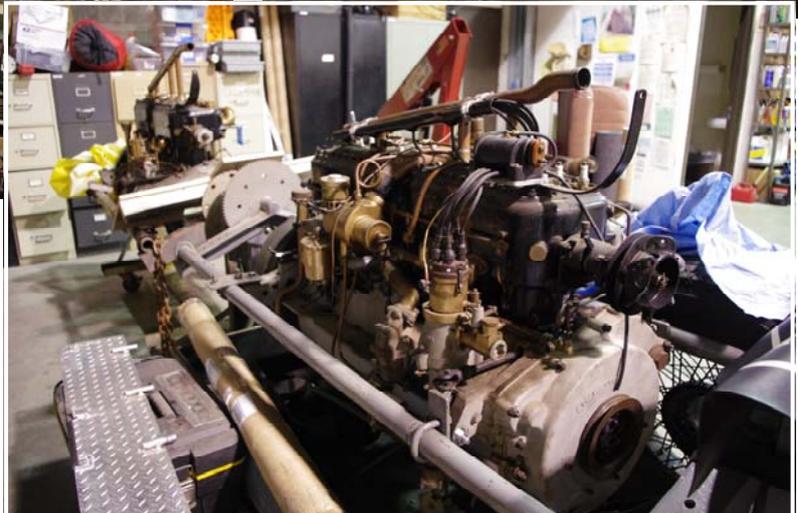
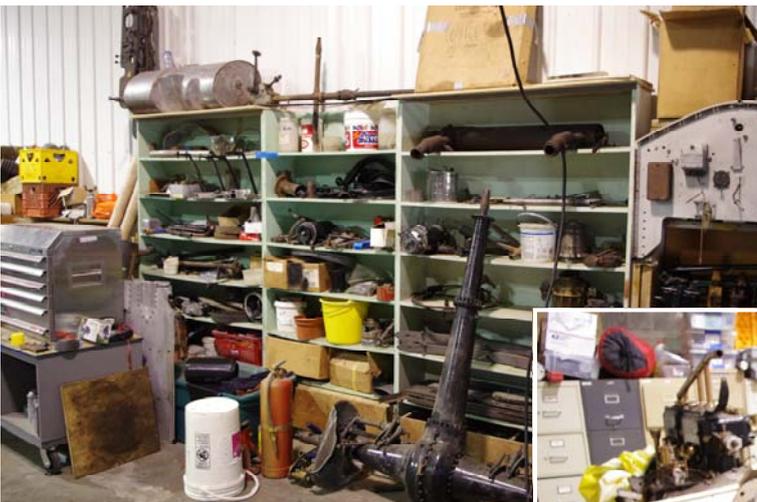




His and hers Rolls Royce. Above is John B Thayer's Ghost. He is considered to be the real life person that the rich guy in the movie "Titanic" was based on. He published his memoirs on that subject. To the right is his wife's car. It was a wedding present to her by her grandfather, so she would not be at a lower social level than her husband who already owned one. Rick has driven this car all round the world and the top photo is of him crossing sand dunes in the Simpson Desert near Birdsville in Queensland. To the right is the same vehicle in its city trim with it's limousine body. It is currently on a ship en route to India where Rick will head to the Himalayas and cross the highest motorable passes in the world. There will definitely be no bitumen.



These 3 photos are of one Rolls Royce Silver Ghost slightly dismantled. Needs a body. That's why there are bodies in the shed!



Pontiac. Was a really smart Indian chief and it used to be a really neat brand of car for sure but there is also a town that goes by the same name. And its on the legendary route 66 in Illinois, USA. There are mobs of nostalgic motoring buffs cruising '66 so a bunch of switched on people and a switched on mayor have made it a memorable place to stay along the old route 66. And how's this for hospitality: I was taking a photo of a suburban street just to get a snap of the local area when a gent invited me into his home to see what a 1920's built 2 storey timber home is like. It was just like a 60's American movie with the staircase that the teenage girl always descends to meet the young bloke at the door with the flowers. Real estate prices were amazingly cheap too. Fantastically cheap! But this story is about classic motoring, There were cute little model cars all down the main street and they had these really neat murals depicting 1950's and 60's motoring scenes painted on various walls around town. They also had their own route 66 museum with all sorts of motoring related stuff but the crowning glory, apart from the rows and rows of real classic cars lining the streets, was the Museum of Pontiac cars. Apart from the fantastic collection of Pontiac cars from the earliest to late model performance cars, there is the widest variety of general stuff associated with the Pontiac brand. I watched a movie aimed at teaching a salesman the finer points of selling Pontiac cars, probably in the 1950's. There is also a library, they call it a resource centre. It is an enormous room with floor to ceiling bookshelves all chock full of Pontiac literature from workshop manuals to sales brochures and salesmanship stuff, plus anything else written about the make.

It all started long ago when a feller, Tim Dye and his wife Penny started collecting Pontiacs and any "stuff" associated with them. With this impressive collection behind them they approached the town of Pontiac to see if they were interested in it. The mayor jumped at it and provided a showroom right in the middle of town, and at no rent for the first couple of years. The Pontiac museum plus their route 66 museum and murals have resulted in a fantastic increase of visitor numbers. And mobs of those visitors drive really neat cars which are an attraction themselves. While we were there the Austin Healy club of Switzerland were visiting plus two other car clubs and a bunch of Aussies riding motor bikes. And wasn't it strange to hear an Aussie accent!



Robert T Russell, the mayor of Pontiac. A great bloke but he looks a bit worried surrounded by Aussie terrorists!



Above: Cute little cars parked all over the place

Below: What else would you have gracing the streets of Pontiac but.... A PONTIAC !





Brand new T Bird. Just one of mobs of neat cars parked around while the owners check out all the neat stuff in Pontiac.



Check out the underbody detail of this Desoto. It looks good on top too!

Below: A street scene in the residential area. If you appreciate old school architecture you would love it. Every one seems to park on the wrong side of the road.



Above: Typical of the graffiti on the walls around Pontiac. But the hot-rod is for real!

PROGRESSIVE DINNER

Sunday
19th August

Meet at
Hangar
5pm
bus leaves
5.30 sharp
for
mystery tour



BYO
drinks
(some
wine
supplied)

Bus returns
to
Hangar
for
coffee and
port

Champagne will
be supplied to
toast the
sunset

Contact Trevor 0407 189 136

**Numbers have to be restricted to the first 50 adult
MVEC members to pay for tickets.**

**Tickets available at \$35 each
from Brian Bates & Trevor Feehan**

1946 Ford Jailbar light truck

For restoration
Comes with spare sidevalve V8 engine
\$5000

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Email Ted at propellers@bigpond.com

or phone 89886049

Deadline...the end of the month

Royal Enfield 350 Bullet 1984

\$2600 (not negotiable)
Arthur 89833588
Yvette 0429 833580



Royal Darwin Show Grand Parade July 27th

This is the year of the farmer so if you have an older ute or truck it would be especially welcome. The deal is to line up in Farrell Cres by 1.30pm, then proceed into the showgrounds and a lap of the arena and park in the middle for a while. This is not just for clubs. Anyone with an old vehicle that wants to show it off is welcome.

Computer for raffle or tender

Tom Bertenshaw has donated an Acer computer to the club to be put up for raffle of similar. This computer is only 1 month old so can be considered brand new. If you are interested in tendering a price for it or want some finer details contact Ted 89886049 or propellers@bigpond.com Otherwise it will be raffled at the next monthly meeting.

**The Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club
extends it's thanks to
Shannons Insurance
For it's continued support for the club**



Remember Robin Trippe's 1959 FB Holden from Nov 2011 edition of Transmission? Well after 26 times round the clock on the speedo, plus another 68000 miles and 37 years of continuous ownership, it didn't break down. But it did have a problem. En route from Qld to Darwin it developed a vibration down Mataranka way and Robin had to slow down to something like 30mph. He didn't get stuck though, just took it easy to Katherine. It turned out the bush in the gearbox extension housing fell out. 2,668,000 miles or 4,268,800 km is not a bad life. The rest of the gearbox is still original. It seems they are so reliable no one ever made a replacement part so he had to replace it with a secondhand complete extension housing. Remember, this is a lucky car. It didn't fall off Hobart's Tasman bridge when the bridge fell down from under it. Good show Robin!



The black one is the original, bare aluminium is the replacement. Robin's car is a prototype and sports a total crash box, no synchro at all. That's how it came from the factory.



WOTS ON THIS YEAR

Heaps. Come along and enjoy!

On the 2nd Wed of every month there is a members meeting at the hangar 7.30 pm plus bbq beforehand. Also there is a working bee at the hangar the following Sunday.

- 15 July 2012 MVEC Cricket Match.** Departing Coolalinga 9am. Holden club provide lunch.
- **22 July 2012 Darwin to the Doo** Leaves hangar 9am for Humpty Doo. BBQ, Pretty girls etc contact Ted 89886049
- **26- 28 July Royal Darwin Show parade.** Details 1 page back
- **29 July 2012 Shannons Day at the Track.** John Palamountain. 0417 262 918
- **19 August 2012 Progressive Dinner.** See flyer 2 pages back contact Trev 0407 189 136
- **25 August 2012 Katherine Festival.** Car and bike show. Stay the weekend. Great times!!
- **2 September 2012 Fathers Day Open Day.** Peet Menzies. 0417855222.
- **30 September 2012 Observation Run.** Steve Hall. 0417 831 955
- **21 October 2012 Shed Show Ford Brunch.** Neil Bromley. 0400 420 120
- **24 November 2012 AGM then Xmas Dinner** at Nightcliff Sport Club.

If undeliverable return to
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POSTAGE
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AUSTRALIA

An old Italian lived alone in Fannie Bay . He wanted to plant his annual tomato garden, but it was very difficult work as the ground was hard. His only son, Vincent, who used to help him, was in prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and described his predicament:

Dear Vincent,

I am feeling pretty sad, because it looks like I won't be able to plant my tomato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. I know if you were here my troubles would be over.. I know you would be happy to dig the plot for me, like in the old days.

Love, Papa.

A few days later he received a letter from his son.

Dear Pop,

Don't dig up that garden. That's where the bodies are buried.

Love, Vinnie.

At 4 a.m. The next morning, police arrived and dug up the entire area without finding any bodies. They apologized to the old man and left.

That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

Dear Pop,

Go ahead and plant the tomatoes now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances.

Love you, Vinnie .