



A HISTORY
OF
THE NORTH EASTERN SECTION
OF
THE ROLLS-ROYCE ENTHUSIASTS'
CLUB

THE FIRST FORTY YEARS
BY
GORDON BLACKLOCK

INTRODUCTION

By
Roy Brooks

What a great idea, so typical of the forward thinking of the North Eastern Section to produce a booklet to help welcome new members to the section. Whether or not it is a great idea to ask me to write the introduction to your esteemed President and my good friend, Gordon Blacklock is much more open to question. At least I have known him for over 40 years since soon after he joined the RREC in 1964 and known the section since its inception.

In the very early days Gordon and his family would often travel considerable distances to club events which were, it seemed, invariably centred around Oxford or London. There was just no club activity in the distant North; living in Lancashire, I too had similar problems of distance. In 1966 I formed the Northern Section of the Club, based on Bolton, to provide a focal point for RREC members "North of the Wash"! Gordon and others from your area were active and welcome supporters at many of our events.

It was though not too long before stalwarts in the North East formed their own geographical group with Peter Knighton as secretary. Initially it was a somewhat quiet beginning, but became livelier with time under the stewardships of Edwin Smith and Wilf Davis.

Although then not in office Gordon was a very active supporter and along with Richard Harrison in 1978 produced the section's first newsletter. Shortly afterwards at the section EGM, at which I presided as then RREC Vice Chairman, Gordon was persuaded to become section secretary. After some trepidation he carried out the job with warmth and enthusiasm. The section soon flourished, so much so that in 1979, as RREC Chairman, I presented Gordon – representing the section - with "The Enthusiasts' Trophy" for the section making the most progress that year.

Starting in 1979 and undoubtedly the very best events of the section's early years were the Durham Castle Weekends. Thanks largely to Professor Robin Mills and his influence with Durham University these events became legendary within the club. One little known sidelight of these rallies was that Gordon and his ever-supportive wife Margaret were invited to a Royal wedding. This was when Robin married Princess Helen of Romania in Luzern, Switzerland. Regrettably due to what seemed like over-zealous interpretation of fire regulations these rallies had to be discontinued after only eight years.

Following a spell as section chairman and Margaret as treasurer, in 1986 Gordon was very appropriately appointed your first President. He is now the longest serving holder of such an office in the RREC. The North Eastern Section is indeed fortunate to have Gordon's experience and wisdom available as it continues to serve its members in the true tradition of the RREC, the best motor club in the world.

Roy Brooks 14/8/07
Northern Section President Emeritus
Past Chairman RREC

I realise that before I can start this historic note I have had to ascertain who and when the first Section Secretary took up the challenge. With only the early Bulletins and my newsletters produced in my tenure as Section Secretary from 1978 to 1986 to go by, it has taken some time searching every issue looking for the starting point. One thing I have had to admit is that my memory is not as good as I would have liked. If only I had kept a diary like most sensible folk, it would have been plain sailing. In hindsight, had I known that this Club was going to take over my life I might have done just that and been better prepared to carry out this undertaking.

The first mention of the North Eastern Section is in Eric Barrass's Secretary's Notes, Bulletin No. 50, September 1968. Eric had obviously been talking to Peter Knighton about our section with the result that Peter agreed to get something going in the North East the following year. At the time Peter and Brenda were busy with the preparations for their forthcoming wedding.

A year later in September 1969 Peter Knighton became the first North Eastern Section Secretary. The Section was born. Although we had a secretary nothing happened in the way of rallies or events but it was really good to have someone like Peter who knew what he was talking about when the subject of Rolls-Royce and Bentley was discussed. He was always so cheerful talking at the end of the phone. I suppose it was quite understandable when one considers the facts. He had at that time two Phantom IIs and a Phantom I chassis and a garage not big enough to take any of them, but he had space to build. Remember they had not long been married.

After about two years I noticed that Peter's name had been removed from the Section Secretary's list but in January 1972 Edwin Smith who was a great friend of Peter and was the proud owner of a 1928 20hp Windovers Saloon wrote the first North Eastern Section Notes in The Bulletin asking members to support his first Rally to Wallington Hall in Northumberland, to be held on the 20th May 1972. We had a new Section Secretary.

1972 Bulletin No. 73 North Eastern Section News reported a successful first Rally at Wallington Hall with photos of cars present, Eddie Neille's Hooper Silver Wraith to the fore, Edwin's 20 behind, Ian Turnbull's 20/25 James Young, Ian and Wendy Hick's 1947 MkVI Bentley, Peter Knighton's R-type Bentley, Mr Sprague's 1958 Bentley S1 and Richard Harrison's 1953 HJM MkVI, plus members of the VSCC and the North East Club for Pre War Austins.

May 73 saw the 2nd Wallington Hall Rally which was even better attended although there were no VSCC cars present. Wilf Davis who lived in North Yorkshire came on the scene with the idea of starting a

new Section to cover the area of North Yorkshire and South Durham and maybe later on, Cumbria. At the first meeting, held in the Golden Lion at Northallerton, were Doug Thomas, Richard Harrison, Don Reed, Ian Hick. Eddie Neille, Edwin Smith, Bill McGarr, Peter Knighton and Gordon Blacklock.

November 1973 there was the first entry in The Club Bulletin mentioning the North Yorkshire and South Durham Section. Section Secretary was Wilf Davis. There were no notes.

At the second meeting at Northallerton, Wilf suggested we held our monthly meetings at The Vintage Hotel near Scotch Corner. He felt that Scotch Corner was a more central place in the new Section. These meetings were never as well attended as the first two at The Golden Lion but we survived with numbers varying between twelve and four. I well remember one very cold wet night we were honoured to have George Birrell the then Club Chairman surprise us with an unannounced visit, which transformed the meeting and gave us much to talk about for many weeks.

In 1974 the third Wallington Hall Rally was again organised by Edwin Smith. Members present were Mr and Mrs Les Dickinson, 1933 20/25 Sports Saloon; Ian Wilton, 1937 25/30 Sports Saloon; Peter Knighton, R-type Bentley; Ian Turnbull, 20/25 Sports Saloon; David Sills, 1948 MkVI Bentley and Ed Dixon's 1935 3½ Bentley.

Everything seemed to be running quietly for a while in the North East and North Yorkshire. Wallington was still popular with decent attendances. Some years had very hot weather and others wet and windy and, once, even snow. Then in 1977 things changed, Wilf Davis informed us that after long discussions with Edwin Smith, Secretary of the North Eastern Section a decision had been reached to amalgamate the two Sections and should be called The North Eastern Section, so the North Yorkshire and South Durham Section was disbanded. Wilf Davis was to take over as Secretary and Edwin Smith to assist.

Wilf Davis tried very hard to arouse interest in events in the Teesdale area. Member Bill McGarr gave a silver cup as a trophy for a Teesdale Rally, but to no avail, the event was cancelled and the Trophy sat on a shelf for a number of years.

In the meantime Durham Castle Weekend which was started in 1974 by Dr Robin Mills, Vice Chancellor of The University, was gaining in popularity each year, and later, was organised by Wilf Davis when Robin was posted to Sudan.

Wilf Davis found organising Durham Castle Weekend rather tiring and after the 1977 event asked me to write the report for the Bulletin which was published in the November issue, my first attempt at writing an article. Photographs which accompanied it were of Edwin's Windovers

20hp, Wilf Davis's R-type and Jim Wilson's con-course winning Silver Cloud 1.

In March 1978 Richard Harrison and I started to produce a monthly newsletter, we both had access to the same photocopier so it wasn't too difficult and the first edition went out a few days before the April meeting.



Another milestone in the section was incorporating Cumbria into the fold. Possibly they should have been attached to the Northern Section but were not, so it was left to Wilf Davis to bring them in. Therefore Appleby became a popular venue for runs.

At the June meeting held at the Vintage Hotel, Wilf Davies announced his decision to retire as Section Secretary and suggested I take over as caretaker secretary.

To appoint a new Secretary we were compelled to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting which we did on the 18th of July 1978 at the home of members Barry and Noreen Chapman who lived in Norton. The reason for this venue was thus; at the previous meeting in June, the manager of the Vintage hotel informed us that in future he wanted twenty pounds for the use of the room (which was only an alcove in the bar). We voted with our feet.

Those present at this meeting were Roy Brooks, who was Club Vice-Chairman and his wife Rita, who had motored over from Bury to officiate, and Messrs Davies, McGarr, Smith, Harrison, Neille, Wilson and of course Barry, Noreen and myself. To cut a long story short I was asked if I was willing to take on the roll of Secretary, I agreed and a vote was taken and everyone present gave me their support. I thanked them all for their trust and promised to do everything I could to get the Section on a firm footing. Deep down inside I was petrified. Roy Brooks suggested that Wilf became Section Chairman which he accepted. A vote was taken in favour. Barry Chapman became Treasurer and Richard Harrison Joint Editor with me. Next job was to find a new venue for meetings.

Realising our predicament, member Jim Wilson, who ran the Wheatsheaf Hotel in Consett, very kindly offered us the use of the rear lounge until we could find a more central venue. This turned out to be a fantastic meeting with more members attending than we had ever had.

His wife Pat proved what an excellent caterer she was by providing us with a large tray of sandwiches and pastries with Jim a perfect host. All those who attended wished that Consett was more central.

The Teesside Yesteryear Motor Club had been using the Hardwick Hall Hotel, situated on the outskirts of Sedgfield for some time, and being a member of that multi car club and knowing how the hotel operated I approached the management, with the result we held our first meeting there in the Cellar Bar on the 13th September 1978 (the second Wednesday) when 22 members and friends attended. This was beyond our wildest dreams and to add icing to the cake we agreed to hold our first Annual Dinner there the following month having an equally good turnout.

The fifth Durham Castle Weekend, also in September, was organised by me, ably assisted by Barry Chapman, our very capable Treasurer and my wife Margaret. I am pleased to say it was a huge success with over 30 members and friends in 21 cars. David Preston, Rolls-Royce Motors' Public Relations Manager, and his wife Beryl attended in the Company's Camargue.



Shortly after my appointment I received a phone call from member Graham Holmes, who farmed in the Appleby area. Apparently Graham had stowed his MkVI Bentley in the barn of a farm he rented out. The car had suffered a broken con rod and he was not sure whether to repair or scrap it. But, unbeknown to Graham the tenant had pulled the Bentley out of the barn into the field with no cover, to allow him more space for his equipment! Consequently when Graham finally saw the state of his car there was only one course of action, SCRAP. See full report in Appendix 1.

In November 1978 I received a letter from Wilf Davis offering his

resignation as Chairman. As no one came forward as replacement we operated without a Chairman for a number of years. The lack of Chairman did not stop the progress of the Section. Our monthly meetings went from strength to strength averaging 25 plus members. The Newsletter which we printed on an ancient Gestetner hand operated duplicator, later being replaced by an electrically operated one, was well received by most members, even 'fought over' by some families. Section Secretaries were sent a copy as a matter of course and some members of the Management Committee requested a copy. A copy was also sent to the Hunt House with favourable feedback. We also took our place at the Club Conference in March which was then held for one day only at an hotel in Daventry, followed by a quick inspection of the shell of the Hunt House, when the conference was over. Each year we were well received by the delegates and each year we had the pleasure of inspecting the progress made in the Hunt House restorations. Things could not have been better.

1979 was the 75th anniversary of the Company and the 10th anniversary of the North Eastern Section. It was an honour that at the Annual Rally held at Packington Hall in Leicestershire, I received on behalf of the Section, The Enthusiasts Trophy from Roy Brooks, Club Chairman. This trophy is awarded to the Section considered to have made the most progress in the previous year. Jim and Pat Wil-



son, Jacqueline White, and of course my wife Margaret and our two boys were there in support. 1978 had been very hard work, but to receive the Trophy made it all worthwhile. I was bursting with pride for a long time.

The last event of the year, November to be precise, was a run into North Yorkshire organised by Ian Hick and Wendy, who were members of our committee. The run started in Wetherby, stopping at Thruscross, a new reservoir with a splendid car park for our picnics, then continued through more beautiful countryside finishing up in the grounds of Harewood House. By coincidence the assembled members were from all four

Northern Sections. Needless to say it was not long before the chat turned to the expanse of lawn immediately in front of the house and a unanimous chorus of "what an ideal place to have a super rally".....

The pioneers, Ian Rimmer for Northern Section, Ian Hick for North Eastern Section, Nigel Berry for East Yorkshire Section and Brian Crookall for East Midlands Section met at the Pennine President Hotel alongside the M62 near Huddersfield in February to plan the first rally at Harewood House for the 13th July 1980. It was agreed to call the event The North of England Rally and a small organising committee, plus some of their respective wives and a few others have continued to meet every February since. It has to be said that the first rally was a huge success with almost 150 Rolls-Royce and Bentley motor cars attending. The general consensus was that it must be done again in 1981, and so it continues.

There was a time in the Club's history when wives and partners were allowed to join the Club as a spouse but without voting rights. This went on for some years and was a thorn in the flesh to many members especially fathers and sons. I suggested at one of the Conferences to drop the word spouse and replace it with JOINT member, with full voting rights. I am pleased to say it was carried.



One of the most memorable events we held in 1981 was a visit to Catterick Garrison for driving tests organised by member David Dudley a lieutenant colonel there. One of the parade squares had been marked out for us. Over thirty members and friends in nine Club cars and eight modern vehicles took part, only the older cars being used for the tests. Nearly everyone took the opportunity to drive a Rolls-Royce or Bentley and had such fun. After about an hour and a half when we had all had our turn we drove in convoy to the officers' mess for drinks and lunch. After a splendid meal we had the prize-giving and a vote of

thanks to David for giving us such a fantastic day.

In 1982 David repeated the driving tests with a few more Club cars attending, with a similar outcome, another wonderful day. Alas, David was posted to Germany some time afterwards, which put an end to our popular driving tests.

Although the North Eastern Section had had its share of good fortune over the previous decade the following years were not exactly plain sailing. I had been Secretary since 1978, and in 1981 I had started up my own business and, by 1984, I was finding it difficult to give my best to both jobs. Fortunately Phil Bradford who had been a very active committee member agreed to become Section Secretary and I took over as Chairman. Durham Castle Weekend was still popular, attracting

members from all parts of England, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man and even four members from California. We were very pleased to have the General Secretary, Eric Barrass and his wife Grace visit and on another occasion Chairman Roy Brooks and his wife Rita. Reg Vardy our local Rolls-



Royce dealership became interested in our activities at the castle and Peter Vardy, Managing Director, gave us lots of support and was guest of honour, with his wife at Sunday luncheon in The Great Hall. However, in 1986 after 12 years of running a very successful event, new regulations were instigated by Durham Council limiting the number of cars of any type at any time in the courtyard to six and on Palace Green. It goes without saying that it was impossible to carry on under such limits so 1986 became the last Durham Castle Weekend. It was the end of an era. Also in that year we saw a change of leadership and a change of direction.

At a committee meeting held in the Royal County Hotel, Durham, in April prior to the Club A.G.M. John Church was persuaded by Management Committee to take the Chair vacated by me and Phil Bradford to continue as Secretary and Margaret Blacklock continue as Treasurer. Management Committee also suggested that I be offered the post of President. Also on that day a new Section Committee was formed which included Ian Hick, Joe Sampson, Eddie Neille, Ian Wilton and Mrs

Jacqueline White. Following on from that, the general consensus from the membership was that monthly meetings had lost favour, so John Church planned to have Sunday lunches tied in with visiting places of interest.

In April 1987 members attended a Teach-In organised by Phil Bradford at his garage in Northallerton with one of our cars up on a ramp. Whilst we men were delving into the mysteries of modern motor traction units the ladies were given a very informative tour of the local Police Station, after which we were escorted to a local restaurant for Sunday lunch. It turned out to be a very interesting day.

Also that month, Margaret Blacklock organised a visit to Hartlepool Dock to view H.M.S. Warrior, which was undergoing an intensive restoration programme. We all met at the Raby Arms at Hart Village for coffee prior to nine Club cars driving in convoy to the dock. After a very interesting tour we returned to the Raby Arms for lunch.

On the 6th December we held our A.G.M. at Blackwell Grange Hotel, Darlington, followed by Sunday lunch. Margaret Blacklock resigned as Treasurer but remained on the committee. Zena Church accepted the vacancy, also Mrs Jacqueline White retired from the committee.

In April 1988 the Warrior visit was repeated mainly because the restoration was almost complete and it would soon be moving to Portsmouth to join the other historic ships. Also the Yorkshire Section decided to join us and stayed the weekend at Blackwell Grange Hotel. After a most interesting tour of the vessel, and being amazed at the standard of work accomplished by local retired shipyard craftsmen, we drove the short distance to the Staincliffe Hotel at Seaton Carew for Sunday lunch.

Shortly after our successful Warrior visit John Church unexpectedly passed away in May. None of the committee members were prepared to take over the Chair so it was some time before a new Chairman came onto the scene.

Brian Wiggins had sold his business and moved into a beautiful house in Coxwold, North Yorkshire. He had a fantastic motor house built to accommodate his equally fantastic collection of Rolls-Royce and W.O.Bentleys and others. He used Phil Bradford to do his servicing and even though Brian was officially a Yorkshire Section member Phil persuaded him to take the Chair of the North Eastern Section. He proved to be a very enthusiastic and capable Chairman for the Section and came up with lots of ideas for weekends, and his first venture abroad was to Norway which was a huge success. Other events that year were a repeat of the Sanbrett teach-in with lunch taken at the Croft Spa Hotel, also a visit to Appleyard-Rippon, Leeds, again joining up with our Yorkshire Section neighbours.

In 1989 Phil Bradford retired as Secretary and took over as Treasurer and Chris Tucker became Secretary. One of Chris's weekend events was based in Alston where we visited Jo Sykes, daughter of Charles Sykes, designer of The Spirit of Ecstasy who had her own studio nearby. She was a sculptor and artist in her own right. Her home was full of both her own and her father's work.

Brian Wiggins continued to do a splendid job as Section Chairman till the spring of 1992 when at a committee meeting he informed us that he was joining the Management Committee, which meant he had to vacate the Chair. Once again we were without a Chairman. Realising the magnitude of the situation I offered to fill the gap, everyone present agreed.

At the 1992 A.G.M. Phil Bradford resigned as Treasurer and Tony Fairley took over. Chris Tucker also resigned as Section Secretary and as there were no nominations from the floor Brian Wiggins addressed the meeting and asked if there was anyone who could type. Cynthia Fairley made it known that she could, to which Brian put it to her and asked would she like to be our Secretary. To everyone's surprise Cynthia said yes. We had a new secretary but she was not a member. That was soon rectified.

In the summer of 1993 Brian Wiggins called a meeting of the North Eastern, Yorkshire and East Midlands committees outlining the proposed 1994 Round Britain Rally to commemorate 90 years of Rolls-Royce Ltd. The venue was The George Hotel at Chollerford near Hexham in Northumberland. The response was poor with only six of us turning up namely Joe and Doreen Sampson, Pam and Tom Telfer and Margaret and me but we were enough to get it off the ground. Over the following months Tony and Cynthia Fairley and Ray and Florence Hornsby became involved and we all worked hard to make it a success. There was a two night stopover planned at the Holiday Inn north of Newcastle where a full programme of visits to the many local historical attractions and evening entertainment in the hotel was arranged. Paul Frankie took on the mantle of guide to Cragside, Ray and Florence Hornsby escorted a group to Gibside, and a further group chose to visit Hadrian's Wall and Housesteads with Barry Pickering. Everyone taking part in this great event, overseas members in particular, were very impressed with both the area and the organisation. On the third day all our visitors were escorted through beautiful Northumberland to Scotland where the Scottish Section shepherded them to their next hotel, the Peebles Hydro. A 75 minute documentary video was produced and is still available from the Club Shop.

In 1996 I met an old friend at an I.C.I. Reunion, who was an electrician when we worked together, but he had changed direction and had

become the manager of The Salutation Inn at Billingham in Teesside. In the course of the conversation I happened to mention that I was looking for a room in a pub to hold informal monthly meetings we call Noggin and Natters. He informed me that the pub had two lounges on the ground floor but we would have to buy any drinks from a separate bar. This sounded good and after a visit we took up his offer and started holding our meetings on the second Wednesday which was an instant success. Meanwhile in the Section, life went quietly on over the next two years with committee members organising events, two of which require a mention here. In May 1998 we had a run to Appleby organised by Graham Armstrong and in September, Ray Hornsby and Florence organised a visit to Siemens Generator Factory known to us oldies as Parsons. Both these events are set out in full in the Appendices. After holding our A.G.M.s in a few different places in the area we finally settled at The Hotel Baltimore in Middlesbrough. Tony Fairley retired as Treasurer after six years and Barry Pickering took over. I had been Chairman since 1992 and with the help of my wife, Margaret, had organised a weekend each year, it was time to stop. For the last one we stayed in Larpool Hall south of Whitby. My good friend Graham Armstrong, knowing the Yorkshire Moors better than I, plotted a run to Ryedale Folk Museum on the Saturday and back to the Hall. On Sunday we drove to Grosmont, parked our cars and boarded the Pullman coach, red carpet and all, and were served a super lunch whilst travelling through the glorious North Yorkshire countryside to Pickering and back to Grosmont hauled by one of the restored steam locomotives belonging to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, finishing the weekend in grand style. I felt this was a good time to bow out and I was very pleased when Tony offered to take the Chair and I continued as President, so the committee for 1998 was as follows, Tony Fairley Chairman, Cynthia Fairley Secretary, Barry Pickering Treasurer, Richard Hall Advertising Manager, Ray and Margaret Andrews, Ray Hornsby, Paul Frankie and Graham Armstrong.

Needless to say the Section was doing well, those members taking part in the various events organised, usually in the region of 25% were well pleased with their committee. In the year 2001 Barry Pickering retired from the post of Treasurer so we needed a replacement. As no one was prepared to tackle the job Tony Fairley volunteered, providing someone would take over the Chair. Fortunately for us Richard Hall agreed to do it. In that same year Derek Moss was elected onto the committee.

The year 2002 was very good with lots of events undertaken by the committee led by Richard Hall. The Section Weekend was organised by Paul and Susan Frankie and held at Solberge Hall Hotel situated near Northallerton. It was during that weekend that we learned of the

untimely death of our good friend and mentor Ray Hornsby. We were totally devastated, only two weeks earlier Ray and Florence had organised a Tyne river cruise for us which had been a tremendous success, and a short while before that a visit to the Killhope Lead Mining Centre which was also a huge success. On the 7th November Ray's funeral was held at the small church of Minsteracres Monastery in Hexhamshire, Northumberland where Florence and Ray had been married. The church was absolutely packed to the doors with family and friends, a tribute in itself to Ray.

At the 2002 A.G.M. which was held at The Hotel Baltimore, Cynthia Fairley made a request for someone to become Editor of the Newsletter. Martin Vinson who had moved to Thirsk from Kent in 1997 and joined our Section in 1999 volunteered to take over that role. Also at that meeting Tony Fairley stepped down as treasurer and Grahame McDonald took over and Neal Huitson joined the committee taking the seat vacated by Graham Armstrong. It was at about this time that our Noggin and Natter evenings went a bit pear shaped. Our friendly manager moved to another pub and the new manager did not like our set up and offered us a dark and dingy room upstairs, so we cancelled our meetings, but not for long. The owner of The Hotel Baltimore who was a friend of Richard Hall offered us the use of the lounge which was ideal and we are still there.

2003 got off to a good start with a visit to Darlington Railway Museum and Tornado. The museum houses a distinguished variety of railway memorabilia including Stephenson's Locomotion from 1825, and the oldest surviving Darlington built locomotive Derwent from 1845, as well as some interesting



North Eastern Railway locomotives. Situated adjacent to the museum, Hopetown Carriage Works the former Stockton and Darlington workshops, is the site of a unique locomotive building initiative. Here the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust were constructing a new Pacific A1 class locomotive, Tornado, built to Arthur Peppercorn's original LNER design. On



completion this huge engine was to be the first main line loco to be built in this country since 1960. In complete contrast, Raby Castle at Staindrop, in June was our next outing. The castle has many rooms well furnished and a fascinating kitchen. The coach house and stables are also worth seeing.

That year's Section

Weekend organised again by Paul and Susan Frankie was held at Lumley Castle, near Chester le Street, in Co. Durham. The highlight was the medieval banquet held in the Great Hall on Saturday evening after a day spent at Beamish Museum. Eating a meal with your knife and a spoon is quite an experience. Sunday morning saw us travelling to Bishop Auckland to visit Auckland Castle the home of the Prince Bishops and some priceless paintings. One could say 2003 was the year of the castles! At the AGM held in The Hotel Baltimore on the 30th November Cynthia Fairley decided to step down as secretary after 11 years. She also stated that she would be willing to remain on the committee. Fortunately for us Martin Vinson was willing to take on the Secretary's post.

2004 was a milestone in the history of Rolls-Royce Limited, it being the centenary year of the formation of the Company. Some of our members, Paul and Barbara Farnill and Richard Hall in particular, participated. Paul and Barbara travelled to Australia to take part in the first event. Richard took part in the 3rd and 4th May celebrations at the Midland Hotel to re-enact the meeting of Rolls and Royce on the 4th May one hundred years before. There was a tour of the country similar to the 90 year event but this time we used Slaley Hall for an overnight stop. The tour was timed to finish at the Annual Rally at Boughton Hall, Northamptonshire.

We in the North East had our own full programme, the star of which, in my opinion was a visit to R.A.F. Leeming, for a tour of this front line fighter station. Member Ian Tanfield was in charge of engineering and it was thanks to him, plus Colin Hutchinson and Paul Frankie, we had such a wonderful day, with a photograph taken of us all and our cars, parked in front of a Tornado aircraft as a memento.

After four years at the helm Richard Hall felt that due to commitments over which he had no control, he found it impossible to continue as



Chairman but agreed to stay on the committee. Cynthia Fairley who had been on the committee for the last twelve months volunteered for the post of Chairman as did Ray Andrews and Derek Moss. After a vote Cynthia became our first lady of the Chair.

To start the year 2005 our committee was Cynthia Fairley, Chairman, Martin Vinson Secretary, Grahame MacDonald Treasurer, Committee members Margaret and Ray Andrews, Paul Frankie, Derek Moss, Richard Hall, Peter Tong and Jackie Vinson.

The big event that year was the 25th anniversary of the North of England Rally at Harewood. It is interesting to note that in the first years we had more pre-war cars in percentage terms than at present and often ask the question where have all those old cars gone? Nevertheless we attracted well over 400 cars and each member received a commemorative mug. Another interesting event in that year was a visit to Harperley Prisoner of War Camp organised by Ray and Margaret in June. Walking through the huts reminded me of my time in the RAF, 1945 to 1948. In mid 1946 I was posted to Brampton Park, near Huntington, where we had around two hundred German prisoners living in similar huts to those at Harperley, until August 1947, when the Government decided the war was officially over and they were all repatriated.

In July, Martin and Jackie took us all to Dilston Castle, Corbridge, to join the MG Owners' Club Classic Vehicle Show. I must admit I have never

seen so many MGs and so many types in one place. It was a super day and has become an annual event.

Also in July, Paul Frankie somehow wangled a visit to Brighton Airfield situated between York and Selby, right up my street. There must have been twenty or more aircraft from both wars parked up all waiting their turn to fly, brilliant. Everyone always enjoyed Richard Hall's picnics at Dibble Bridge and this one was every bit as good as previous ones. It was always a great place to catch up on news of old friends and meet new ones and Richard always found somewhere interesting to go to. This year after the picnic we visited the Cleveland Ironstone Mining Museum in Skinningrove, which was very interesting. Unlike a coal mine with a shaft and underground seams, the stone was dug out of tunnels in the side of the Cleveland hills and is known as drift mining.

This year's Section Weekend was held in the Marshall Meadows Hotel on the north side of Berwick upon Tweed. There was quite a good turnout of Club cars, Roger Hall's Phantom II, Tony Gray's Bentley 4¹/₄, Ken Cowdell's Bentley and Mike Pannell's Spirit naming just a few. If we had a long distance prize Mike and Val would certainly have taken it after driving all the way from Huntingdon. It was a jolly good weekend and the hotel was excellent.

The first Section outing of the year was organised by Martin and Jackie and was a visit to The Dun Cow at Sedgefield for Sunday lunch. Twenty four members and friends were accommodated at tables of six at one end of the restaurant. We were delighted to have Paul and Barbara Farnill who motored up from Leeds.

2nd April was a joint visit with the Yorkshire Section to the Black Sheep Brewery at Masham. The brewery was established in 1990 by Paul Theakston, a 5th generation brewer of Masham's famous brewing family, with the first brews being sampled in 1992. Traditional brewing methods are used to turn out eleven million pints of beer every year. After a very interesting tour we were allowed to sample the five different brews before sitting down to an excellent lunch. Everyone agreed it was a 'reet good do'.

Later in that month lunch was held at Whitworth Hall followed by a visit to Brancepeth Castle. This castle is an almost unknown gem, lying just west of Durham, with a history dating back to Saxon times. The castle has many fascinating features remaining in abundance, such as its Norman tower and bailey wall. The Neville family lived here in the thirteenth century, and it has been involved in many of the stories of uprisings in the North. It was here that Bridget Bellasyse lived, who, it is said, was an heiress in love with Bobby Shafto while he lived in Whitworth Hall.

7th May saw the Section driving around Durham County on a mystery road run finishing at the Ramside Hall Hotel organised by Derek Moss and Viv. Ramside Hall Hotel is an impressive hotel set in a 220 acre estate close to junction 62 of the A1M motorway, and reputed to be the most popular 4 star hotel and golf club for the city of Durham.

In July we were back to the place where it all started, namely Wallington Hall, deep in the middle of Northumberland organised by Ray and Margaret Andrews with glorious sunshine and everyone sheltering under the gazebos. One thing worth mentioning was the fact that we had two Silver Dawns on the lawn. So what you might say, but in actual fact there were some forty years between their manufacture. Malcolm Young's Dawn was the 1997 model and my 1954 model a completely different machine. I remember when the new Silver Dawn was introduced and thinking it should have II behind its name like the Silver Wraith II. One thing in Malcolm's favour is that one does not see the new Silver Dawn very often so must soon become a rare breed.

Just to prove that the sun does not always shine for us, Sunday 20th August was a complete washout and the cancellation of our picnic at Dibble Bridge was the result of severe flooding. Richard Hall contacted everyone to say that the ground was waterlogged, the field unsuitable for parking and the lawn totally unsuitable for dancing.

On 3rd September, displayed in a car park were 27 members and friends gathered to participate in a guided tour of the Souter lighthouse situated at Whitburn on the coast of Tyne and Wear. The lighthouse has now been turned into a fine museum belonging to The National Trust, and can boast of being the first one ever to be powered by electricity. From information gleaned from the guide, the Durham coastline had probably the worst record of shipwrecks in the country during the nineteenth century. Souter was built in the 1860s to provide the most technologically advanced solution to this problem. Obviously the lighthouse has its own engine room equipped with generators to make the electricity and all well looked after. After a very interesting tour we travelled north along the South Shields coastline for lunch at the Little Haven Hotel where we were able to watch the activity at the entrance to the Tyne.

The next event in September was a visit to the police H.Q. at Newby Wiske, North Yorkshire. Thirty members and nine Club cars enjoyed the warm autumn sunshine. We were split up into two groups to view the central control room. The eighteenth century house with its beautiful architectural features and acres of well kept lawns were more appealing. Before we left for lunch at the Romanby Golf Club, we had a photo call featuring Cliff and Jennifer Curley's newly acquired 1935 HJ Mulliner 20/25 GPG12, and Malcolm and Wendy Young's 1997 Silver

Dawn.

Also in September the Derby Bentley Register visited our area, staying at Linden Hall Hotel, Northumberland for the first time, and the photo is of them parked in front of the hall. Martin Vinson made it known that an invitation was to all our members to join them



on the Sunday for a drive and lunch. Sadly only six people including Martin and Jackie accepted. The weather was not as it can be in this area and fine drizzle turned to rain on the drive to Bellingham where they had a splendid lunch. The route instructions included a quiz, and after lunch the answers to the questions were given, together with some lively discussion as to the accuracy, and prizes were distributed. Our members also received prizes, just for being there! Fortunately by this time the weather had improved allowing them to inspect those beautiful cars in full sun and obviously making new friends before leaving for home. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed their day.



The 2006 AGM was held in The Hotel Baltimore on 10th December. Unfortunately I had picked up a tummy bug two days earlier so, not wanting to pass anything on decided not to take part. Apparently the meal was very good; Paul and Barbara Farnill had driven up from Leeds

to represent Management Committee and there were two changes to our committee, Jackie Vinson retired and Alan Crawford took her place. The two trophies which are awarded each year are the Enthusiasts' Trophy for good works to the benefit of the Section, and the Ray Hornsby Trophy donated by Florence in memory of Ray, for the car most favoured by the Chairman. This year the Enthusiasts Trophy was awarded to Jackie Vinson for the work she did as a committee member and for the help she gave Martin our esteemed Secretary. The Ray Hornsby trophy was awarded to John Harrison for his 20/25. We ran the usual raffle to raise money for Section funds.

Lunch at The Dun Cow, Sedgefield got 2007 off to a jolly good start. Run by Martin and Jackie to their usual high standard every one of the thirty five members and friends had to admit they had had an excellent day. The food was up to the usual standard and the service amazing. The staff really did a splendid job managing to serve us all in a very short space of time so that all the food was hot and no-one was kept waiting. All the ingredients for a successful event, no wonder we keep going back.

Nenthall Country Hotel was the venue for the 2007 Section Weekend, this time held in March rather than in autumn, and arranged by Peter and Susan Tong and Jackie and Martin Vinson. The hotel is in the Pennines only three miles from Alston, so the 17 members and friends went fully prepared for rather cold weather. However to their surprise they had lots of sunshine. Highlight of the weekend was a visit to Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle where the cars were allowed to park on the terrace which is an ideal setting to show off the cars to advantage. On Sunday they embarked on a short tour of the Pennines into Cumbria in a 1948 AC Regal Classic Coach aptly named Florence, which took them to Langwathby near Penrith, where coffee, tea and cakes were available. After being fully refreshed they enjoyed a nostalgic run across beautiful scenery back to the hotel for a meal and then home.

On 15th April 2007 on a glorious spring day a group of 35 members and friends visited an undiscovered treasure. Hidden in the small village of Newburn is Newburn Hall Motor Museum. Originally built on land purchased from the Duke of Northumberland, the Hall became



the home of the Territorial Army for almost fifty years. In 1974 it was sold to Northumberland Boys Club who used it till 1977. Two years later after much refurbishment it opened as the motor museum. Its purpose was to cater for the casual day visitor right through to the most ardent car enthusiast. Owing to the activities of the museum the exhibits are never on permanent display but nevertheless there were about 35 cars from veteran through to classics for us to view without the hindrance of ropes etc. The day started with coffee served in the museum lounge where we were able to catch up with old friends and meet new ones. One surprise visitor was Peter Kendrick past Scottish Secretary and living in Edinburgh who drove down in his Bentley 3¹/₂ to be with us. Peter and I first met in the 1980s when we were both secretaries. After the refreshments we were escorted into the hall and given a very interesting tour of the cars by an equally interesting guide. After an hour or so we moved off in convoy to the Close House Country Club, a short distance west of the museum where we participated in a sumptuous Sunday lunch in the ballroom.

After lunch many of us relaxed with a drink enjoying the sunshine while others took the opportunity explore the extensive gardens, a truly memorable event.

May the 6th saw the Section spoilt for choice at Pinchinthorpe Hall situated in North Yorkshire near to Great Ayton for Sunday lunch. The Hall has its own mini brewery and was running a farmers market so we had a busy time to take in the brewery tour, check out the market and see the gardens before finding our private room where lunch was to be served. The fact that the sun was shining brilliantly seemed to delay things somewhat. It was an excellent lunch. In earlier times Pinchinthorpe Hall had been the winter home of Club member Jack MacKinley who had quite a collection of interesting cars including a Phantom I, a 20hp Tourer and, I believe, something modern like a Silver Cloud III. He never talked much about them but he often asked me when I was going to take up his invitation to see the cars. I found it difficult to find the time as I was tied up with my business commitments, Secretary's and Editor's duties, and he went away to his other home near Hawes in the summer. Sadly Jack died before I could take up his invitation.

Members of the RREC (Rolls-Royce Eating Club) gathered at the Scotch Corner Hotel on Sunday 6th June for coffee and titbits prior to driving off into the wilds of North Yorkshire to Dennis and Lucy Wheatley's home in Ilton. After the nibbles we took off in convoy behind Dennis to do the scenic route. We drove through one or two showers and followed groups of cyclists who seemed determined to split us up and lose us in the hills. However, we eventually arrived at School

House and descended into the garden with our bags, cool boxes, and umbrellas. The barbeques were already set up and were quickly put into action. Lucy had prepared salads, buns, dips in dishes and so much more. Everyone joined in the activities. The busy tables and smiling people with clinking glasses translated into happiness, which was short lived as within minutes it started to rain. Umbrellas went up over the barbeques and everything else was moved indoors. It was a deluge. After eating wherever we could we all made ourselves comfortable in their huge games room and nattered the day away. For all the wet we had to endure we still had a wonderful day. I hope this event is repeated, it definitely warrants it. By coincidence, there was a fly past of the Battle of Britain Lancaster, and I'm still trying to work out how Dennis and Lucy managed thatbrilliant!

Our Section was invited to participate in the annual Vintage and Classic Vehicle weekend organised by the North Yorkshire Moors Railway but because of the Newby Hall Rally the following day, Saturday 14th July was the only day we could attend, which probably accounted for the limited number of our members who chose to register. This proved to be an excellent event for railway buffs.

August was again quite a busy month with the 27th North of England Rally on the 12th of the month also the Club's 50th anniversary 'Wheels on Road' celebration the same day. Best rally of all was the 100th anniversary of The Silver Ghost which was well and truly celebrated at the Annual Rally at Kelmarsh Hall earlier in June by a drive past of 56 models of the marque from all over the world.

The 2007 A.G.M. was held on the 2nd of December again at The Hotel Baltimore and attended by 42 members and friends. After a very good meeting the general consensus of opinion was that the club was in a pretty good state all things considered and most importantly we were financially sound. After some deliberation Richard Hall decided to stand down. Linda Corrie and Dennis Wheatley had earlier submitted nominations so a vote was taken and Dennis Wheatley was duly elected. Trevor Baldwin representing the Management Committee gave a very informative talk on the position of the Club. The meeting concluded with the presentation of the McGarr Trophy which was given to the whole Committee with the Ray Hornsby Trophy presented to the owner of the most desirable car in the opinion of the Chairman. This year's recipient was Roger Hall for his magnificent 1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom II Continental.

What a year 2008 was. The first event was lunch in February at the Honest Lawyer at Croxdale, near Durham organised by Martin and Jackie Vinson. Forty four members and friends turned up and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. The 11th May saw a similar number turn



Roger Hall's 1934 Phantom II

up at the Darlington Pumping Station in glorious sunshine. One never tires of watching that beautiful beam engine working, and when our guide took us to see the gas engine it was a bit of a let down - no steam!

After our tour was finished we retired to the tea rooms for light refreshments, something like a cup of coffee or tea and a scone. Imagine the surprise at the sight of so much food of every description laid out for us, plus an

iced cake with a picture of a Rolls-Royce car decorating the top and we were booked at the Blackwell Grange for lunch.

A week later we were on the road again this time to Goathland for a second North Yorkshire Moors Railway spectacular and again organised by Grahame MacDonald. This time we were pulled by the famous Sir Nigel Gresley much to everyone's delight. After about two hours in Pickering we boarded the train for the return journey to Goathland where most of us made a beeline for the tea shop, after which feeling fully refreshed, parted in full sunshine for home, another excellent day.

Then June 1st saw us in Northumberland, at Seaton Delaval Hall built for Admiral George Delaval between 1718 and 1728. The house is regarded as the finest example of design by Sir John Vanbrugh, who also built Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard.

Of particular note are the coach house with a collection of interesting vehicles and a restored ice house. The turnout was jolly good with a couple of new members. Sadly it started to rain and contin-



ued most of the time we were there. Although the building was in a state of disrepair because it had suffered fire damage, there was still a lot to see. At the time of writing the hall has just been sold to the National Trust who intend to restore it to its former glory. After a very interesting tour we retired to the Horton Grange Hotel for a splendid lunch in sumptuous surroundings.

July 6th 2008 we were back in Northumberland joining the M.G. Owners Club at their annual Classic Car Rally held at Tynedale Park in Corbridge arranged by Martin and Jackie Vinson. Once again the weather was wet but it did improve later in the afternoon. Tynedale Park is the home of the Corbridge Rugby Club and we were allowed to use the club rooms for our picnics. It was a bit slippery leaving the site but we managed, our big wheels do help.

Sunday 17th August was the second barbeque at Ilton. Dennis Wheatley was delighted to greet 25 members at the Lakeside Farm Shop when they met for coffee and scones. At the time few thought the day was really 'on'. Earlier that morning heavy rain had caused localised flooding and so the general opinion decreed that they abandon the planned scenic route and drive direct to Ilton in favour of main road routes. Imagine their delight upon arriving to be greeted with clear skies and bright sunshine. Apart from one threatening passing cloud the afternoon remained warm and dry. As Dennis said 'they have all asked if they can come back next year so they must have enjoyed themselves'.

A visit to Weardale railway Sunday 28th September was arranged. It was three years since the Section went on the first visit to the then recently opened Weardale railway which was organised by Peter and Susan Tong. Many felt that it was time for another visit, which was duly arranged by Tony

and Cynthia Fairley. So it was that 39 members and friends in twelve Club cars arrived at Stanhope station. Last time we were there we had a steam engine at each end of the



four coach train. This time we had a two coach rail bus built by Leyland Motors in 1984 which is probably the only set of its type still running in the UK.

We boarded the train at 11.45am with our guide John Askwith who informed us on the progress over the last three years whilst we were pulled through beautiful countryside to Wolsingham. After a short stop to allow us to inspect the newly built station and shop where some members bought mementoes of our visit we boarded the train to take us back to Stanhope. After a photo shoot organised by John Askwith we drove off in convoy for the twenty minute drive to Helme Park Country Hotel, near Crook where we had lunch in quiet and unhurried surroundings.

For once the weather had been very kind to us.

On Sunday 26th October about thirty of us took the Chequers Inn almost by storm. It is situated at Dalton on Tees near Croft racing circuit. The bar was not very big which made buying drinks rather intimate, even when we were seated we were almost rubbing shoulders but there was a great atmosphere. The meal, the reason for going, was really good and the service excellent. It was a shame that such a good event should have to come to an end but at almost five o'clock and I think mine host was keen to get the dining room ready for the evening guests at six o'clock. The goodbyes took almost half an hour. Many thanks to Paul and Sue Frankie who organised such a wonderful event.

The last meeting of 2008 was the A.G.M. at Blackwell Grange Hotel at Darlington. This was the first time we had used this hotel for an A.G.M. and it worked quite well and the food was much better than the previous year. Duncan Feetham accompanied by his wife Vivian, was our representative from Management Committee and gave us a very informative and entertaining address. Cynthia Fairley, in her Chairman's report announced the sad passing of Bill Bateman who had been a friend of the Section, along with his wife Annie since the early 1980s.

On a happier note she also announced the wedding of Richard Hall and Anne Lorentsen in October.

After quite a lengthy report Cynthia concluded by informing us that she felt it was time, after all of 16 years as Secretary and Editor and lately Chairman to cut down on some activities and retire from the Chair and the Committee and wished her successor all the best whoever he or she may be, and good wishes for the future to the Section. It is true to say that she will certainly be missed and the Section will not be the same without her and also at the Club Conferences.

The Secretary in his report informed us that the Section membership was standing at 130 according to the latest information from Hunt House. The Newsletter was still being printed in black and white in order to reduce costs to the section, and the Club website had been re-launched and was, hopefully, more user friendly. It would be of great benefit if we have our own Webmaster to set up and maintain our own

section website.

The Treasurer was pleased to announce that there were funds of over £4,300 and there were no significant outstanding liabilities therefore Grahame believed the Section finances were entirely satisfactory.

This year's McGarr trophy was awarded to John Harrison for enthusiasm, and the Ray Hornsby Trophy to Martin Vinson for his 1947 Mark VI Bentley. The meeting was officially closed and members retired to the bars but the committee then had to nominate a Chairman. Moving to a vacant room the committee went through the procedure and in no time at all we had a new Chairman, Derek Moss, much to everyone's delight. After a very good meal in amicable company our new Chairman thanked all those present for coming, and the staff for their endeavours and was looking forward to 2009 with enthusiasm.

The first outing in the new year, March 15th to be precise was another very successful Sunday lunch at the Honest Lawyer, Croxdale organised by Martin and Jackie Vinson. About forty members participated and as there had not been a meeting since the previous December you can imagine how the conversation flowed.

April the 26th saw us driving north to Woodhorn Mining Museum near Ashington Northumberland. Most of the surface equipment had been saved and cleaned up so one got the feel of what it was like to be a surface worker. To see how it was underground one was well informed with lots of pictures and full size models of the coal face and various workings all set up in a building which was built to look like a giant coal cutter. After a very interesting tour we set off through lovely countryside to Doxford Hall for lunch. I think I could fill a whole page describing this beautiful hotel but all I will say is I hope some time we can go back for a weekend.

Once again we were back at Goathland for our annual visit to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, organised by Grahame MacDonald and the weather was pretty good for May. Most of the members took the steam train to Pickering, although some of us this time decided to board the diesel train to Whitby to partake of the famous fish and chips or have a little retail therapy before catching the train back to Goathland.

On 21st June, the longest day, a good few of us were enjoying the sun whilst wandering around Elvington Air Museum. It was good to meet old friend Stuart Dennison from the Northern Section with his beautiful SCI. The last time we were there we spotted the frame of a 1917 BE2C reconnaissance aircraft and were really pleased to find it completely built up this time. Whilst on the subject of aircraft a Spitfire flew over the site while most of us were eating our picnics. Many thanks to Dennis and Lucy Wheatley for arranging a most interesting day.

July 12th and Dennis and Lucy were busy again with another barbeque at their home in Ilton. This year we all congregated at The George Hotel, Piercebridge for coffee and biscuits prior to driving off to Ilton via a scenic route. The weather was more like April



Spitfire at Elvington Air Museum

than July. With two BBQs in place cooking was relatively easy and we all ate outside. The spread set out by Lucy was really something and was greatly appreciated. Unfortunately the weather cooled somewhat so we were all invited into Dennis's den (games room) where the chat continued until it was time to go home. Once again we must say many thanks for a very enjoyable day.

On July 25th to 27th the Scottish Section travelled to Beamish Hotel for a weekend and invited members of our Section to spend Saturday evening with them. Ten of us decided to accept the invitation, those being Derek and Viv Moss, Martin and Jackie Vinson, Gordon and Margaret Blacklock, Colin and Gladys Hutchinson and Jim and Janet Clark and travelled up to the hotel where we were made to feel most welcome and enjoyed an excellent evening with good food and convivial company.

The year 2009 we celebrated the thirtieth year of the North of England Rally at Harewood House. It is wonderful that it has gone on for so long with numbers being pretty steady over the years. Although it is not surprising to learn that our good friend Ian Hick has retired from the Rally Committee after all those years.

The 40th Anniversary Weekend at Headlam Hall was 25th to 27th September 2009. The weekend was well attended, and we welcomed members from the North East-



ern, Northern, Yorkshire and East Anglian Sections, together with friends and some members of the Jaguar Owners and Enthusiasts' Club. After dinner on the Friday evening Nick Clark organised a 'feely' competition. This was quite innocent and involved identifying objects contained in cloth bags. There were eighteen objects in all, ten were car related and eight household. Everyone participated but no-one got all of them right, but it was really good fun. Saturday took us to Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle again, where we were allowed to park in front of the building and bright sunshine set the scene. At dinner on Saturday evening we were well entertained by the Ramside Trio (piano, bass and violin) who played, unobtrusively during the meal and performed a cabaret afterwards. Many continued merry making in the bar until the early hours so it was lucky that we did not have a particularly early start on Sunday morning to drive to the Beamish Open Air museum where the North Eastern Club for Pre-War Austins was holding a rally. Although the name implies a one-make club in fact all makes are welcome and there was a good turnout of machinery old and not so old. Although the cut off date for entry was supposed to be 1990, Duke Mike Pannell paraded with the rest of us with his 1998 Silver Spur. There are several photos on the website for those who would like to see them. Many thanks to all who attended and helped with the organisation, especially Derek Moss for negotiating with the hotel, Margaret Andrews the quiz, Janice Hall the raffle, Nick, as mentioned earlier, for the feely competition and Martin and Jackie Vinson for all the general organisation.

The final entry for this piece of history was the 2009 A.G.M. held at the Blackwell Grange Hotel on 13th December. About forty members attended including new members Geoff Mansfield and wife Sheila who we were very pleased to welcome. This was the first Annual General Meeting Chaired for us by Derek Moss. Linda Corrie took on the role of membership/minutes Secretary, which should be of great help to Martin. It was also very pleasing to announce that John Harrison had volunteered to be our Webmaster. He has been doing sterling work on the section website. Welcome too, to long term member Roger Hall onto the committee and not forgetting Lucy Wheatley, who has taken over now that husband Dennis has stood down. We were all also pleased to hear Grahame McDonald's report on the finances and happy to learn that they are sound. We all felt really privileged to be joined by Suzanne Finch past Club Chairman representing the Management Committee, and her husband Nicholas. Suzanne gave a very informative address and apologised for not managing to get up to the North East while she was Chairman, but better late than never.

Your committee to take you into the new decade will be ... Chairman

Derek Moss, Secretary Martin Vinson, Membership/Minutes Secretary Linda Corrie, Treasurer Grahame McDonald, further Committee members are Margaret and Ray Andrews, Paul Frankie, Roger Hall, Peter Tong and Lucy Wheatley. Webmaster John Harrison.

In conclusion I must thank all those who have helped me when my memory has let me down, especially when I had already been in touch just a week or two earlier and I pray forgiveness for lifting pieces from the newsletters where appropriate. Writing this piece has had its moments and I think it fitting to dedicate these pages to the many whom I feel privileged to call my friends and who are sadly no longer with us. Had they still been around I am sure they would be very proud at what has been achieved.

Gordon Blacklock.

Appendix 1

That Bentley

It's not every day that we are offered a MK6 Bentley to break up for spares, so when Graham Holmes of Appleby did just that, we immediately accepted his most generous offer knowing that the sale of the bits and pieces would swell the Section funds and so help us to be self supporting. Barry Chapman offered us a home at his builder's yard where we would be able to keep it until it was broken up. Barry also offered to help in the removal, but as it was near holiday time nothing could be done until September. In the mean time we had to find a trailer. Nothing came from my appeal in the August newsletter, until Malcolm White came to the rescue with the offer of a trailer from a friend Bill Doland of Teesside Cars, Billingham which would cost us £10 per day, the going rate for a four wheel trailer. Having got over that hurdle all we then needed was a vehicle to tow it. Barry's Rolls-Royce did not have a towing ball but wife Noreen's Wolseley had, so he offered that. Without further ado, we arranged to meet Graham in Appleby the following Saturday afternoon being the only time we were all available. He would then guide us to the farm where the Bentley was being 'stored'. Armed with tow ropes, tools, overalls, bits of wire and string plus my camera to record the spot where we found it off we set full of excitement, or was it nerves, picked up the trailer, tried to drive off with the brake on (must be nerves) sorted that out and away we went. The time was about one o'clock. We had calculated that we would be back into Teesside, job completed, by six o'clock. Little did we know what lay ahead.

The weather was bright and sunny at the outset of the journey via Scotch Corner, but changed as we neared Appleby. We encountered long queues behind a couple of wagons loaded high with straw bales, the wind which was getting stronger was making life difficult for the drivers and the cars following seemed frightened to overtake, making progress rather slow.

Eventually, we arrived at Appleby, time 2.35pm, we felt we were on schedule. By the time we had collected Graham in his car and travelled to the farm some five miles out of town it was just 3 o'clock. Like magic, a brand new tractor appeared as Graham had arranged and we followed it to the bottom of the field to meet our prize. After clearing away a bit of debris it was a simple matter to tie a rope around the front axle and haul the car out with the tractor which made light work of it, even though both rear tyres were off the rims. At this point someone

suggested taking the tractor rather than the Bentley! We were most surprised to find after we had winched this placid beast onto the trailer that we were unable to lift the ramps which carry the trailer number plate and lights etc., so with a little difficulty the front bumper was removed. Ramps in place, lights were checked and we were ready to roll, time 3.45 pm. Barry not having towed anything before was given swift instructions from all present before starting up the engine. Imagine the surprise when after rolling a few yards on the level, turning to take the short bank out of the field the car just stopped, the bonnet of the Wolseley high in the air, front wheels skidding like mad. I immediately lay over one wing whilst the tractor driver put his weight on the other without success, it was obvious we required more effort. Graham, seeing our predicament backed his car in front of Barry's and fastened another tow rope on to the Wolseley, and between them pulled the trailer up the bank and out of the field. Once on the level everything seemed OK, but Barry knew he had a lot of car on that trailer. Graham accompanied by his daughter Fiona, escorted us through Appleby to a garage two miles out on the A66, where we stopped for petrol which Graham insisted we put on his account. We checked the tyres on the trailer which were looking sick and inflated them to 40psi and they still looked sick. I was worried. A final check around the trailer revealed that we had travelled those last seven miles from the field with the trailer brake on!

No wonder the car had felt heavy. We were now convinced that everything would be plain sailing. We said our thanks and goodbyes to Graham and Fiona and feeling more confident set off once more having a good laugh about the trailer brakes.

I was at the wheel and soon realised that one could only travel at 20 mph without the whole contraption swaying from side to side which was most disconcerting to say the least. We plodded on for a few miles causing long tailbacks behind us then the worst happened. We had been watching the temperature rising steadily, so it was no surprise when we saw steam rising from under the bonnet. Fortunately, we were just approaching a lay-by and so pulled in, our hearts rather heavy, our respective sons who had come to help, fortunately sat quietly, while Barry and I did some hard thinking. We knew we couldn't go on so what does one do with a sick Bentley in the middle of nowhere. We would have liked to have dropped it off there and left it but the notice at the lay-by clearly said 'leave no litter' Penalty £100. The hissing eventually stopped so we checked the engine. I was sure there was a burst radiator hose but they were all secure and whole. We decided to unhitch the Bentley and drive to the garage where we had taken petrol earlier to see if they would allow us to leave the car there, to give us the

chance to try with a bigger vehicle. The proprietor agreed to take it for one week only, so after topping up with water we set off back to the Bentley. This time Barry checked the mileage because he felt we had travelled further than we thought. It turned out that we were 10 miles from the garage and we both agreed we just couldn't waste that time and effort by going back to it. As we sat in the lay-by wondering what to do, I spotted a farm house about 200 yards ahead, I'm positive it wasn't there before. In desperation I plucked up courage to ask the farmer if we could leave the Bentley in his yard. It was pretty rough but it was better than the alternative. The man's eyes lit up when we mentioned the word Bentley and agreed to let us leave the car in a corner. The next job was to get it off the trailer. Teesside Cars used their trailer for police work and were on 24 hour call out so there was no way we could leave the car on the trailer. With the aid of the farm tractor and a lot of heaving and pushing we eventually had our beast off the trailer and settled in the corner of the yard. The rain which was attacking us almost horizontally due to the wind which was blowing at gale force, was all we needed. By the time we were finished, we were like drowned rats. Still we felt that luck was with us, it was certainly on our shoes which we had to clean off on the grass verge before getting into the car. With a firm promise to our new found friend that we would return in a week, we set off back to Teesside.

Driving over Bowes moor was like driving through a disaster area as we passed three caravans totally wrecked after being blown over and we learnt later that a motorcyclist had also been blown off his bike. What a day we had chosen.

Barry was due to be picked up to go to a dinner dance at 6.15pm which was being held in Bishop Auckland and as the time was 5.45pm I guess he had had that so we decided that I would drop the trailer off at Billingham while he did his quick change act and then number one son would drive them to their dinner dance. For once things went according to plan, I arrived back with the Wolseley, Barry and Noreen emerged looking like a million dollars, climbed into the car whilst I changed seats and off we set. Things were working like clockwork. At the end of our road, they dropped me off and as I stood waving goodbye, I noticed my camera still on the rear window ledge where I had put it some seven hours earlier! Words failed me.

As I walked wearily home, my thoughts were of the car and the struggle we had had. I am convinced it knew it was going to the knacker's yard and put up a fight and I must confess it won that round.

In the next week after our first effort at retrieving the Bentley, Barry and I had got our heads together and made a phone call or two. After

explaining to Bill McGarr what had happened the week previous, Bill suggested we use his Land Rover which we accepted graciously. I was confident that this time we would win. Saturday morning dawned bright and sunny and we set off at 8.40am full of hope and much more confident than the previous week. We picked the trailer up again from Teesside Cars. Bill Doland very kindly let us have it free of charge after hearing our tale of woe. Barnard Castle was soon reached where we changed over the trailer and hitched it to Bill's Landrover. After a quick check round we set off, yellow light and all.

We had not gone very far when Barry spotted a yellow light on the dash which had just appeared. I pulled up immediately thinking it was the oil warning light but the gauge showed a good pressure. After a good look around we decided to carry on, fingers crossed! We found later that the choke button was sticking out a fraction, enough to activate the warning light.

Traffic on the A66 was hindered by road works where long queues were encountered before we finally reached 'our Bentley'. Unfortunately it was still there just as we left it. We had secretly hoped that it might have disappeared. What was surprising was that our farmer friend was pleased to tell us that he had had two enquiries about the car but unfortunately couldn't give them names etc. because we hadn't left them. It's funny really when you think about it, we roll up to a farm house, drop off a Bentley and drive away with only a promise that we will be back in a week to pick it up again, no thought of names or addresses! The only thing the farmer knew was we were members of the RREC and when my wife asked which farm we had left the car in I could only say one between Bowes and Brough. It's amazing how trusting people can be.

Reversing a trailer into a tight corner through a gateway with a Landrover we discovered was virtually impossible, so after a few attempts we unhitched the trailer and manhandled it into position. 'Mr Farmer' and a friend of his gave us a hand to winch the car onto the trailer, the winch almost collapsed under the strain. Although there wasn't much muck about, Barry, heaving and pushing with all his strength as we all were, kept treading on a dead rabbit that appeared from nowhere, which was most off putting. After a long struggle we had our beast secured and Barry being well prepared brewed up a cuppa which was well received.

Getting out of the yard was ten times worse than getting in with two tons of car on that trailer there was no way in which we could manhandle it. The tractor we had used to get the car in was not available, so we had no other option but to use the Landrover with it's large turning circle. We shunted all over the place, even taking the clothes line of washing

down to get into a position to allow us to drive through the narrow gate way and onto the road.

With a cheery wave we pulled out into the traffic, the time just after twelve noon. I soon realised that the Landrover was going to make light work of it but as I approached 40mph I also realised that if I wanted to stay on the road I would have to SLOW DOWN, which was what Barry was shouting as he braced himself. Driving at 30mph was comfortable but we did cause a bit of a tail back.

Barry seemed quite happy to let me do the driving and busied himself working out the mileages and petrol consumption etc. According to him the run to Norton via Barnard Castle was twelve miles shorter than via Scotch Corner so we left the A66 and the traffic at Bowes feeling confident that the bridge and the bank we would have to negotiate would be no problem. It wasn't and we sailed through 'Barney' quite easily. We would have loved to have stopped at Bill's garage to show off our prize but double yellow lines prevented us. As we were making good time we decided to stop at Norton for a late lunch then take the car on to the yard situated in Acklam afterwards. By the time we had driven through Darlington we were feeling very pleased with the Bentley. From the very outset of our journey we had received quite a deal of interest from passing motorists. When we took on petrol the entire staff came out to see our car and all agreed it was a shame to see such a lovely car so sick. Before very long we were parked up in Norton High Street and after a very welcome bacon sandwich and a pot of coffee we were ready to start the final stage. Margaret had popped down with the camera to record the event and afterwards decided with Noreen to follow us to the yard which would later prove to be our saviour.

The next two hours can only be described as disastrous. A builder working on nearby cottages had the way into Barry's yard almost blocked by a Morell bucket on the one side and a load of Dolomite on the other, any thoughts of reversing the trailer into the yard just disappeared. Even when driving in straight, one wheel had to climb over this great pile of yellow stones. When I think back I cannot understand why the car did not roll over, but it did not. After a huge amount of effort we eventually got the trailer into the yard. The only way left for us to get the car into the space available was to manhandle it and this we did. Once in place we were able to use the winch to pull the trailer away from the car. This would have been easy if the winch handle hadn't snapped earlier. Fortunately we were able to clamp a shifting spanner onto the flats of the spindle and use that.

After what seemed ages we finally had our monster laid to rest in the corner and I must admit we would never have got it there without the assistance of the ladies, they were marvellous. All we had to do now

was to return the trailer and the Landrover and the time was just after 5pm.

The run to Barnard Castle was a lot faster without the trailer and the return in the Wolseley even faster. We were all going to a barbecue organised by our local motor club, Teesside Yesteryear Motor Club, 8pm start and we did need a bath.....

In conclusion we decided we had done a hard days work twice over. We were pleased to have the car safely stowed. It was just a matter of time before we got it dismantled unless we got a reasonable offer for it as it stood. Our thanks to Graham Holmes for the Bentley and the way he helped us to get it away from the farm at Appleby, also to Bill Doland for the loan of the trailer, sorry we broke the winch but I offered to fix it, and to Bill McGarr for supplying a vehicle strong enough to pull the loaded trailer and finally to Barry because without his enthusiasm and generosity the Bentley story would have been a non starter.

Gordon Blacklock

Appendix 2

Run to Appleby Castle. Sunday 17th May 1998 organised by Graham Armstrong.

Twelve cars booked in for the run by the closing date of 9th May. This was not as many as I had hoped for but it was just sufficient to make the event worthwhile. The majority of the cars were of the Shadow variety with three exceptions, namely Gordon Blacklock's 1954 Silver Dawn, Bill Calvert's Mark VI Bentley and Ray Andrews with the 1972 Phantom VI, which he maintains for a friend of his.

The Sunday weather was exceptionally kind to us with a warm dry day right from the start at Croft Spa Hotel, at Croft near Darlington. Nine cars started from the hotel with the remainder having elected to join en-route or meet at Appleby. After morning coffee and pastries the crews set off in their own time for a leisurely drive through Richmond and on down Swaledale before climbing to Tan Hill which is the highest inn in England at 1732ft. This was not a planned stop on the route, but I understand that Alan Henfrey's two Norfolk terriers needed to stretch their legs and this seemed an ideal spot. (We believe you Alan!) After reaching the heights of Tan Hill it was all downhill through the Westmorland countryside skirting Kirkby Stephen and arriving at Appleby Castle for lunch. In the meantime I left for a more direct route to Appleby in time to put on my parking attendants head.

No sooner had I arrived than I was followed in by the Andrews tribe in the Phantom VI not renowned for its agility on the better roads in the land, never mind the twisty lanes of North Yorkshire and Westmorland. This car seemed to have covered the sixty mile route in just seventy five minutes, amazing! Not quite true, because Ray had had to stop for petrol before reaching Richmond, he got caught along with the Fairleys, behind a parade that was going to delay them for a minimum of twenty minutes. Plan B was immediately put into operation, the Andrews decided on a direct route to Appleby, i.e. back onto the A66 and turn off at Appleby. Hence the arrival time!! Tony and Cynthia decided on plan B also, only with a deviation, joining the original route at Tan Hill.

All managed to arrive in time for lunch. Chris Curley and Jennifer had the shortest distance to travel, they live in Appleby. This made a change for them as they normally have a good way to travel before the start of most of our events in the Section. (Living in one the most picturesque parts of the country has its penalties, Chris.) After lunch, in brilliant sunshine, the afternoon was spent enjoying the pleasant

surroundings of the Castle, with Norma and Barry Brighton playing 'Hunt the Garden Nursery'. Barry was overwhelmed at coming to a venue without a nursery and shook me by the hand. Norma was underwhelmed and shook me by the throat!! It was advertised in the literature Norma, I checked, honest.....

Happy Motoring,

Graham Armstrong

Appendix 3.

Thursday 17th September 1998. Visit to Siemens Generator Factory, Wallsend, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Organised by Ray and Florence Hornsby.

The first thing we noticed when we started our guided tour was the size of the buildings, easily the height of a six storey block of flats. They really made one feel small. On entering, we were shown the first turbine generator built by Parsons in early 1900. It was marvellous to think that this early piece of machinery had been salvaged and brought back 'home' as a showpiece. It was tiny by present day standards.

As we proceeded through the various stages of manufacture one realised just how big everything had to be. This aspect of the tour fascinated me. We saw lathes so big that the operator had to climb up a set of steps to a platform some ten feet from the floor to work the machine and follow the progress of the cutting tools needed to shape the shaft. The milling machine used to face the covers was so big a bus could be driven through the tool gantry and a boring machine with a turntable 35 feet in diameter. Over the years I have only seen photographs in magazines of these colossal pieces of equipment but never in the flesh. From the machine shop we moved to the assembly shops, where all the pieces are put together. Here we saw the last turbine generator to be made carrying the name 'Parsons'. I was so very pleased to see it but so very sad to realise that yet another major British manufacturer had been taken over by a foreign company, which has introduced its own designs. The general opinion of the workforce was that these new turbines were not in the same street as Parsons and will not last. I have had this sort of conversation with people working with the breed of Rolls-Royce cars being produced by BMW. Time will tell.

Whilst in the erection shops we saw the rotors being built up with rows of blades and the unique way in which they are locked into position so they cannot move. Because of the high speeds the rotors revolve, everything has to be very finely balanced. Huge concrete pits reminiscent of wartime bunkers, with sliding roofs ten feet thick were constructed to house the balancing equipment and the rotors while balancing took place.

Units from as far afield as China and South America were in the repair shops having new blades fitted. We were told this was necessary after about 25 years. One strange story our guide told us as we passed a heap of very large packing cases, was that these held a complete generating plant bought by the Iraqi Government but our own Government refused the export licence so it was stuck so to speak and believe it or not, was costing Saddam £165,000 per year for storage! Apparently it has been there for a number of years!

Our thanks to Ray Hornsby for organising this splendid tour and to our guide who was so ably assisted by our own Edwin Smith who spent most of his working life if not all of it at Parsons. Last but not least sincere thanks to Florence for the wonderful buffet she laid on for us all. Florence has set a terrifically high standard of cuisine which will be difficult to beat. We are deeply grateful to you both.

Appendix 4

A day out at R.A.F. Leeming in 2004

Organised by Ian Tanfield, Colin Hutchinson and Paul Frankie.



Twenty nine members and friends from all parts of the North East of England travelled to R.A.F. Leeming, near Northallerton for an unforgettable tour of this front line operational station.

On arrival we parked up outside the main gate where we checked in and received our passes. As we were only about 500 yards from the runway any conversations were lost each time an aircraft took off. When one was so close, the eight foot long jet from the preheat was quite something and ones eardrums really vibrated. Fortunately when the aircraft reached about 250 feet preheat was turned off.

At ten o'clock prompt, Ian Tanfield, our member based at Leeming who took over the original concept of the visit from Paul Frankie and Colin Hutchinson, arrived, and after introductions all round gave an outline of how we were to proceed into the base. Simplified this was "I'm going to ride in Paul's 20" (the oldest car present) "follow us and don't get lost!"

In the space of a few minutes the barrier was lifted, we drove in convoy past the guard complete with some sort of sub machine gun and arrived at a further car park set aside for our use.

After locking up, we boarded a bus which just happened to be waiting for us and drove the short distance to the Training Development Flight. There we were directed to the T.D.F. conference room where tea, coffee and biscuits were served.

At this point we all received a bundle of papers which included the day's programme and timetable, a list of all attendees and their cars, plus two pages appertaining to

health and safety.

Security was extremely tight even to the point of us being told what type of footwear was required. Shoes or boots likely to cause sparks and high heeled shoes were out. I noticed throughout the day that all personnel on the base wore rubber soles and heels.

After a very interesting fifty minutes where we saw a film about the station as it used to be, to the present time, with a good insight as to what really goes on in an operational air base, we were ushered back to the bus thence to our car park.

Back in our cars we followed the 20hp through the maze of roads to the northern taxiway extension for a group photograph. Again the strict security made its impact as every car had to have its tyres, mudguards and wheel arches personally checked by Ian and an assistant to ensure the wheels were free of small stones etc, which if said stone was ingested through an air intake would cause damage to that engine to the tune of two million pounds!

Having all passed the test we were gently coaxed into position in front of a Tornado which had been set up earlier. Thirteen cars in all stood in two rows with Peter Kitching's 25/30 and Paul's 20hp to the fore, the Tornado looming up behind us. They really are big when you get close to them.

While all this was happening three Tornados came in from manoeuvres, flew overhead then peeled off in 'line ahead' to land on the main runway. It was not long after that these three aircraft taxied right past us giving us a wonderful photo opportunity. Imagine my surprise when I was told that all three aircraft were crewed by females. I had been puzzled earlier when I thought I saw one of the pilots with long blond hair!

The station photographer used a set of portable steps to give him the height he needed, and the members with cameras took advantage of the extra height. Just before the official photograph was about to be taken Group Captain Morrison, Station Commanding Officer along with Ian, and Bob Beaver R-R representative and Ian's assistant took up their positions in the centre with everyone else standing beside their respective cars.

After a few pictures were taken we climbed back into our cars and drove back to 'our' car park where we boarded the bus once again, and were soon being greeted by the staff of the Officers' Mess and directed to the bars for pre-lunch drinks. Needless to say we were thrilled at the bar prices, so much so that some members were heard to suggest spending the rest of the day there.

After we all had our drinks we were informed that lunch was served whereupon we all proceeded to the main dining room.

Fully refreshed we made our way back to the bus which then transported us to the A.M.F. which I think means Aircraft Maintenance Facility. In layman's language we were in the main workshop where five Tornados were being serviced or repaired, one had its wings removed but cannot remember why. To make life easier we were split into five groups and designated an aircraft. Ian and Bob shared themselves around answering the many questions thrown at them. The young men and women working on the aircraft were keen to talk and went into great detail when asked a question.

All too soon we were shepherded back to the bus and on the way to the Mess stopped at the souvenir shop with a good stock of goodies, but not a lot of space for customers. A book entitled Straight and True, a history of Royal Air Force, Leeming, caught my eye which has proved to be a good read but I must admit that being ex R.A.F. myself and in boyhood having spent a week camping with the

A.T.C. at Leeming, way back in the summer of 1943, does make it a bit more interesting for me.

On arrival at the Officers' Mess again we were allowed to clean ourselves up in preparation for our journey home. Tea and coffee were gratefully received in the anteroom where Ian addressed us stating how he had enjoyed his time with us and hoped we had had a good day too. I responded on behalf of the members with sincere thanks to all concerned for making it such a memorable day. On reflection, this event did not just happen, a lot of hard graft and many, many phone calls and consultations were needed. So a big thank you to Colin and Paul for initiating the visit and to Ian for taking it to heights of which we could only dream. None of us will ever forget our visit to R.A.F. Leeming.

Grateful thanks to you all.

Gordon Blacklock.