EVERY MODEL COVERED
All production data

CARS, OWNERS, EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES
If it’s SZ, then it’s in here

THE SPIRIT
Official magazine of the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts’ Club SZ Register

FREE TO ALL RREC MEMBERS AS A PDF FILE. A PRINTED COLLECTORS’ EDITION IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE CLUB SHOP

FOR ALL OWNERS AND ENTHUSIASTS OF 1980s AND 1990s ROLLS-ROYCE AND BENTLEY CARS
Welcome...

... to The Spirit, produced by enthusiasts for enthusiasts, and aiming to cover all aspects of owning and enjoying a Rolls-Royce or Bentley SZ car.

What I really like about Registers is that they are the home of anoraks, and I am proud to be one. For me, it is sheer bliss to research certain models, really going into their history. I love meeting like-minded enthusiasts to kick tyres and discuss important things such as a missing pinstripe on a hubcap, or why their leather smells better than that of my own car.

I am 46 years old, I live in Germany and, to date, I have owned 10 cars from Crewe. I joined the R-REC as a schoolboy and I am one of a dying breed who likes to add the hyphen between the ‘double R’ in R-REC. That’s because I am an anorak and, therefore, I know that it’s important. I used to have a green 1981 Silver Spirit called “Kermi”. I used her every day for seven years, covering up to 40,000 kilometers per annum without any problems. Other Rolls-Royces followed and, two years ago, I bought a 1995 MY Brooklands which I drive as often as I can. Last year, for example, I travelled 3,000 kilometers across England in her.

I must say I was surprised to learn just what constitutes an SZ and how many are in our database. We now have a brilliant magazine, we will receive technical help from knowledgeable people, and we will have a lot of fun. I hope you will enjoy this Register as much as me and I also hope you will become an active part. It’s a place for car nuts, anoraks, and for those who want to make friends as part of a big family around the globe.

Juergen Buech
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We decided to buy a Rolls-Royce on the day I turned 40. Back then, in March 1996, I knew no more about Rolls-Royce than I did about any other make of car. In May 1996, after a thrilling three-month search, I bought my wonderful 1969 Silver Shadow that I have owned for 18 years. My desire to learn as much as I could about everything Rolls-Royce and Bentley had ever created was overwhelming. My investigations into facts and figures started then and I have never looked back.

In 2000 I set up www.RSSilverShadow.com and the next year I began publishing articles about the cars. Other milestones would follow; such as the membership of international clubs, annual visits to RREC Rallies, days of research in the Hunt House archives, and the creation of my second website www.RRSilverSpirit.com. The world of R&B has brought me into contact with an unbelievable number of SZ owners, so it is great to join Juergen who lives near Cologne (and whose enthusiasm knows no bounds) and Marinus from The Netherlands (who has forgotten more SZ facts than I will ever learn) in producing The Spirit. There was an Englishman, a German and a Dutchman… it sounds like the opening line of a bad joke but is, in fact, the start of a fantastic adventure.

The best source of information comes from listening to the experiences of other owners, so it is great to join Juergen who lives near Cologne (and whose enthusiasm knows no bounds) and Marinus from The Netherlands (who has forgotten more SZ facts than I will ever learn) in producing The Spirit. There was an Englishman, a German and a Dutchman… it sounds like the opening line of a bad joke but is, in fact, the start of a fantastic adventure.

I have been amazed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of SZ owners who have sent us articles from all around the world. To them, I say a heartfelt “thank you”. I hope you enjoy reading their stories and they make you want to join the SZ Register and share your own experiences in the next issue.

Richard Charnley
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Silver Spirit stylist Fritz Feller summed it up for me when the new model was announced in 1980: “Nothing in this life is so dull and miserable as the ‘average’ and ‘mean’. Once we regard dreams as a waste of time, magic also dies. That is why Rolls-Royce motor cars must always remain true to our best traditions.”

Keeping that dream and the magic alive is what SZ ownership is all about. The aura, the feel, the smell… the sense of occasion you get from sneaking out to the garage to have one last caress of the bonnet, one last peek at the dashboard. Owning a Rolls-Royce or Bentley fulfils a lifelong ambition for many of us and it can take years to find the perfect car.

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**Who can join the SZ Register?**

The RREC SZ Register welcomes every owner or enthusiast of these charismatic cars: That means any Rolls-Royce or Bentley that has a “Z” in the fourth position of the chassis number and was built between 1980 and 2003.

Eligible cars include:

- All Silver Spirit and Silver Spur models, Mulliner editions, Park Ward editions, stretched limousines and division editions
- All Mulsanne, Mulsanne S, Eight and Brooklands models, long wheelbase editions and stretched limousines
- All Bentley Turbo R and RT models, and Mulliner editions
- All Bentley Continental R, S, T and SC models, Le Mans, Mulliner, Millennium and Final Series editions
- All 1995-2003 Azure models, Le Mans, Mulliner and Final Series editions
- Rolls-Royce Corniche (2000) and Corniche Final Series
- Rolls-Royce Corniche convertibles from chassis number CCH0537 onwards (1982), Corniche II, III, IV and S
- Bentley Corniche convertibles from chassis number CCH05822 onwards (1982), Continental convertible and Continental Turbo.

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**Benefits of SZ Register Membership**

- The Spirit magazine
- Technical advice
- Car rallies and social events
- The most affordable thing you will ever do with your car – it’s free!
They came from the

Milestones in the production of Rolls-Royce and Bentley SZ saloon cars

The Silver Spur with 36 and 42-inch stretch was initially sold alongside the Phantom VI. The extra length was added between the doors which were the same as on the standard car. Stainless steel wheel trims were added for 1986, at which time the front number plate was mounted on the bumper and a telephone was fitted in the front armrest.

The Everflex roof was an option on early Silver Spirits and standard on Spur. Headlamp wipers were replaced by high pressure jets in 1985.

The curved front bumper on the Bentley Mulline can be adjusted by the owner to fit around the radiator. The flying B mascot did not retract into the shell on impact (unlike the Spirit of Ecstasy) and was therefore supplied loose for the owners to fit themselves, if they wished.

Shadows

with individual numbers built shown overleaf

All data kindly provided by rrsilverspirit.com. All dates refer to model years rather than year of manufacture, sale or delivery.

The Silver Spirit II gained alloy wheels with stainless steel trim, plus adaptive ride and improved handling. Inside, there was a new fascia with two additional bull's eye vents, inlaid and crossbanded veneers and a leather trimmed steering wheel.
Production of four-door cars

All data kindly provided by rrsilverspirit.com.
All dates refer to model years rather than year of manufacture, sale or delivery.
Special projects for the Royal family of Brunei are not included. Most of these were built on SZ undercarriages, but received a chassis number that was not part of a regular series.
From Corniche to Continental

In addition to the Silver Spirit range, the Rolls-Royce Corniche and Bentley Continental carried SZ numbers, as did the Continental R, T and SC.

Although based on the Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow II, the 1983 Corniche badge did not include the II suffix but the car carries a 17-digit chassis number with the fourth position being a Z, thus qualifying it for SZ status.

The Bentley Continental R was launched in 1992 with 360bhp, rising to 385bhp in 1997, which reduced the 0-60mph time from 6.6 to 6.3 seconds. Azure-style front seats with integral seatbelts were also added for the 1997 model year while the final 1998 models had curved pleats and partially ruched leather. They also gained a matrix grille, new alloys and restyled bumpers.

The body looks similar to that of the Silver Seraph, but the Corniche launched in 2000 (model year 1999) has its roots in the 6.75-litre SZ range. The instrument layout is based on that of the Silver Spirit, with an outside temperature gauge, no rev counter and a column mounted gear selector.

All data kindly provided by rrsilverspirit.com. The dates refer to model years rather than the car’s year of manufacture, sale or delivery.
Production of two-door cars
The rich and famous love a Bentley and high profile previous ownership can add thousands to the price... but not always.

It’s 1995 and radio presenter Chris Evans is branching out into television. Things are looking up for his career and he has managed to accumulate £103,000 in his bank account. So what does the ginger petrolhead do next? He sees a £102,000 Bentley Brooklands for sale in a London showroom and blows the lot.

"I cleaned myself out. It’s what I keep in in Dorchester – or he might have meant in Melburnian car dealer Gary Leche's garage door opener ($699); presentation box for master key in gold plate ($361); garage door opener ($699); and wooden gear selector ($556)."

Since then, the celebrity Brooklands has been offered by Targa Florio Cars for £9,995 and Evans’ one-time pride and joy was seen on eBay for £10,750 but it failed to meet its reserve on that occasion with a final price of just £5,600.

Ex-Python John Cleese owned his 1987 Bentley Eight for 25 years before parting with it on eBay. With peeling veneers and 73,000 miles on the clock (only 9,000 in the last 13 years) the service history was sparse with only two stamps in the service book in the past 20 years.

"Twenty five years on it is a little faded, and needs some attention to the battle scars from a quarrel with a gate post the last time I drove it," said Cleese. "But it is the most beautiful car I have ever owned. It’s like driving a starfighter. It removed any sense of haste from my life. You don’t drive it, you guide it. Yet, if you need a moment of acceleration, the power surges like a battleship."

Melburnian car dealer Gary Leche posted the winning bid of £17,100 and the car was shipped to Australia along with a handwritten sheet listing the famous bottoms, including Kevin Kline and Jamie Lee Curtis, to have dented its Connolly leather upholstery. The car was later offered for sale in 2013. It could have been yours for £49,500.

The last Bentley Turbo RT built in July 1998 for North America – a 1999 model year LWB Turbo R chassis number 66515 was bought new by Barry Gibb of Bee Gees fame from Braman Motors of Miami, Florida.

The black car with parchment leather piped in black was ordered with £20,099 worth of accessories on top of its £9,995 list price, making the grand total of £213,699. The extras included veneered door panels ($5890); embroidered headrests ($471); loose foot rests ($287); picnic tables ($1734); veneered waivers ($356); grab handles to rear seats ($118); triband aerial ($486); upgraded hi-fi with Mission speakers ($3,561); special door step plaques ($933); leather storage compartments in the seat backs ($3,979); presentation box for master key in gold plate ($361); garage door opener ($699); and wooden gear selector ($556).

Oh yes, those prices were all subject to Federal Luxury Tax on top. Pedigree Motor Cars of Delray Beach, Florida were unable to offer the car for sale in 2013. It could have been yours for £49,500.

The society column and gossip magazines almost all reported that pop singer Lily Allen arrived for her 2011 retro themed wedding to Sam Cooper in a vintage Bentley.

Actually, it was one of a handful of James Young Turbo Rs built in 1997 at the behest of dealer H R Owen to celebrate its purchase of the famous coachbuilder’s name. This metallic green example had an Everflex roof, vented bonnet and wings, its purchase of the famous coachbuilder’s name. This metallic green example had an Everflex roof, vented bonnet and wings, carbon fibre trim, a panoramic glass panel, modified sports seats, small rear window, chrome five-spoke alloys and a number of other RT-style body enhancements. It cost around £208,000 when new.

The Léy Allen car sported the Northern Irish registration GIG 3204 that the Co-Fermanagh personal number plate company Speedy apparently supplied in 1998 for the grand sum of £50.

In addition to his Aston Martins, HRH Prince Charles has enjoyed a string of 6.75-litre Bentley Turbos over the years. His 1991 model went to auction last year with the estimate set at a princely £14,000 to £16,000 but it fetched only £10,600 – about what you might expect to pay for a similar car without royal provenance.

On 14 August 1991 this car was supplied by Michael Powell Bentley in Leicester, who had the Royal Warrant for Bentleys but it remained registered to Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Ltd.

Special features include extra reading lights in the rear, softer leather than standard and an extra leather holder in the front passenger footwell for storing police/security radios. The rear glass roof doesn’t open but the leather liner slides back to increase the light, so people could get a better view of HRH in the car.

Sometime later his old 1996 Turbo RL (pictured below) with just 38,000 miles came up for sale at Graeme Hunt of York. It took Saunders nine months to give the 1983 Mulsanne a two-inch roof chop, three-inch suspension drop and 20-inch chrome wheels.

It came into Evans’ ownership during a clear out of Saunders’ collection which included 11 cars and raised £223,000. Chris Evans said, “It’s the best £17,000 I have ever spent.”

Last thing we heard, the car was on its way to another new owner, this one based in Canada.
I t was 34 years ago, in October 1980, that Rolls-Royce introduced the Silver Spirit, Silver Spur (the long wheelbase) and Bentley Mulsanne range of motor cars, replacing the Silver Shadow II, Silver Wraith II and Bentley T2 models. Although retaining many Silver Shadow II mechanical features, it is interesting to look at the changes that took place over a 10-year span after the new models had been launched.

They were introduced against a backdrop of what turned out to be the start of recession in the UK and other parts of the world but, at least in the short term, a new model when introduced attracts interest. However it must be pointed out that the initial thinking of the company was that the Spirit model range was to be only a ‘stop gap’. Strong rumours originating from the USA suggested that smaller and more fuel efficient vehicles would be on North American roads by the end of the decade and, as this was the company’s biggest export market, a much smaller Rolls-Royce known by the experimental code name SX was already well advanced at the design stage with a launch date of 1987. However, as we now know, that thinking was reviewed during the decade and discarded.

The Spirit, Spur and Mulsanne were actually launched to the press in the late summer at Nice, and to the general public at both the Paris and Birmingham motor shows during the early autumn. One notable new feature of the Silver Spirit and Silver Spur was that the flying lady mascot was retractable, whereby upon impact it would ‘disappear’ into the radiator grille. However, for the US, the conventional flying lady, as fitted to the Shadow range, was retained owing to legislation in that market.

A further important change was that both the braking and levelling systems were now filled and operated by hydraulic system mineral oil (HSMO). North American and Japanese specification cars did not commence production until early 1981 and had fuel injected engines fitted in order to meet the stringent exhaust emission legislation in those territories, whereas all other markets were still using the SU twin carburettor configuration.

Once in full production, the company decided to enhance the car’s ride and handling following a number of problems experienced with the first cars to be built. In early 1981 to address the problem, a package of front suspension modifications was introduced, resulting in better comfort and greatly improved handling.

The following year, with the UK recession deepening considerably, the company took the bold step of introducing a car with a turbocharged engine, with the intention of giving an impetus to the marketplace that was seeing a slow down in sales of the existing models. The Bentley Mulsanne Turbo was introduced at the Geneva motor show and it can be stated confidently that, from this point onwards, the Bentley name was to experience a great renaissance because following its launch, many orders were placed. Unfortunately, at the time of launch, the Turbo could not be sold in North America, Australia and Japan. Several years were to pass before sales in these territories took place – and that will be discussed later.

Running changes took place to all the various models during 1982 and 1983, the significant ones being the introduction of improved door locking mechanisms and the car height rear levelling valves. A further model was added to the range during early 1983, this being the Silver Spur fitted with a centre division. This took the place of its Silver Wraith II predecessor that had been discontinued in 1980.

However, unlike the former model which had the rear compartment air conditioning unit fitted in the car boot, the Spur division car had this unit built into the centre division itself owing to the fact the boot area previously used on the Silver Wraith II now incorporated the fuel tank. This resulted in the rear seat passenger legroom being greatly restricted and hence the model was not popular and very few were produced.

The following year, 1984, resulted in Rolls-Royce and Bentley models becoming further differentiated thanks to the introduction of the Bentley Eight. This model was clearly identifiable by its mesh grille but also had a slightly lesser interior trim specification and reduced features in order to achieve a lower selling price than other models in the range.

The Bentley Turbo R with its distinctive alloy wheels and wide tyres – and also the inclusion of a centre console to differentiate it from the Rolls-Royce models – was introduced in 1985. Also, in conjunction with Robert Jankel Design, the company launched the Silver Spur limousine which was a 36-inch (915 mm) stretched version of the Silver Spur to simulate an executive’s mobile office and was equipped accordingly.
Also during this year, a special Silver Spur was introduced for the Middle East only. The marketing strategy behind this was that prospective Middle East owners would feel that they were getting a unique motor car, the main features differentiating this model were as follows:

- Kneeling Flying Lady mascot
- Video and TV to rear compartment
- Special wooden door capping rails

1985 became the first year whereby the term Model Year entered the Rolls-Royce terminology, as previously modifications to the specification were simply referred to as running changes or package deals, as an updating process. A number of enhancements were made for the 1985 model year, the main visible ones being:

- Facia vent flaps that could be opened or closed by manual controls
- New air vent mouldings fitted to the lower facia
- Headlight dip switch was now incorporated into the direction indicator switch, replacing the foot operated one that had been a feature of Rolls-Royce and Bentley motor cars for many years
- Revised door capping rails
- Improved digital display units

1985 became the first year whereby the main features differentiating this model were as follows:

- Improved digital display units
- Revised door capping rails
- Video and TV to rear compartment
- Special wooden door capping rails

During this particular year the company produced its 100,000th car and named it the Rolls-Royce Silver Spur Centenary and actually produced a further 25 replicas for selected owners. They were all painted royal blue, and festooned with many extras, and featured in a procession of Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars organised to celebrate this historic event outside the factory on 2nd August 1985. A 42-inch (1066 mm) stretched Silver Motors were specified:

- An anti locking brake system (ABS) was introduced for all markets other than North America, Australia and Japan
- Body modifications such as a new front apron enhanced air flow around the engine to aid cooling and also improved the aerodynamics
  - Revised hydraulic fluid reservoirs
  - New improved air conditioning compressor
  - Revised suspension settings
  - Revised front seats with position memory function
  - Improved wiring and terminals
  - New steering wheel
  - Improved cruise control system
  - The following year the Bentley Mulsanne S replaced the Mulsanne. This, again, provided a noticeable difference between the Rolls-Royce and Bentley ranges. The Mulsanne S acquired the Turbo R alloy wheels and also its interior console to differentiate it from both its predecessor and the Silver Spirit; a dashboard was also included in the instrument panel to give a more sporty character.

During this year, further occupant safety legislation was introduced in the USA, which meant 10% of certain models built had to be fitted with a seat belt system known as ‘passive restraint’. This was a motorised system whereby, when a driver or passenger sat in the vehicle and switched on the ignition, both belt and buckle ‘offered’ themselves for fastening
The decade ended with all Bentley models being fitted with 7-inch diameter twin headlamps and protruding ‘frogs’ eye’ washer jets.

Crewe factory parlance these jets were referred to as ‘frogs’ eyes’. At the same time, the Bentley Eight now had alloy wheels added to its specification, bringing it in line with the rest of the Bentley range. Also, below the front bumper and to further enhance the differences in appearance between the two marques, new airdam mouldings were introduced. A revised and stiffened engine crankcase was introduced for the model year change to enhance the smooth running of the V8.

At the end of 1989 the Silver Spirit range was replaced by the 1990 model year Spirit II and Spur II which were discussed in the RREC 2014 Year Book.

These revised models and their successors would continue in production until the final months of the 20th century, thereby becoming the joint third-longest running model range in Rolls-Royce history at 19 years. This matches the production run of the famous 40/50hp Silver Ghost (1907-1926) – quite an achievement for an interim model that was initially intended to remain in production for only seven years!

2014-2015 Issue 1
A GOOD, CLEAN FIGHT

With 25 examples listed under Class 16 (cars from 1979 to 1989) and 63 entries in Class 17 (1990 to 1999), SZs were out in force at the 2014 RREC Annual Rally. Fritz Feller's angular design was better represented than any other model at Rockingham Castle – and the judged entries were among the finest cars on display.
Diewerge explains consultant Daniel SZ Register technical winner, as owner and be rebuilt into a prize for the tired old car to more money than that. The vendor said a few.

The vendor said a few hundred Euros would turn this Bentley Eight into an “ideal wedding car.” Well, it took a bit more money than that for the tired old car to be rebuilt into a prize winner, as owner and SZ Register technical consultant Daniel Diewerge explains.

From my earliest childhood, I have been in love with Rolls-Royce cars. I recall seeing one for the first time in the late 1970s as though it was yesterday; I must have been seven or eight years old. It was a dark red Silver Shadow parked on the Grand Rue in the city of Luxembourg and I spent an eternity admiring it from every angle. From that moment I knew that only one company could rightfully claim to build ‘the best car in the world’.

It was a dark red Silver Shadow parked on the Grand Rue in the city of Luxembourg and I spent an eternity admiring it from every angle. From that moment I knew that only one company could rightfully claim to build ‘the best car in the world’.

In Luxembourg, where I was born and grew up, these cars were almost nonexistent on the streets during my adolescence. The official agent sold one or two cars per year but most were probably kept in the holiday homes of their owners. Luckily, I spent most of my holidays with my family in St Jean Cap Ferrat on the French Riviera and it was there where I could see many of these wonderful cars in reality. I even had the opportunity to ride as a passenger in a few Spurs, Turbo Rs and Corniches.

Even though I like almost every Rolls-Royce, it is the unobtrusive styling of the SZ series that makes me favour this model as a daily driver. I specifically looked for an early, pre-1985, SZ model because these cars ride a bit softer than the later models. I also prefer the earlier facia with the classic switchbox design. That the earlier cars have a much simpler electronic layout (i.e. no fuel injection, ABS or dreaded headlight control module) was an added plus for me. Of all the SZ cars, I always liked the Bentley Eight a lot. Once more, it is the facia layout with the classic round analogue gauges instead of the square digital ones and the simple, straight grained walnut dashboard (a ‘board’ in its true sense) that I like.

Shortly before buying my project car, I had the opportunity to keep a friend’s ’91 Bentley Continental for a few months while he was abroad and I was able to do some minor work on this car. It was then when I realised that I should not delay buying my first Bentley any longer.

The car I found on a large used car internet site was advertised as a “very rare” LHD Bentley Mullanne S, but due to the build year, the mesh grille and the missing sport centre console I knew it had to be a Bentley Eight. The ad mentioned that the car had not been on the road for several years but that it was in good shape and for “a few hundred Euros” could be transformed into the “ideal wedding car.”

So I contacted the seller and he agreed to meet me in his showroom on a Sunday. Arriving in Dusseldorf, Germany, after a three-hour drive, he admitted that the transmission had a problem and the car would only move in reverse, thus making any test drive or even an inspection of the under floor on a hoist impossible.

On the outside of the car there were the usual and expected rust spots in the lower rear quarters and some less usual rust bubbles on the rear apron. A look under the driver’s seat revealed a clear view onto the silencer heat shield and part of the rat trap. Both bumpers had damaged rubber sections, the fuel filler lid was kinked and the boot lid as well as the grille were badly damaged where some ‘badge collectors’ had tried to pry off the Flying B and the Bentley badge with a screwdriver.

More encouraging was the fact that the engine ran smoothly and every electrical feature such as the window lifts, the seat motors and the central locking system worked. Even the air-con system worked perfectly, to my surprise the compressor kicked in which meant that the system still held its charge of refrigerant.

The hydraulic system made no bad noises and the rear rams showed no signs of leaking. The steering rack also seemed dry and had already been exchanged for the improved later model version. A check of the front longeron’s (the part of the body structure that runs parallel to the exhaust manifolds) showed no kinks or dents, suggesting that the car had never suffered a heavy front impact.

The windscreen had an enormous crack right across the driver’s field of vision. The seats had been repainted with a thick and glossy coat of leather paint, this coating was already hardened and cracked. The woodwork needed attention too; the clearcoat was cracked in many places with the waist rails showing water stains on the exposed wood.

The carpets were generally good but the driver’s seat was partly burned from exhaust heat through the rust holes in the floor and was partly rotten, in other words a clear case for the waste bin. The car wore four different tyres; one of them was a gnarly off-road tyre, but all four wheel discs were at least present. The seller was a very nice and honest chap with a lot of R-R and Bentley

Rust bubbles were evident on the lower rear quarters and also on the rear apron

The driver’s floor was rusted through to give a view of the silencer heat shield

The wood trim needed attention due to a cracked clearcoat and water damage

The seats had been repainted and the new coating was hardened and cracked

Once home, the car was driven over the inspection pit to assess its true condition
experience and I spent the rest of the day chatting with him about the cars. After returning from Düsseldorf, I was up almost all night planning the restoration in my mind. After another sleepless night I agreed to buy the car if the seller would deliver it to my garage. One might ask why I choose this car when so many better examples are for sale at reasonable prices. Right from the beginning, I was looking for a project car. I have been in love for so long with Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars that I wanted to experience first hand how these cars are built beneath their glamorous surface. As tired as the car looked at first glance, there were no bodge jobs or curious modifications apparent, it was simply neglected and had been put aside for years by a desperate owner when the transmission let go, probably shortly after an expensive ‘rip-off’ rebuild. I knew I could handle the transmission repair as I had rebuilt a few TH400 transmissions before. These transmissions have a straightforward design with almost no technical flaws and can be repaired by almost anybody. I also had some bodywork experience from former car restorations and at the time, the necessary work seemed reasonable.

A week later, the Eight arrived on a Friday night. On Saturday I began the restoration. My original plan was to overhaul the transmission, repair the floor and then drive the car for a few months to get to know it better. I had to change my plan as soon as I had driven the car onto the pit in my garage and was able to assess the extent of the rust damage. Rusted out spring pods and severe rust on some brake and hydraulic pipes strongly advised against driving the car on a public road in its present condition.

I removed the grille, which would decorate my home office for a long time, and the bumpers to gain a better access to the body. With a friend, I removed the transmission which I rebuilt using a kit from an American supplier. The forward clutch drum seal (a little rubber seal) that was apparently incorrectly installed during a previous rebuild was identified as the culprit for the missing forward gears. With the transmission reinstalled and the engine oil and coolant changed, I could do some test drives in the courtyard in front of my garage. After being used for the first time, after many years of standing still, the brake pumps and the carburettor fuel inlets started to leak badly, so replacing the hardened O-rings was the next job I tackled. I also had the radiator re-cored since it seeped coolant from a few places on the cooler matrix. I also renewed the hoses from the LHM reservoirs to the brake pumps with some industrial grade hydraulic hose from Aeroprop that I obtained from a hydraulic shop. Unfortunately, the original style herringbone hose seems to be no longer available but, as I learned, any hose suitable for hydraulic fluid can be used. The power steering cooler hoses were replaced with dedicated Goodyear transmission cooler hoses specifically designed for hot ATF fluid like that which circulates in the steering system.

A local hydraulic shop fabricated two new braided high pressure hoses for a very modest price and bent and flared some brake lines to pattern to replace the rusted out ones. Some of the hydraulic lines feature a different kind of flare and I was lucky that the hydraulic shop also did jobs for the nearby Citroën garage and could fabricate this flare without a problem. Only once did I visit this Citroën garage to buy new seals as Rolls-Royce used many components from Citroën in this series of cars. I was more than surprised to find out that Citroën spare part prices can be almost three times more than those ‘our’ preferred spare specialists demand for the same parts. While I was working around the drivetrain, I also replaced all the flexible brake lines, the brake and suspension spheres, the brake caliper seals, the parking brake lines, the exhaust downpipes, the exhaust manifold gaskets, the valve cover gaskets, the engine mounting rubbers, all the drive belts, the flexible joints of the propeller shaft, the sparking plugs and high tension leads and a few more things I have certainly forgotten to mention.

I now had a car that could reliably move, steer and brake under it’s own power but still looked horrible. On a school trip to London in the mid 1980s, I visited the Rolls-Royce showroom in Conduit Street where, somewhat to my surprise, I was treated really well and was given a lot of catalogues, a price list and a colour fan where one could slide different colours behind a transparent SZ or Corniche model. I decided right then that my Bentley would be Brewster green. Fortunately, Rolls-Royce cars make a colour change relatively simple since the engine compartment is finished in black and the boot is lined with carpet. Moreover, the stainless steel finishing rails under the side windows can be slid up by about 10mm and don’t have to be removed to renew the paint finish. After the new paint is applied, they are simply pushed down again with a new rubber seal inserted to give a clean appearance with no joining line. I started by removing the windscreen and the rear screen. Being aware of the price of a replacement, I was extremely careful when removing the rear screen. I decided not to cut the rubber seal which undoubtedly would have been the safer method. Instead, I first pried out the chrome strip to release some tension from the seal. Then I carefully went around the circumference of the seal from the inside to free the sticking seal from the window channel and the glass. Finally I inserted around 50 wooden spacers between the channel and the glass. Finally I inserted to give a clean appearance with no joining line. The car was finished in Old English white when I bought it, but the lacquer had seen better days, showing a lot of fine crazing on all the horizontal surfaces. There was also a lot of white overspray, for example on the boot lid carpet binding and on the rubber grommets on the doors. Underneath the carpeting in the boot, I could see that the car must have left the factory in Dark Oyster. Interestingly, the paint code for Old English white was embossed on an original paint code plate fixed to the bonnet so the change to white might have been done by an official Rolls-Royce garage. The painter who had executed the colour change had sprayed a very heavy coat of filler and a thick layer of paint over right the original thermo plastic finish so the only answer was to take the whole car back to bare metal if I was to avoid future problems.

I used several methods to strip the paint: a razor blade, chemical stripper; sandpaper; and 3M fibre discs. The thermoplastic paint has a habit of instantly clogging even the roughest sandpaper, since it melts under the heat of the abrasive process, so the standard approach did not work in my case. The professional chemical stripper softened the paint very quickly and turned it into a gluey mess before turning gummy almost as fast so I could only do small sections at a time. The fibre discs worked really well but were too harsh for the aluminium parts of the car.
I did not use any prefabricated repair panels since, at least in my experience, these always have to be extensively reworked anyway. I formed all the necessary pieces from Tmm sheet metal.

Picture 17

For the final shaping of the body lines, I tried my luck on lead filling for the first time. It was much easier than I thought and I now prefer this method over the more common 2K plastic filler.

Picture 18

In the end, I had to replace the lower rear quarter panels, both corners of the rear apron, sections of both rear wheel wells, the lower rear corners of the front wheel wells, the entire driver’s side floor and some little patches here and there.

Picture 19

Once these areas were welded and lead filled and the complete outer body stripped down to bare metal, I used a 2K epoxy primer to spray the first coat.

Picture 20

I found a brand of primer that was suitable both for steel and aluminium and could be applied directly over thermoplastic paints. That last point was important to me since I did not bother to completely strip the paint from parts of the inner door or the front apron. I used two different colours of epoxy primer, green and black. This approach was used by the factory; the advantage being that, during sanding, you can see immediately when you are going too far, before reaching metal.

Picture 21

At this stage I took the doors and lids off the car. The rear doors were removed with their hinges at the B-pillar and, for the front doors, I left the hinges on the car.

Picture 22

After correcting some minor imperfections on the primed body with conventional plastic filler, I applied several coats of spray-on filler which was flattened with 800 grit and finally 1200 grit paper to achieve the desired result.

Picture 23

I was able to do all this work in my own garage since minor imperfections and any dust attracted during the primer or filler stage would be sanded out.

After almost a year of work on the engine, I rented a paint booth and a friend put the Brewster green basecoat and the clearcoat on the car. It is a stunning experience to see a freshly painted car in a paint booth.

Picture 24

Reassembly was quite straightforward because I had used the time when I felt unenthusiastic about doing more bodywork to clean and prepare small parts to restore the woodwork.

Picture 25

Since I wanted to use the car on a regular basis, I applied a thorough rust preservation treatment with a product called Mike Sanders. Instead of wax, which turns hard and splits after a few years when all the solvents have evaporated, a special grease mixture is sprayed into the cavities. The process is somewhat involved since the grease has to be heated to approximately 100° Celsius in order to be usable but is the long term protection I have come across so far. In warm weather, the grease will soften and continue to creep into unprotected crevices or over newly formed rust. Of course, this product was also liberally applied into the vulnerable spring pods. Finally the car received its Luxembourg registration. The only observation during the mandatory official technical inspection was the weak performance of the parking brake. I corrected this problem and the brake now performs quite well. The secret to a well functioning parking brake is to make sure that all pivots of the system can move freely.

Picture 26

After more than 40,000km throughout Europe, my Eight has only let me down once. In Berlin, the original fuel pump stuck and I blew a handful of fuses before disassembling it on the side of the street and being able to get it to work again. It was swiftly exchanged for a Faucet pump. It goes without saying that the work on such a car is never really completed. In the meantime, I rebuilt the front suspension, changed the rear subframe mounts and installed Turbo R rear hubs. I was lucky enough to find a complete interior in very good condition from a low mileage Silver Spur that was damaged beyond repair, to replace the mediocre seats I had in my car.

As a preliminary conclusion I can merely repeat the old classic car wisdom that one should always buy the best car one can find and afford instead of one in need of a total restoration. My total expenses far exceeded the costs for a well maintained car of the same model even without taking into account the hundreds of working hours I spent on the car. To make matters worse, my Eight still does not have the exquisite factory finish that a well preserved model displays. On the other hand, the restoration achieved just what I had hoped to learn about a Rolls-Royce built car from the inside out.

The crowning glory of my efforts was to be awarded the Tom Woods Trophy for the best personal restoration at this year’s RREC Annual Rally at Rockingham Castle.

I would like to thank Conny, Sebastian, David and Carsten for their hands-on and moral support. For Silver Spirit parts and technical advice please visit my website: www.spiritspares.com
It was a spring afternoon in 1965 and I was six years old, lessons were over and I was hurrying out of class when I ran right into her. She was nearly twice my age and had the most beautiful body I had ever seen. The memory of that Mason’s black Bentley S-type, parked surreptitiously beside the kitchen garden wall, has stayed with me ever since.

In hindsight, I suspect the car belonged to the war poet Siegfried Sassoon who was a patron of the school, lived nearby, and was reputed to have had an affair with the headmistress. But such intrigue was wasted on a car-mad six-year-old.

What was important was that my Dad was about to swap his Morris Minor for a new car and I now knew exactly what he ought to buy. Sadly, my entreaties to save up for a bit longer and get a Bentley fell on deaf ears. Instead, he came home with a two-tone green Vauxhall Victor 101 Super estate. It wasn’t even the blue Ford Cortina MK 1 estate with faux wood side panels that he had recently taken me to see. I made a secret pledge that, one day, somehow I would buy a Bentley.

Well, it took 48 years for that day to arrive and a Turbo RT – one of just 138 recorded by DVLA in the UK – now shares a garage with my primrose MG Midget. The Bentley is sublime, unfeasibly fast, and as luxurious as anything on the road… I love it. The MG is crude, noisy, slow and uncomfortable… I love it, too.

That’s not to say the Bentley is without its faults. That exquisite, dial-packed dashboard dates from an era before ergonomics and the position of the fuel gauge means the driver can only estimate what is left to within two or three gallons; and anyone with a Silver Shadow will find the suspension tooth-shakingly firm. And don’t even try to park it unless there are at least two empty spaces.

On the plus side, for such an affordable indulgence, the Bentley is a passport to another world. Our MG is often admired but seldom singled out for special treatment. But on its first show outing the Bentley was directed to park in a Ferrari sandwich between a 456 and a 512 TR. Then, a few weeks later, it was off to Classics at the Castle in Sherborne – a favourite event every year, where the MG mingles unobtrusively with hundreds of other classics on the show field. This time the Bentley was ushered through to a reserved space in the supercar enclosure outside the castle door. In the company of the Earl of Pembroke’s Bugatti Veyron, a new McLaren, a gleaming De Tomaso Pantara and a brace of Ford GT40s it was like being an interloper at a royal ball.

At the end of the day, there are two things people want to know about the car: how much petrol does it drink and what’s it really like to own?

The first one is easy: about 20mpg if you are careful and 10mpg if you are not. The second question is harder but Holly Golightly summed it up in Breakfast at Tiffany’s: “It calms me down right away, the quietness and the proud look of it… nothing very bad could happen to you in there.” That, I reckon, says it all.
LA GRANDE CORNICHE

Named after the spectacular coastal routes between Nice and Menton near the Italian border, Ralph Bünger explains how he tracked down this beautiful Corniche III in Switzerland and the trials and tribulations of bringing the originally French-supplied car up to concours standard.

Of all the cars in Rolls-Royce’s history, the Corniche was in production for the longest. Soon after the Silver Shadow was launched in 1965, a two-door saloon and then a drop head coupé (DHC) were introduced and these models were renamed Corniche in 1971. Production of the saloon ended in 1981 but the convertible continued to be built until 1995. For this reason, the Corniche can be considered a classic as well as a modern car.

The design of the DHC and later Corniche was so timeless, stylish and beautiful, that hardly any exterior change was necessary over its life-span of nearly 30 years. But from a mechanical perspective, it was the technology carrier for several other model lines including the Silver Shadow, Silver Spirit and Spur, and the similar Bentley Mulliner and Turbo models. Most technical innovations were first implemented in the Corniche before being carried over to the other models.

For the whole time it was in production, the Corniche DHC was considered to be the finest luxury car one could acquire. All attempts to imitate or improve on the Corniche’s style since then have not achieved the same success, with the possible exception of the Bentley Continental CTC.

Before I began the search for a Corniche, I already had two Rolls-Royce saloons, a 1973 Silver Shadow and 1953 Silver Dawn, seen in the picture below. Several friends owned Rolls-Royce or Bentley convertibles: Andrée had a Silver Cloud II, Christian a Bentley S2 Park Ward, Patrick a Corniche III and a Mulliner Park Ward ‘Chinese-Eye’ Silver Cloud and Jean-Yves owned a Bentley Continental, which made it difficult to withstand the temptation of buying a Corniche of my own any longer.

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At this time there was a nicely restored lime green Corniche II for sale in P&A Wood’s showroom in Essex, England. This is the garage where my other cars have been serviced regularly for more than 20 years. Unfortunately, this Corniche was a RHD car with a Stromberg carburettor topped by the air filter in the form of a huge pan. This set-up can be difficult to adjust and, had I bought it, I would have wanted to fit SU carburettors, similar to those of the Silver Shadow.

I then decided to look for a Corniche IV. This model was built from 1992 to 1995 and was equipped with technical features such as the Zetec fuel injection and ignition programming system, four-speed transmission, electronic ride control, driver and passenger airbags, and an electrically operated hood with a glass rear window. However, an expert dissuaded me from choosing a Corniche IV, mainly because the glass rear window is prone to cracking and its replacement is complicated and extremely costly.

Also, the other improvements were not considered as beneficial as those of the Corniche III (although, as I discovered later, the Zetec programming provides the engine with a smoother idling).
Differences between US Corniche IV (white) and a European Corniche III (blue) include more prominent bumpers, side marker lights and a centrally mounted brake light on the boot lid of the US car (which has the number plate mountings modified to meet French regulations).

There is one other reason why I finally opted for the Corniche III: most left hand drive Corniche IVs were built for the US market and have a different specification compared with European cars. These differences include a modified engine management system, due to different emission control regulations, more protruding bumpers, a third brake light mounted on the boot lid, side marker lights and a speedometer calibrated in miles per hour.

The speedometer is often replaced by one displaying kilometres when such cars are imported into Europe and this makes it difficult for the genuine distance covered by the car to be verified. US specification cars also lack a front spoiler and the steering wheel is bulky because of the need to accommodate an airbag.

Nearly all Corniche IV models on the European market have been imported from Florida and California. The majority have white coachwork and have suffered damage from the sun and salty air due to being parked outside for too long with the hood down. I viewed a number of American cars with cracked veneers, especially on the rear seat armrests.

To be fair, most of these differences are simply observations and not necessarily problems but a purist will recognise it as an American car and may consider it less prestigious than a European model.

For this reason, I forgot about the Corniche IV and concentrated my search on the III, which seemed more readily available with the specification I was looking for. The Internet is a great help these days and so I was able to spot a number of suitable cars for sale in France, Germany and Switzerland.

The Corniche III I tracked down near Zurich in Switzerland proved to be the one in the best condition. This car has had two previous owners, the first one having acquired the car at Franco Britannic Automobiles in Paris at the end of 1990 and taken it to Geneva later on.

He sold it in 2006 to a gentleman from Lucerne who confirms that he never used the car in rainy weather – which, in Switzerland, means not very often.

Another plus point was that the service booklet was maintained in good order (something, I think in general, few people do) supported by a number of invoices, confirming the service history and the number of kilometres covered, some 58,000 in total.

After buying it, I had to re-import the car to France, because Switzerland is not a member of the EU, and this meant a lot of paperwork and the need to pay French VAT. Thus, the tax has been paid three times for this car: in France in 1990 when it was new and again 2012, and in Switzerland in the 1990s.

Although the car was in very good cosmetic and mechanical condition when I bought it, there were a number of faults, such as vibrating front brakes, a climate control system that did not work correctly and several smaller issues. The car also needed a new air bag, which I chose with white sidewalls, and I also fitted a modern audio unit with iPod connection and Bluetooth.

The 1990 Corniche III that I tracked down in Switzerland was the one in the best condition. With two previous owners, it had covered just 58,000km by the time I bought it.
Engine surging

When I bought the Corniche and drove it from Lake Zurich to Paris, I noticed an engine surge at about 120 km/h, which was especially noticeable with the cruise control engaged. I was convinced that after carrying out a maintenance service, changing the spark plugs and doing the usual checks, this problem would disappear. The work was completed in October 2012, but it didn’t solve the problem.

In May 2013, while carrying out some additional work following the previous service, I had the engine surging/holding back issue checked once more. In the meantime, I had been able to work out more accurately the conditions under which it happened: at a cruising speed of 110 to 120 km/h, corresponding to about 2,500–1,500rpm, and when not under load. At lower speeds or accelerating strongly the surging was not present.

Also, the “check engine” light would illuminate under certain circumstances – normally indicating a Lambda sensor problem according to the handbook and other literature. But no fault was registered by the Electronic Control Unit (ECU). It became clear that the engine surging and the surging caused by the cruise control were in fact two separate issues. One of them probably amplified the other.

A long list of checks, tests and new parts followed, none of them solving the problem. In fact it became worse to such an extent that it was impossible to exceed 100 km/h (approximately 65mph) because, at higher speeds, the surging problem reappeared. The engine surging was especially noticeable with the cruise control engaged. I was told that this is inherent in the system fitted by Rolls-Royce Corniche, of course.

Cruise control

The cruise control has three options: Set, Cancel and Resume. When I set the speed, there is a little jump, but it stabilises quickly. I can then increase the speed by about 10mph at a time by repeatedly pressing the Set button. Once set, the speed control holds speed correctly as long as the car is being driven on a level road (such as a motorway) or uphill. The problem occurs once the road goes downhill.

The steeper the hill, the more the cruise control starts surging, trying to reduce the speed and then accelerate again.

The result is similar to the problem caused by a faulty Lambda sensor. As a result, one has to disengage the speed control and wait until the road becomes level again. This may be due to the fact that the system is not linked to the brakes in order to stabilise speed, as most of the modern cruise control systems are (even some older ones…).

Trying to remedy the problem I was told that this is inherent in the system fitted by Rolls-Royce and nothing can be done.

Engine idling

The system doesn’t work correctly because of a faulty sensor; then the engine surging would be a typical result.

However, a twofold sensor replacement didn’t solve the problem either, although in the meantime an engine diagnosis specialist who also assumed that the surging was caused by a faulty sensor had checked the car. Probably the sensor was working correctly but was not able to influence a problem elsewhere.

At a later stage the car’s pre-catalyst was removed and a crack discovered inside. But even after replacing it with a secondhand unit, because no new catalysts are available, the surging continued (the difficulty of accessing the pre-catalyst and lambda sensor is visible on the right-hand picture). Finally, the expert who had worked on the problem and whom I have now appointed “official engine surging expert”, discovered that the ignition sparks were reducing or even disappearing at the critical engine speed.

He explored further and discovered the ignition distributors were not correctly synchronised, a fault not shown by the sophisticated engine analysing equipment. Following the necessary adjustment, the surging problem was finally cured.

This was like a miracle. The car is fine now and is a pleasure to drive. Thanks to my engine surging expert!
When award-winning artist Paul Karslake FRSA (Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts) was looking for a suitable canvas on which to celebrate great moments and people in British history, a 1990 Bentley Mulsanne S provided the ideal solution. Karslake is the brother of Jo Wood, former wife of Ronnie Wood of the Rolling Stones, and his 1998 painting of Keith Richards, commissioned by Keith’s wife, famously provided Johnny Depp with the inspiration for his portrayal of Captain Jack Sparrow in the film Pirates of the Caribbean. Karslake’s other portrait subjects include Audrey Hepburn, the Krays twins and Sir Michael Caine.

Karslake’s ‘Empire Car’ was painted in 2012. The bonnet depicts Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, alongside the Virgin Atlantic space project and the moon. The boot lid portrays Sir Winston Churchill, the Battle of Britain and the Falklands war. On the offside rear pillar is a portrait of The Duke of Wellington with scenes from the Battle of Waterloo along its flanks, and the nearside rear pillar shows a portrait of Admiral Horatio Nelson with images of the Battle of Trafalgar. Both front wings depict the First World War, with poppies adorning the wheel arches. The work is signed by Paul on the front door mirrors.

The Bentley Mulsanne S was sold at auction in 2013 to art collector Eugenie Barron by Historics at Brooklands. “I was shocked that the bidding wasn’t going higher,” says Barron who often visits the auction house to admire the cars but has never owned a classic before. “I thought if I let this car slip away, I’ll regret it, so my arm shot up. My boyfriend was gobsmacked. It was my first and only bid and I got it for £14,000.”
Four years ago Malcolm Tucker bought a used Silver Spirit in preference to a new Mercedes E-class or Jaguar XF and set out to see how the Rolls-Royce stood up as an everyday car.

Of the many charms that Rolls-Royce ownership confers, one in particular has been enjoyed by RREC members since the formation of the Club in 1957. That attraction has been to possess a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, the price of which reflects outstanding value for money. Historically the models that fulfil this role have been two generations away from current production cars.

For now, the SZ range of Silver Spirit and Mulsanne derivatives, produced between 1980 and 1998 are the cars in question. Years ago when the Mk VI Bentley, or latterly the Silver Cloud held the baton, their relative simplicity and lack of hydraulic and electronic systems made them easily able to withstand high mileages and low maintenance. The arrival of the more complex Silver Shadow range gave vent to the accepted wisdom that they were often unreliable and very expensive to keep in good order. As they grew old enough to relinquish their role of ‘front line transport’, that accepted wisdom continued with the view that they were not happy cars if left standing for even relatively short periods; they needed to be well used to keep their complex systems lubricated and free of corrosion.

The SZ cars evolved from the SY range and naturally had the propensity to suffer the same problems. So, can a 16 to 35-year-old SZ car with a good service history still serve as everyday transport? I decided to acquire one and put it to the test. The choice boiled down to a Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit or a Bentley Turbo R. The Turbo R was rejected as, although it is a supreme high speed touring car, the ride is too harsh below 70mph on England’s rapidly deteriorating roads.

Most vendors will tell you that the best version of any model is the most recent year you can afford. However, with the price of these cars being less than £20,000, other considerations may be taken into account. Early cars did not appeal, because of their propensity to rust, and higher fuel consumption through carburettors. The later, often wrongly-named Mk IV – correctly called 1996 model year cars – I deemed to be too complicated although their higher gearing and better economy were tempting. They also had some good colours. So a Silver Spirit II or III was sought.

After much searching, I found a 1993 Silver Spirit II, with a very good service history, and in superb condition.
Rolls-Royce is problematic

But the sheer size of the car is problematic. Trying to negotiate 'res-parked' city side-streets, overgrown country lanes and parking at supermarkets with their 'average' sized spaces all need attentive driving.

I have owned a Turbo R, and one of the most irritating problems with it was the attitude of other drivers. It sometimes seemed that all and every BMW and Audi owner was hell bent on overtaking, no matter how dangerous or downright stupid the manoeuvre. The Silver Spirit did not suffer that reaction.

Had I not bought this car, I might well have purchased a new Mercedes E-Class or Jaguar XF. So, let us suppose I had chosen a mid-range Jaguar with the 3-litre petrol engine. On a long run it should achieve about 40 miles per gallon, against the Silver Spirit's 20 miles per gallon. At first look, a serious disadvantage for the Rolls-Royce.

However, if one does 10,000 miles a year, and petrol retails at £1.32 a litre, then it costs about £1,500 more to fuel the Rolls. Servicing costs would be much higher for the Crewe-built car. Ray Hillier of Hillier Hill suggests that an owner of a new SZ car might expect to pay around £1,400 over three years for the same attention.

All in all, the running of an older Rolls-Royce would seem to be a relatively expensive way to get from A to B, but two more costs have to be taken into account which alters the equation in favour of the Rolls-Royce. Insurance for the Jaguar is quoted at £1,033 per annum for an average driver. Using the RREC insurance scheme the price is probably going to be less than half that figure, more like a third – say £400. Much of the extra fuel cost has therefore been recouped in insurance savings. I’ve saved the best to last, in terms of financial factors in favour of our make of choice – depreciation.

The ‘retained value’ for the 3-litre Jaguar XF is 47% after three years according to What Car?, in this example £13,800 which demonstrates a loss of £21,200. The Silver Spirit should retain a higher percentage, which on a car purchased for £20,000 would represent a loss of about £7000. Of course, you must also consider the fact that twice as much capital was tied up in the Jaguar, in the first place.

In pure financial terms, the Silver Spirit would cost a similar sum to own and use over a three year period, but with a substantially lower initial outlay. In terms of driving and ownership pleasure, it really comes down to the individual owner’s preference. Only you can say how much you value the Rolls-Royce experience over that of a brand new luxury car, with its three-year guarantee, up-to-the-minute safety features and 2014-friendly size (all of driving and ownership pleasure, it really comes down to the individual owner’s preference. Only you can say how much you value the Rolls-Royce experience over that of a brand new luxury car, with its three-year guarantee, up-to-the-minute safety features and 2014-friendly size (all

The car was a joy to drive, although the ‘feel’ of the brake pedal is different from other makes of car...

But the sheer size of the Rolls-Royce is problematic.
things are relative). There is no denying that most Silver Spirit owners will have opted to share their driving with a modern ‘other’ car.

My car was attended to by Hillier Hill and had the faults of the first six months of ownership rectified under their warranty, this included fitting a new fuel tank, due to a weeping seam thus avoiding some potentially heavy repair costs compared with running a newer luxury car.

I shall now be more subjective about the ownership and use of such a car. However good or bad a car appears on paper, or indeed the television, there is one aspect that rarely seems to be mentioned; is the car in question a car at all? The answer, I think, is No! But only just. The driving experience on an everyday basis is perfectly viable, without qualification. You must also take into account the parking problems, the need for keeping the vehicle in tip-top condition and the careful scrutiny of maintenance requirements as per the handbook, to maximise the value of the car and the satisfaction of driving it.

The car at their premises.

Many dealers will be happy to perform the basic checks for you and ‘safe’ destinations, let the Silver Spirit keep a smile on your face for as many as you can manage.

And ‘safe’ destinations, let the Silver Spirit keep a smile on your face for as many miles as you can manage.

The motivating question for this article was “Is a Silver Spirit a suitable car to be used every day?” The answer, I think, is No! But only just. The driving experience on an everyday basis is perfectly viable, without qualification. You must also take into account the parking problems, the need for keeping the vehicle in tip-top condition and the careful scrutiny of maintenance requirements as per the handbook, to maximise the value of the car and the satisfaction of driving it. These tasks will probably be too much for all but the most ardent owner, on a daily basis. At the other end of the scale, a Silver Spirit used only for Club events is a sure route to mechanical problems engendered by infrequent use.

My recommendation for these cars is to use them frequently, say at least three times a week, and the more you drive it, the better the car will perform. Let the nearly new hatchback take you to Tesco, park in Parsons Green and wait for you outside the White Swan. For long journeys the ‘safe’ destinations, let the Silver Spirit keep a smile on your face for as many miles as you can manage.

This story originally appeared as a two-part article in The Bulletin in 2011.
Simply by looking at the Rolls-Royce Corniche that was launched in 2000, who would imagine that this car has more in common with a Silver Spirit than a Silver Seraph? Many people don’t realise this. The similarities between the nose of this car and that of a Silver Seraph are clear: they suggest strongly that it is derived from the BMW V12 powered Seraph. Yet, the mechanics are from the Bentley Azure and the car is a clear member of the SZ family. This article gives some of the background and explanations of what is often called the fifth generation of the Rolls-Royce Corniche convertible.

During the 1980s the designers in Crewe worked hard on a successor to the iconic Corniche. Many renderings were made and some of them reached the clay model stage. By the end of the decade the efforts to make a Corniche successor came to an end in favour of concentrating on a new two-door Bentley coupé, the Continental R. In the 1990s the Continental R was added to the model range and it was decided to base the new convertible Bentley Azure on this coupé. In 1995 the convertible Bentley Azure was launched. As with the Continental R, the Bentley Azure had no Rolls-Royce equivalent. The Bentley Azure was very successful and more than 1,100 examples had been produced by the end of its run in 2003, yet there was still a demand for a Rolls-Royce convertible as well.

In spring 1998, at the time the Silver Seraph was being launched, the idea came up to use the Azure as the starting point for a new Rolls-Royce convertible and give it as much Silver Seraph styling as possible. The final pragmatic solution involved combining the Azure platform with visual elements of the Silver Seraph. In May 1998 VW took control of the Crewe factory and, since it was logical to use the more recent Seraph platform or even a VW platform, new attempts...
were made to base the new Rolls-Royce convertible model on a more modern platform. In December 1998, after comparing two models – one on the Azure and the other on the Seraph platform – it was finally decided to build the Corniche on the Azure platform. All the background and considerations are explained by Graham Hull in his interesting and involving book Inside the Rolls-Royce & Bentley Styling Department. Reading this book is highly recommended to everybody with an interest in the SZ generation of cars.

Styling
As mentioned previously, the front and rear of the Corniche received the look of the Bentley Azure. The gear change selector resumed its traditional location on the right of the steering column. The engine was not the BMW-sourced V12 used in the Silver Seraph but the old and trusted 6750cc V8, tuned to produce 738 Nm torque at 2100rpm. What was special about the engine in this Rolls-Royce Corniche was that it was turbocharged. Just like the Silver Spurs from model year 1997 onwards the Corniche 2000 was provided with a Low Pressure Turbo (LPT), which made the drive powerful and extremely effortless and flexible.

Chassis numbers
Although the Corniche was shown to the public in 2000, the first car carried chassis number XCH68001 dating from model year 1999. All subsequent cars were built with a 2000 model year number or newer. The model indication on the fifth position of the chassis number was “K”, the letter that was applied to the Bentley Azure and Rolls-Royce Corniche only. The last five digits in the chassis number are the sequential numbers. The Corniche has a number range of its own, not mixed with other models, and separate series for each model year. The tenth digit in the chassis number indicates the location of the steering wheel. No less than 88% of the Corniche examples and 80% of the Final Series are left hand drive.

Final Series
At the end of 2002 it was agreed that Rolls-Royce would go forward under the ownership of BMW, while Bentley would remain in Crewe as part of the VW company. Therefore, production of the Corniche in Crewe had to be ended after only three years. It was decided to commemorate the years at Crewe with a Final Series special edition Corniche. This version featured special wood trim with an inlaid Spirit of Ecstasy motif, a numbered plaque on the centre console, red RR badges on the grille and boot lid, Spirit of Ecstasy emblems on the hub caps, re-styled chrome Azure alloy wheels, chrome door mirrors, and a badge on the front wings reading “Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, Crewe, England” together with a Union Jack. The Rolls-Royce production in Crewe ran from 1946 up to and including 2002 – 56 years in total. For that reason, 56 examples of the Corniche Final Series were planned to be manufactured. In the end, only 45 cars were built.

Table 1: Rolls-Royce Corniche production (Final Series excluded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model year</th>
<th>Left Hand Drive</th>
<th>Percentage of production</th>
<th>Right Hand Drive</th>
<th>Percentage of production</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Rolls-Royce Corniche Final Series production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model year</th>
<th>Left Hand Drive</th>
<th>Percentage of production</th>
<th>Right Hand Drive</th>
<th>Percentage of production</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All production figures provided by www.rrsilverspirit.com
The final Rolls-Royce Corniche rolled off the assembly line on August 12, 2002. This was the very last Rolls-Royce to be made at the Crewe plant before it was turned over entirely to the production of Bentley models. This car has remained the property of the Crewe factory. The unique Silver Ghost coloured convertible Rolls-Royce Corniche has a specially designed interior, based on that of the famous 1907 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost, which is owned by the Crewe factory, too.

Special editions
Almost every model in the rich history of the factory has its special editions, sometimes manufactured in Crewe, and sometimes modified by an after-market specialist. The Corniche is no exception. The fifth Corniche to be built, YCX68092, is a good example. This left hand drive car is said to have been made for the Millennium US Motor Show and registered to the factory at Crewe. The car started life as an Azure but when a car had to be selected for the Motor Show, Crewe modified it to become a Corniche. The gear shift is not on the steering column, as in most Corniches, it is the only Corniche with a Bentley-style gear selector on the centre console. Similarly, the dashboard is more Bentley than Rolls-Royce such a stunning car.

When Emmanuel de Menten from Belgium recently bought this 1982 Silver Spirit it was 32 years old and had only 14,825 miles on the clock.

Only seven careful owners
F

By the time third owner Malcolm Boyle bought the car in 1997 the mileage had soared to 4,412 and he piled on another 2,840 miles during the next six years. The car passed into the ownership of Mrs Caroline Deeprose in 2003 when the odometer was showing 7,275 miles. She kept it until 2008 when William Holborne bought the car with 12,186 miles on the clock. Despite minimal use, the car was showing its age, indicated by a £1,900 invoice for paint repairs at the time.

The Spirit was imported into Belgium by Etienne Mahieu in 2010 but he didn’t drive the car and Emmanuel de Menten bought it at just 14,825 miles. Following an engine and brake service (€3,500 for parts alone) it has now passed the 15,000 mile mark and Emmanuel says he is “expecting to drive it as often as possible.”
The origins of HooperFest 2013 can be traced back to April 2008 with my acquisition of a 1989 Hooper Bentley Turbo R 2-door (KCH26285). However, my interest in Rolls-Royce and Bentley began many years earlier following a visit to the UK’s National Motor Museum at Beaulieu as a toddler. I don’t recollect specifics of the visit, but I’m told that from that day onwards I was fascinated with Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, and by my mid-teens I had amassed a vast collection of brochures, magazines, newspaper clippings and models. It was at this time I joined the RREC as an enthusiast and aspiring owner, and also when I first met a younger Juergen Buech, the Registrar and driving force behind this register. It was also around this time that I first became aware that Hooper & Co, the illustrious coachbuilder, continued to create a limited number of bespoke Rolls-Royce and Bentley motorcars.

I suspect most, if not all, members of the SZ Register are familiar with Hooper & Co (Coachbuilders) Ltd, founded in 1805 and preferred coachbuilder to many royal households, first for horse drawn carriages and later Rolls-Royce, Bentley and Daimler cars. However, fewer members may be aware that in October 1959, following the closure of the famous coachbuilding operations, Hooper Motor Services Ltd was set up to provide ongoing support to existing customers, and that this business continued to operate as officially appointed Rolls-Royce and Bentley representatives through the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s.

One of Hooper Motor Services’ clients was Colin Hyams, an Australian businessman and entrepreneur. In October 1981, having identified a demand for modern, highly personalised Rolls-Royce & Bentley cars that Rolls-Royce Motors was unable to accommodate, he negotiated the acquisition of Hooper Motor Services and re-launched Hooper & Co (Coachbuilders) Ltd to target this clientele, delivering approximately 140 modern-era coachbuilt cars over the next 15 years.

I first had a chance to see the new Hooper & Co models at the British International Motor Show at the NEC in Birmingham in 1982, where a Hooper St James (a Silver Spur with signature reduced rear window and bespoke interior including glass partition and electric rear seats) and Hooper Corniche (with colour coded bumpers and door mirrors, a bespoke interior, chrome sills and chrome wire wheels) were on display.

Nevertheless, it was not until the RREC Annual Rally in 2000, where Straight Eight International (a London based luxury car specialist) was offering a Hooper Bentley Turbo R 2-door for sale that I was able to examine a car close-up, and I was left highly impressed by the elegance and quality workmanship of the conversion.

By then I had reached my 30s and I had been considering the purchase of my first Rolls-Royce or Bentley for some time. The notion of owning of a modern, coachbuilt Hooper Bentley Turbo R two-door was very appealing, but the asking price was beyond my budget. Memories of the car remained with me, so when I found the same car for sale while browsing classifieds on the web almost eight years later, I immediately contacted the specialist dealer and agreed its purchase.

With the acquisition of the car I also received an extensive history file including contact was made with 20 Hooper owners and nine were able to attend the inaugural HooperFest at the 2013 RREC Annual Rally International Motor Show at the NEC in Birmingham in 1982, where a Hooper St James (a Silver Spur with signature reduced rear window and bespoke interior including glass partition and electric rear seats) and Hooper Corniche (with colour coded bumpers and door mirrors, a bespoke interior, chrome sills and chrome wire wheels) were on display.

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With the acquisition of the car I also received an extensive history file including...
a Hooper & Co brochure with options list, and this encouraged me to start scouring the web for more details about the modern-era cars.

My research soon brought me into contact with other enthusiasts including Jordan Devine (of www.bentleyspotting.com) and later Bill Wolf (author of a series of features on Hooper & Co for the RREC’s Flying Lady publication) and Don Stott, owner of an extensive collection of Hooper & Co brochures and photos. It also brought me into contact with other owners, and this resulted in an informal gathering of three modern-era Hooper cars at the 2009 RREC Annual Rally at Rockingham Castle.

By 2012, I had established contact with more than 20 owners of modern-era Hooper cars around the world, including Dennis Robinson, a prominent member of the RREC’s Yorkshire section, with whom I first raised the prospect of arranging a more formal gathering of cars at the 2013 Annual Rally.

Meanwhile, the aforementioned Bill Wolf kindly introduced me to Colin Hyams, who enthusiastically accepted my invitation to join the gathering and view some of the cars he was responsible for envisaging and creating more than two decades earlier. It was some six months later that nine modern-era Hooper cars converged on Rockingham Castle on Sunday 16 June for the RREC Annual Rally and inaugural HooperFest, gathering in the Concours collecting ring for Colin Hyams to proudly inspect the line-up.

Colin Hyams had brought with him original Hooper & Co business cards, and he generously presented these to owners while remissign about the cars and entertaining us with stories of the frequently characterful customers and (hopefully less frequent) workshop mishaps. Following close examination of the cars, many photographs and much laughter it was time to clear the ring, so after bidding farewell everyone dispersed to enjoy the rest of the afternoon.

I did briefly consider that this might make a nice companion for my Turbo R two-door, but I resisted the temptation to bid and it failed to meet its reserve. Who knows what may happen if I spot it for sale in a few years’ time…
How to spot, circle and asterisk the difference

The following tables, summarised from the company’s contemporary Sales Directory, issued to salesmen as a source of product information, describe the main specification differences between the 1993 model year Rolls-Royce and Bentley four-door saloons and the Continental R.

Standard equipment or feature; Optional equipment or feature available at no extra charge if requested when ordering; Equipment or feature available at extra charge; a blank space in a column indicates that the equipment is not available for that particular model.

Note: Specifications included in the original Sales Directory that apply to all models have been omitted to save space; the information here is intended to highlight the differences rather than the similarities.

### TECHNICAL FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLLS-ROYCE</th>
<th>BENTLEY</th>
<th>SILVER SPIRIT II</th>
<th>SILVER SPUR II</th>
<th>BROOKLANDS</th>
<th>TURBO R</th>
<th>CONTINENTAL R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhaust system</td>
<td>Dual, 2 silencer, 1 outlet</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti roll bar stiffness</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damper setting</td>
<td>Softer – bias to comfort</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Firmer – bias to handling</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auto selection of firm setting in Sport mode</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panhard rod</td>
<td>To rear suspension</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-frame mounts</td>
<td>Front – soft</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Front – firm</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rear – soft forward firm rear</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rear – firm forward and rear</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering weight</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmission</td>
<td>4-speed auto</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport mode</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final drive ratio</td>
<td>40mph (64kph) / 1000rpm</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35mph (56kph) / 1000rpm</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### EXTERNAL FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLLS-ROYCE</th>
<th>BENTLEY</th>
<th>SILVER SPIRIT II</th>
<th>SILVER SPUR II</th>
<th>BROOKLANDS</th>
<th>TURBO R</th>
<th>CONTINENTAL R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front wing badges</td>
<td>No badge</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BENTLEY</td>
<td>Turbo R</td>
<td>Turbo RL</td>
<td>lwb</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>lwb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear quarter panel badges</td>
<td>Marque</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black, polished top plate</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black, painted top plate</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body colour, plated top plate</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
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<td>Door mirrors</td>
<td>Polished</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in body colour</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everflex roof</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine lines</td>
<td>No fine lines</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single thin</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Double thin-thick</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Double thick-thin</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyres</td>
<td>Black Whitewall</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whitewall</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheels</td>
<td>6½J x 15 alloy</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7½J x 15CH alloy</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7½J x 16CH alloy</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheel trim</td>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With painted ring</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### INTERNAL FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLLS-ROYCE</th>
<th>BENTLEY</th>
<th>SILVER SPIRIT II</th>
<th>SILVER SPUR II</th>
<th>BROOKLANDS</th>
<th>TURBO R</th>
<th>CONTINENTAL R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air horns</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellular telephone</td>
<td>Where system available</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Above rubies

That’s how T E Lawrence famously valued a Rolls-Royce in the desert in his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. But what about these poor SZs suffering from too much sun and sand in Riyadh, as featured on Ross HappyHearts’ Facebook page?

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**The Bentley difference**

Product summaries supplied to salesmen to help them explain the key differences between models.

**All models**
- Tachometer standard
- 170mph or 270kph speedometer
- Sports style steering wheel except where air bag specified
- Air bag wheel available only in black with no colour rim option
- Bentley rocker covers
- Black walled tyres
- Handling to satisfy the sporting driver through:
  - Bias towards handling in automatic ride control system by more frequent use of firmer damper settings
  - Increased anti-roll bar stiffness
  - Firm sub-frame mounts
  - 13mm (0.5in) wider track

**All saloons**
- Console mounted gear range selector
- Black indicator stalk stem

**Brooklands**
- Fluted door trim pads
- Wilton carpet overmats
- Rugs available at extra charge
- Unique wheel design
- Sports style seating at extra charge

**Brooklands, Turbo R**
- Flattened oval switch apertures on lower facia
- Long wheelbase versions of the Brooklands and Turbo R are offered in all markets

The Brooklands long wheelbase saloon has a painted roof as standard but, this exception apart, both Brooklands lwb and Turbo RL combine the distinctive features of the Silver Spur II with those of the Bentley saloons from which they are derived.

**Turbo R, Continental R**
- Turbocharger with intercooler
- Detail changes to engine to suit turbocharger and increased power output
- Three silencer exhaust with two outlets
- 50%+ increase in power
- Sport mode for greater response at high speeds
- Higher change points
- Burr walnut veneer without inlay
- Specially designed sports style seating front and rear
- Even greater priority given to direct and positive feel
- A Panhard rod controls the lateral movement of the rear sub frame and so maintains handling precision at very high speed. The rod is bolted to the rear axle cross-member at one end and the luggage floor cross-member at the other

**Continental R**
- Oil temperature gauge
- Automatic selection of firm damper setting in Sport transmission mode
- ZR rated low profile tyres

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>INTERNAL FEATURES</strong></th>
<th><strong>ROLLS-ROYCE</strong></th>
<th><strong>BENTLEY</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening armrest</td>
<td>Rear</td>
<td>lwb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lwb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lwb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Picnic tables         | Padded or veneered | lwb |
|                       |                   | lwb |
|                       |                   | lwb |

| Rugs                  | Lambswool        | lwb |
|                       | lwb              |

| Veneers               | Black lacquer    | lwb |
|                       | Elm, burr with crossband | lwb |
|                       | Mahogany with crossband | lwb |
|                       | Maple, birds eye | lwb |
|                       | Walnut, burr with crossband | lwb |
|                       | and boxwood inlay | lwb |
|                       | Walnut, burr with crossband | lwb |
|                       | on doors         | lwb |

| Gear selector         | On steering column | lwb |
|                       | On centre console | lwb |

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**Silver Spirit II**

**Silver Spur II**

**Brooklands**

**Turbo R**

**Continental R**
Although one of the rarest Bentley models of the modern era, the Continental T’s potential is still largely undiscovered. Buy one now, while only a few collectors are privy to its secret, says Martin Puthz.

In 1997, for the price of a Bentley Continental T in the UK (£220,312), you could buy two 12-cylinder Mercedes Cl 600s and still have nearly ten grand left over. Today, a Continental T is worth £50,000 to £70,000 – about a quarter of its original price. The chances of getting hold of a properly maintained low-mileage example are excellent because most of the 321 cars that were built between 1996 and 2003 have enjoyed a sheltered life.

At a dealer in Germany, we are about to test drive a 1997 car (please note, pictures of this car were not available but Gijs Veerman from The Netherlands kindly provided his similar Continental T for photography). Meticulously looked after and with only 60,000km on the clock, it seems practically new. Even after almost two decades, the scent of money has not vanished. The aroma of Connolly leather permeates your nose like the bouquet of a fine Bordeaux. As you bask in the opalescent glow of the engine-turned aluminium dashboard, the very name of the car sets your imagination on fire.

In the 1950s, streamlined Bentley coupés were called Continentals. Rich gentlemen would use them to escape the London mist and race off to Nice, where chilled champagne was awaiting at the Negresco. At that time, Crewe drew a veil of silence over the power of its engines, which were built in the same brick halls as those used for the Spitfire only a few years earlier. When customers or journalists insisted, the factory curtly replied “sufficient”. Today, power output is indiscreetly revealed in official documents: in this case, it’s 400bhp.

Sufficient, indeed. Even today you could challenge a train just as Woolf Barnato did in the 1930s. But as the German Railway with its notorious delays would hardly be a satisfying opponent, let’s have a look at the car in peace. At 5.24 metres in length, the Continental T outdoes many long wheelbase versions of current luxury saloons, although it is only a 2+2 coupé. In the metal, it looks even mightier than its dimensions suggest. The defiant front grille braces itself against headwinds.

Apparently, the engineers were not interested in a low drag coefficient. And why should they have been? The phrase “anyone who studies aerodynamics cannot build engines”, which is attributed to Enzo Ferrari, could easily have come from W O Bentley.

The company’s founder categorically rejected forced air induction (the ‘blower’ materialised in the late 1920s at the initiative of racing driver Sir Henry Birkin). Strictly speaking, the 6.75-litre V8, pressurised by a football-sized turbo, is not a Bentley engine but one from Rolls-Royce. Although it can be traced back to 1959 and the valves are archaically operated by a central camshaft via push rods and rocker arms, the forward thrust of the machine, which has a kerb weight of 2.5 tonnes and the drag of a British manor house, cannot really be slowed.

Anyone peacefully cruising at 1500rpm, enjoying the grandeur of the coupé’s unusually high seating position, could be easily transformed from the mild-mannered Dr Jekyll into the evil Mr Hyde once his welted brogue dives a little deeper into the lambswool rug. For the fraction of a second, the Bentley appears to gather its forces. An invisible fist then pushes the massive car towards the horizon as though the laws of physics did not exist. Even now, the rev-counter needle lingers in the lower third of the scale. But the muffled rumble has given way to an ominous roar.

You cannot truthfully say this car feels light. Although 800 Newton metres of torque do play with mass, they are not able to nullify it. It would also be exaggerating to call the Bentley agile, although its 11m turning circle is impressively small – many mid-size cars of today require more room to manoeuvre. Imagine being able to loop the loop in a 747. You now have an idea of how a Continental T drives.

Compared with the Continental R, its firmer suspension slightly jerks on lateral grooves, and the T doesn’t have the flying carpet feel of an SZ saloon. Most of the time, its passengers revel in the abundance of unused reserves and inhale
the luxury of a rolling mansion seasoned with a pinch of racing flair. In front of the driver, ten round gauges glitter from within shining bezels. Despite the three-metre wheelbase, four passengers enjoy a rather intimate sense of space. A herd of cattle might have been slaughtered to provide the leather – even the headlining of our test vehicle has been slaughtered to provide the leather.

Despite the three-metre wheelbase, four passengers enjoy a rather intimate sense of space. A herd of cattle might have been slaughtered to provide the leather – even the headlining of our test vehicle has been slaughtered to provide the leather. The Continental T wheelbase is four inches shorter than that of the R, the suspension is stiffer and the kerb weight is reduced by 100kg.

The modified 6.75-litre turbocharged V8 is tuned to give more than 400bhp T, which was introduced, new with 400bhp. The wheelbase was reduced by four inches and it had wider wheelarches. Suspension was stiffer than on the R and the kerb weight was reduced by about 100 kilograms.

The power of the Continental T’s engine (based on the Turbo R) emerged in 1991, notably being the first Bentley for more than four decades to divorce significantly from a Rolls-Royce body style. The 6.75-litre turbocharged V8 was estimated to deliver 360bhp while Crewe continued its policy of not supplying official figures, preferring to describe power output as “adequate” or “sufficient”.

WHO IS MARTIN PUTZ?
Martin Putze is a staff author for Auto Bild, Germany’s leading car magazine which is, with its licensed editions, available in 36 countries. The 4.3-year-old is an expert on British classic cars and has a long-term involvement with Jaguars. He is planning to add an SZ Bentley to his small fleet of 51 saloons soon.

The red badge of the Continental T was changed to a black background from 1998 big bore tailpipe, skirts and flared wheel arches add to the T’s sense of purpose. The exterior of the Continental R was designed by independent consultants Ken Greenley and John Heffernan, whereas Crewe’s Graham Hull styled the interior. In 1994 and 1995 Bentley offered a limited edition Continental S with big bore tailpipe, skirts and flared wheel arches add to the T’s sense of purpose.

Full size spare is stowed in the wheel well beneath the boot floor.

The red button next to it is the starter.

Sports seats with padded sides provide extra support for driver and passengers.

Sports mode switch is on the gear selector.

The modified 6.75-litre turbocharged V8 is tuned to give more than 400bhp.
Stretching out

In June 2014, Marinus Rijkers immersed himself for days in The Hunt House archive, scrutinising the factory build records to produce this definitive guide to stretched limousines with exclusive production data.

In the 1980s and 90s Rolls-Royce had a good deal of customers who didn’t buy a car to drive, but in which to be driven. These customers wanted a car that was designed and manufactured for them to live in the rear compartment. This accommodation needed to have every feature and accessory that the factory could deliver as standard, usually enhanced with scores of bespoke features. Often, the rear compartment was provided with an additional bench or individual seats, or one or two occasional seats to make it possible for the owner to share the comfort and luxury with others.

Until the introduction of the Silver Spur II Touring Limousine in 1991 Crewe didn’t actually build a limousine themselves. When the factory received an order, it manufactured a Silver Spur and sent it to a coachbuilder who stretched the car to the desired length. The ‘factory’ stretched limousines in the eighties were manufactured by Robert Jankel Design (often referred to as RJD, or just ‘Jankel’). The models in the nineties were lengthened by Mulliner Park Ward (MPW). There were also a number of aftermarket stretched limousines by other coachbuilders.

During the model years 1980 to 1990 the Phantom VI was still available as an alternative to the stretched SZ limousine. However, the Phantom VI does not qualify as an SZ so it is not included in this article. Table 1 (right) gives an overview of all the lengths of stretched SZ that the factory manufactured. It can be seen that over the years five stretches have been sold and that the 24 inch stretch accounts for almost half the examples (152 out of 320).

Many more LHD cars were built than RHD examples, with about two-third of the stretched cars being built in a LHD configuration (212 out of 320).

Table 1: lengths of stretch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stretch</th>
<th>LHD</th>
<th>RHD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 inch</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 inch</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 inch</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 inch</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 inch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 (above right) gives an overview of all the stretched SZ models that were ordered from the factory in Crewe, sorted by their model year.

According to the price lists, stretched cars were only offered as Rolls-Royce models. However, a car was specified as a Bentley on seven occasions and these models are listed separately.

During model years 1982-1988 it was possible to order an extended version of the Silver Spur. The car would be delivered with a 36 inch stretch and could be ordered with four, five or six doors. The extra length was added as an additional segment between the front and rear doors which were not modified. Although the demonstration car had six doors, few customers ordered more than four doors and the six-door option was soon deleted from the marketing literature.

Crewe would deliver a Silver Spur to Robert Jankel Design (RJD). This company split the Silver Spur, stretched the car and fitted it with extra features. All cars received an electric division with intercom and most had an extra air conditioning unit, a television, video player, refrigerator and a bar. Some had cloth upholstery in the rear and leather in the front.

In model year 1985 RJD was asked to build a limousine with a 42 inch stretch. Following the 42 inch prototype FCX12813, two examples were finished with a 36 inch stretch before the 42 inch stretch became standard. A stretch of 36 inches could still be ordered, which some customers did. For example, in 1985 a Japanese customer was advised to buy a 36 inch stretch because Japanese garages were not suitable for a longer stretch. But in later years, Japanese customers opted for cars with a 42 inch stretch as well. Most 42 inch limousines were provided with a moonroof, an option that was not available for the 36 inch stretch.

In 1983 a German customer ordered a 14 inch stretch with many bespoke features. RJD fulfilled all his requirements, but the car remained a one-off. At first, Jankel needed an average of three months to stretch a Silver Spur. Production increased from one example a month in 1984, to two cars a month in 1985 and 1986, and three a month in 1987. Orders collapsed in 1988 and production came to an end after five examples were built in 1988. Further details can be found in table 3 (above).

Table 2: stretched SZ models delivered by the factory in Crewe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Stretch</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>LHD</th>
<th>RHD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Limousine</td>
<td>36 inch</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Limousine</td>
<td>14 inch</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Limousine</td>
<td>42 inch</td>
<td>1985-1988</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentley</td>
<td>Mulsanne L Limousine</td>
<td>42 inch</td>
<td>1986-1987</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur II Touring Limousine</td>
<td>24 inch</td>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur III Touring Limousine</td>
<td>24 inch</td>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentley</td>
<td>Touring Limousine</td>
<td>24 inch</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Touring Limousine</td>
<td>24 inch</td>
<td>1996 &amp; 1998</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Park Ward</td>
<td>24 inch</td>
<td>1996-1999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Touring Limousine 48 inch stretch</td>
<td>48 inch</td>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Division</td>
<td>14 inch</td>
<td>1997-1999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentley</td>
<td>Brooklands LWB Division</td>
<td>14 inch</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Non Division</td>
<td>14 inch</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentley</td>
<td>Brooklands R Division</td>
<td>14 inch</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls-Royce</td>
<td>Silver Spur Armoured</td>
<td>14 inch</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentley</td>
<td>Mulliner Limousine</td>
<td>24 inch</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>217</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: production of Limousines by Robert Jankel Design in the 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rolls-Royce 14 inch</th>
<th>Rolls-Royce 36 inch</th>
<th>Rolls-Royce 42 inch</th>
<th>Bentley 42 inch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The original prototype stretched limousine version of the Silver Spirit, constructed by Robert Jankel Design. This was 36 inches longer than standard, with six passenger doors. It is the 1982 model/year car CCH06597 and was stretched in 1983.

The Touring Limousine, built by Mulliner, Park Ward, has a raised roof, a small rear window and a central division.

In model years 1989 to 1991, Crewe offered no SZ limousines and those who were interested in extra space in the rear compartment were ‘condemned’ to a Phantom VI or an aftermarket stretch by a coachbuilder of their own preference.

In 1991 the factory launched a new stretched model for model year 1992. This Silver Spur II Touring Limousine was entirely built at Crewe and was provided with a 24 inch stretch and the roofline was extended by two inches. The stretch was added behind the rear doors which forced coachbuilder MPW to modify the rear doors of the donor Silver Spur II.

For the 1994 model year the car was upgraded to the Silver Spur III Touring Limousine and a further nine examples were built with the specifications of the 1996 “New” Silver Spur.

In 1996 the factory returned to a model with a central segment added between the doors of the donor Silver Spur. This new Park Ward model was stretched by 24 inches and was named the Rolls-Royce Park Ward Limousine. It was offered as a limited edition of around 50 cars to selected customers. Almost 80 per cent of these cars were delivered to Japan, the UK, Hong Kong, the UK and the USA.

The ultimate limousine offered by Crewe was the Park Ward 48 inch Extended Limousine. In 1997 two examples were built for Thailand.

In 1997 another model with a stretch between the doors was offered. This Silver Spur Division had a 14 inch stretch and was a limited edition for the Middle East and Far East markets. Customers in Hong Kong and Japan accounted for 60 per cent of the production.

In 1998 the Silver Spur Division was also offered in a limited series of 20 examples as a Non-Division edition. The Silver Spur Non-Division was also intended for customers in the Middle and Far East, but 50 per cent of the cars were delivered to the USA and the UK.

The ultimate limousine offered by Crewe was the Park Ward 48 inch Extended Limousine. In 1997 two examples with two inches of extra headroom were built for Thailand. Both cars had the letter H in the fifth position of the chassis number, which indicated that these cars were built as a special project. In 1998 the last 48 inch example was made. This car, with four inches of extra headroom was ordered by a customer from Morocco. The letter V in the fifth position of its chassis number indicates that it is a Silver Spur Park Ward Limousine.

In the 1990s the Royal Family of Brunei ordered several unique models and special editions. Some of these were stretched limousines based on the SZ undercarriage that indicated the LWB edition (Silver Spur, Mulsanne LWB) was the N in the fifth position. In that model year it was decided that the company had to differentiate between all models and X was only used in the application of chassis numbers to signify that the vehicle was a 1988 model year 42 inch stretched model.

The one-off 1999 Silver Spur Armoured XCDX80801 (pictured left and below), is a bomb and bullet proof Silver Spur Non-Division, originally for an Arabian customer. It is provided with a raised roof, Alcantara interior, oxygen masks, run flat tyres, a kneeling lady mascot, and scores of other special features.

The one-off 1983 Silver Spur limousine by Robert Jankel Design with a 14 inch stretch, DCX08101. The car was ordered by a German customer who asked for many bespoke features to be incorporated.

Silver Spurs fitted with a glass division; these were not stretched and therefore have not been included in this article.

Chassis numbers

In the 1980s the stretched limousines (14, 36 and 42 inch) were initially built as a standard Silver Spur. These cars received the same identifications in the chassis number as regular Silver Spurs. The letter that indicated the LWB edition (Silver Spur, Mulsanne LWB) was the N in the fifth position of the chassis number.

During the seven years of production, on two occasions exceptions were made in the application of chassis numbers to the stretched limousines. The first time was in model year 1984 when the letter E was suddenly applied to the fifth position of two stretched limousines. The reason was the Crewe Certification Department proposed to use E for stretched cars and did so for these two examples. However after discussions with the various homologation authorities after the initial two cars the letter N could be continued and was used until the end of the 1987 model year.

The second exception was in model year 1988 when all Silver Spur Limousines were provided with an X in the fifth position. In that model year it was decided that the company had to differentiate between all models and X was only used to signify that the vehicle was a 1988 model year 42 inch stretched model.

The Touring Limousine, the Park Ward and the Spur (Non) Division had separate number ranges and identifications.

The Bentleys were numbered like the Rolls-Royces and were not considered to be separate model lines. A Bentley had no special features.
a B in the third position of the chassis number, whereas a Rolls-Royce had an A. Other properties were similar to those of a Rolls-Royce from the same series.

**Aftermarket stretch**

Many Silver Spurs and even Silver Spirits were stretched by aftermarket firms and it’s impossible to give a complete overview of these conversions. Hearses are stretched cars, so they could be considered, but this article deals with limousines only and no other coachwork. Many modifications to SZ cars were carried out by Hooper (dealt with in the article by Andy Hurfurt, see page 52). For example, Hooper stretched the 1989 Silver Spirit KCX25393 to form an Emperor State Limousine and added 1000mm to its length. In the same model year Hooper stretched the Silver Spirit KCH26441 into a wonderful State Landaulet, extending it by 1016mm. These and several other stretched Hoopers were based on Silver Spirits, not on Silver Spurs.

The oldest SZ stretched limousine that is known to me is the 1981 Silver Spur BCH03280 that resides in Belgium. The car is 6.6 metres long and the coachbuilder is unknown.

The American coachbuilder O’Gara Coach Works of Simi Valley, California stretched a 1982 Silver Spur by 32 inches. A 1983 Silver Spirit was stretched in Sydney, Australia and another 1983 Silver Spirit by Royal Coach By Victor in Anaheim, California. L J Crawley (UK), Coleman Milne (UK), Coway (UK), Mulliner Park Ward (UK), Classic International, Trasco International (Germany), Carat Duchatelet (Belgium), Robert Jankel Design (UK), Dalbryan Coachbuilders (USA) and several more have stretched Silver Spirits and Spurs.

For many owners, a stretched limousine is the epitome of a Rolls-Royce. The factory (now in Goodwood) will probably always manufacture extended Rolls-Royces, no matter whether they are called Touring Limousines, stretched limousines, Park Wards or Extended Wheelbases. Similarly, there will always be aftermarket conversions.

Some sources have published production numbers that are different from those in this article. In order to investigate the exact years of production and the lengths of stretched limousines I visited The Hunt House in June 2014 and researched every file relating to stretched limousines. The figures in this article are derived from the original production files.

For an overview of all the factory ordered stretched SZ limousines and the generations of Rolls-Royces that followed please visit www.rrsilverspirit.com.

Finally, if you know of a type of stretched limousine that has not been mentioned in this summary, please contact me on info@rrsilverspirit.com.

• With thanks to Tony Flood for his help with checking this data.
As a child, I am told that my first word was “car”, followed by “Bentley”, and while that is a good story, it may well be apocryphal. My father had, in the early 1950s, the first car I can remember, a Derby Bentley and he followed that with a MKVI, then an S1 and finally a T2. In the meantime he had purchased a 1929 4½ litre which, in 1984, he passed to me because “I am not playing with it enough.” Maybe this explains one of the reasons why I have had so many Bentleys.

Like my father, I have always appreciated good solid and sound engineering and found Bentleys fitted this very well. Being almost over-engineered and solidly built, they conveyed a sporting image based on their racing successes of the 1920s and ’30s. The 4½ litre has what I would call a proper engine room, in that all the workings are there to be seen. They are easy to work on and can be understood, having carburettors and magneto ignition, and all the drivetrain is clear and accessible. While I am no mechanic, I love working on the car, fettling whatever needs to be done and this satisfies my latent mechanical side and gives great pleasure when it all works. The vintage is a joy to drive and changing gear, either up or down silently with a crash box adds to the fun. It is used whenever I can, come rain or shine and does many miles each year including, some years ago, a few trips to Le Mans. On one occasion, it was interesting to overhear some American tourists who were amazed that we had driven all that way rather than trailer the car. I also know that it gives pleasure to others to see the car out and about and, on fast roads, something of a surprise when I go past modern cars. Although it has spent some time in hospital in the care of experts, the 1929 car is once again great fun to drive, even on motorways thanks to being fitted with an overdrive. We believe the mileage counter has gone round the clock and so it now has nearly 200,000 miles under its wheels. Thus I have ‘outdoor motoring’.

Indoor motoring

As for ‘indoor motoring’, in 1998 I was able to purchase my first ‘modern’ Bentley and found a very good 1985 Eight at P&A Wood in Essex. The Eight was first produced in 1984 (1,734 made) for the ‘younger executive’ and had fewer, or less expensive, fittings to reduce the price – mesh grille with chrome shell, no picnic tables on the back of the front seats and no sheepskin overlay carpets, for example. The mesh grille was a nod to the vintage Bentleys, making the Eight more appealing to those looking for a sporty feeling, and was to become standard on a number of future cars. Initially I was looking for an S3 but at the time, they were either very expensive or would cost a great deal to bring up to standard. I was convinced by friends that the Eight would be very suitable and after a friend had tasted* the sump oil and found it to be satisfactory the car then, with a few items sorted, entered my garage. Over the years it needed very little serious work, other than replacing the head gaskets. There were some minor things which needed attention but as the car was already 13 years old when I bought it, this was hardly surprising. We did some 95,000 miles together and I became very attached to the Eight.

The car performed very well although the specified Avon tyres soon showed up weaknesses, mainly that they did not last very long and I also found the suggested pressures too low which, I was told, was for comfort, not ‘driving’. I was.

Following 15 years and 95,000 miles together, Sir Richard Alexander and his much loved Bentley Eight parted company in 2013. A new companion soon followed and this Turbo RT SWB, one of only two in the world, has joined his 1929 vintage Bentley 4½-litre in the garage.
I saw a Turbo RT SWB with reasonable mileage and went to have a look. Built in 1991, this is one of only two SWBs and the only one with RHD. There were 250 long wheelbase Turbo RTs built, although they were never officially called ‘LWB’ because it was the standard production car. The two SWB examples were, apparently, special orders.

At first glance, I saw no significant differences between the RT and the Eight; it is, I believe, the same chassis and body. On closer inspection, there are a number of noticeable changes. At the front, these include two separate headlights as opposed to two units under a single cover and larger air dams; the radiator has the same mesh grille as the Eight and also the shell on mine is chromed (which I prefer) rather than painted. There are further ‘tweaks’ to the body which make it different from that of the Eight.

The car is based on the Turbo R and uses the Continental T powertrain which gives 400bhp and 590lb ft at 2100rpm. The SWB version does have a couple of advantages over the LWB, one being that it is about 4 inches shorter and therefore has less weight. There are many other benefits over the Eight brought about by having an extra 12 to 14 years of further development, never mind the turbo.

So, a test drive. I first noticed that the steering was slightly heavier but it suited the car. Driving in traffic was very comfortable and it was easy to place the car, but then it has the same dimensions as the Eight. Out on the open road I put my foot down and it was backsh pushed into the seat and watch the speedometer come on at below 3° centigrade; I found the outside temperature reading very useful in the Eight. The gearbox has four speeds and changes are imperceptible. It adapts very well to the style of driving – I have never yet had to engage Sport because the power delivery is instant. In fact, the whole car gives you a feeling of well-being because you know it will deal with any situation – the traction control has activated a couple of times, but that was because the car was on a loose surface – honest! The active ride allows corners to be taken without drama and inspires confidence. And, while the car has all that extra power, I have found no real difference in fuel consumption – as long as you behave yourself; a good 20+mpg can be expected on a clear run.

One slight downside is that there are covers everywhere under the bonnet so you can’t see much of the engine. While I enjoy driving the Eight very much, the Turbo RT is better. It is more of a driver’s car and I know I will still be enjoying it many years hence.

The car recently spent a couple of weeks at P&K Wood for a full service and examination during which a number of major and minor faults and problems were found. The main issue was that the front springs had gone soft lowering the car by 250 inches (not that uncommon, apparently). Although the car was running well, I never realised that many of the items they listed needed attention. It says something that only the true experts would find these but thank goodness they did. It pays to get a specialist to give your car an in-depth health check every-so-often. I do like my cars to be ‘right’. The Turbo RT should now see out my driving career and hopefully be able to be passed on, like the vintage, to my sons. What impresses me most is when you consider that, although the V8 is basically the same as in my 1985 Eight, it is based on the engine designed by Jack Phillips in 1959. It has been progressively up-graded over the years and is the oldest engine design in the world still being manufactured.

BENTLEY DRIVERS CLUB

I have been a member of the Bentley Drivers Club for 30 years and have appreciated all that it offers. It has called a club for friends with a common interest and this is, and more. The activities and services offer a full range to suit all tastes, ranging from racing, vintage, Derby and post-war car, through to social events such as Noggin & Natters, to visits to many interesting places, to concours and some exceptional rallies around the world, together with excellent spares schemes for all eras. If you own a Bentley and are not already a member, please have a look at www.bdccl.org
A big thank you to everybody who has already joined the SZ Register and sent us pictures of their beautiful cars. Here is just a small selection

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Three regal looking number plates for sale – all on retention and available immediately

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Please continue to send us your pictures for possible inclusion in the next issue of The Spirit
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