A Dozen Rolls-Royce Owners in South Australia in 1926
"Mesdames W. T. Mortlock, Martindale Hall, Mintaro"
1912 Silver Ghost, Chassis 2104, Tourer

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"Rolls-Royce Owners – Twelve in State" was the heading of an article in the 26 January 1926 edition of the Adelaide newspaper 'News', which was published from 1923 to 1954.

It continued: "There are 12 owners of Rolls-Royce cars in this State so far as can be ascertained from records. On account of this rather small number casual observers usually look twice if they happen to see a Rolls-Royce purring along. Among those who are stated to own one of these cars, which are regarded as the aristocrats of the road so far as the British automobile industry is concerned are Messrs T. E. Barr Smith, Glen Osmond: T. Tait, Oaklands: C. H. Angas, Angaston: G. Milne, Brougham Place, North Adelaide: J. M. Reid, Victoria Avenue, Unley Park: J. P. Lewis, Nelyambo Station, Wilcannia: Napier Birks, Park Terrace, Parkside: Mesdames W. T. Mortlock, Martindale Hall, Mintaro: L. Hughes, Lee Lodge, Strangways Terrace, North Adelaide: M Symons, Walkerville: T.R. Scarfe, Eden Park, Marryatville: and Miss M. F. Simms, Moseley Street, Glenelg."

"Mesdames" are Rosina Forsyth Mortlock nee Tennant (1865-1939), the widow of her cousin, William Tennant Mortlock (1858-1913), and her sister-in-law Mary Gwynne nee Mortlock (1853-1944) whose husband, Edward Castres Gwynne (b 1849) died in 1905.

Below left: Portrait taken in about 1883 of a young Rosina Forsyth Tennant who married William Mortlock in 1891. [State Library of South Australia.]

Below right: Rosina's son John "Jack" Andrew Tennant Mortlock (1894-1950) is pictured here in about 1930. [State Library of South Australia.]

William Mortlock, grazier and politician, increased his family's pastoral enterprises after his father, William Ranson Mortlock, died in 1884. In 1891 he purchased Martindale Hall, an Italianate influenced house, which became the family's main station. He had a number of cars: a 1908 Darracq registered 148; a 1908 Talbot registered 555; and, a 1913 Napier registered 3365. He left an estate in South Australia valued in 1913 at £550,000 as well as property in Western Australia, Victoria and England. Whilst his name has been associated with the Rolls-Royce, he died some six years before it was acquired by the family. Nevertheless, his estate in 1913 could have bought about 400 new Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost limousines at the time.

Rosina Mortlock moved into her new town residence, 'Meldreth Hall', in Brougham Place in 1925.

Left: *'Martindale Hall' was built in 1879 by Edmund Bowman. Between 50 to 60 skilled tradesmen were brought from England to build the Italianate influenced mansion. The Georgian style home is in the midst of an estate of 10,000 acres. Pictured here during the last stages of construction. [State Library of South Australia.]*

Above and left: *This group of three photographs, taken about 1890, show how the Mortlocks would have seen 'Martindale Hall' and the stables at the time they purchased the estate in 1891. [State Library of South Australia.]*
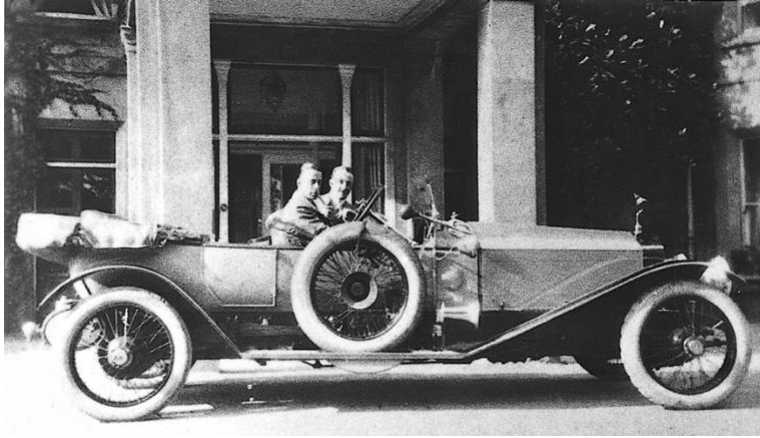
The Rolls-Royce a 1912 Silver Ghost, chassis 2104, originally had a torpedo body by the English firm of Barker. It was acquired with a second tourer body about 1920 by William and Rosina's son, John "Jack" Andrew Tennant Mortlock (1894-1950), benefactor and pastoralist. He was studying at Jesus College, Cambridge when his father died in 1913. He returned to South Australia to take control of the family properties, which included Martindale Hall and stations in the vicinity of Port Augusta and Port Lincoln as well as the properties in Western Australia, Victoria and England.

Away from managing the family's vast pastoral enterprises, Jack Morlock pursued recreational interests on the water. He travelled at high speed in his hydroplanes and in sumptuous luxury in his motor yachts.

In December 1927 he piloted his hydroplane, 'Wizzo', to victory in the Bennett Gold Cup contested over the 25-mile course in the Outer Harbour of Port Adelaide, at an average of 42 mph. 'Wizzo' was equipped with a 6-cylinder British Meadows engine. He won the Bennett Gold Cup again in 1930 with 'Wizzo II' at an average speed of 46 mph.

Above: *Jack Mortlock piloting his hydroplane, 'Wizzo', to victory in the 1927 Bennett Gold Cup. The race was contested over a 25-mile course in the Port Adelaide Outer Harbour at an average speed of 42 mph. ['The Advertiser', 19 December, 1927.]*

Left: Jack Mortlock at the wheel of his hydroplane, 'Wizzo'. ['Chronicle', 24 December, 1927.]

Below: Jack Mortlock at the wheel of his hydroplane, 'Wizzo II'. ['Observer', 1 December 1928.]

Jack Mortlock's first motor yacht, 'Martindale' was built in about 1918 by Ben Weir, who also built the hull on 'Wizzo'. Mortlock was president of the Port Lincoln Yacht Club, a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron and Commodore of the Port Adelaide Yacht Club in 1932 when his new luxury motor yacht, also 'Martindale', was launched by his mother. 'Martindale' served during World War II as a patrol vessel in New Guinea. Now privately owned by the Martindale Vessel Trust in Sydney and restored to her former glory she graces Sydney Harbour.


Left: Mrs Rosina Mortlock seen here launching her son's yacht, 'Martindale' on 18 July, 1932. On her right is Ernest Elwyn Edmund Scarfe, manager of the Mortlock estates, and on her left is her son Jack. [State Library of South Australia.]

Above: MY 'Martindale' in Port Lincoln Harbour. [State Library of South Australia.]

Below: HMAS 'Martindale' during service in World War II. She was returned to the Mortlock family in 1946 after being refitted. It was sold by the family after Jack Mortlock died in 1950. [Royal Australian Navy.]
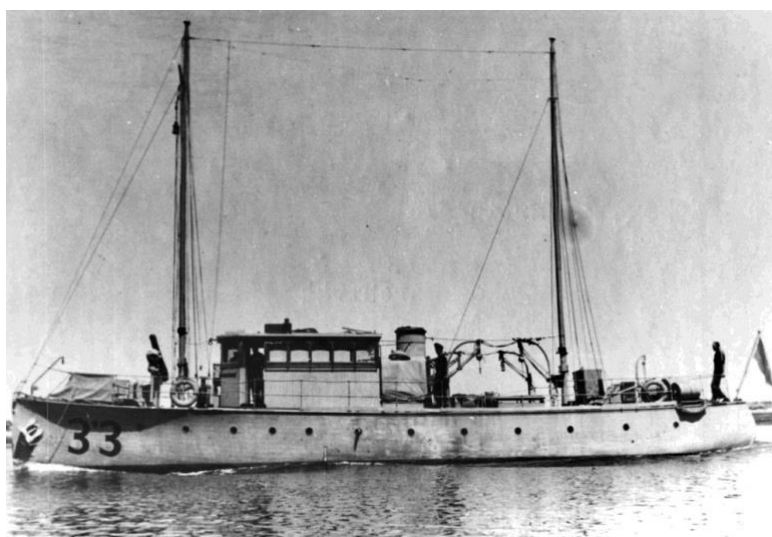
Below: 'Martindale' on Sydney Harbour. The restoration began in 2012. [Martindale Vessel Trust.]

Jack Mortlock was widely known in turf circles. He was a member of most of the leading racing clubs in South Australia. He owned a number of racehorses, including in 1918 a colt named 'Wizzo', a successful hurdler. He was obviously fond of the name which he later used on his hydroplanes.

His estate in South Australia alone was valued in 1950 at £1,148,124, equivalent to about 230 new Rolls-Royce Silver Wraiths! The Mortlock Wing of the State Library of South Australia bears his name and is regularly included of lists of the world's most beautiful libraries. In an interesting connection, the architect of the Mortlock Wing, Edward J Woods (1839-1916), also designed 'Martindale Hall'.

Silver Ghost 2104 was first owned in Sydney in 1913 by Hugh (later Sir Hugh) R Denison (1866-1940), a tobacco and newspaper magnate. In 1917 it was owned by a Sydney jeweller, Alfred W Saunders, before being bought by Mortlock in about 1920. It was laid up during World War II and was still in sound condition at Mortlock's Adelaide home (in Brougham Place, North Adelaide) in 1946. The next part of the story of Silver Ghost 2104 was told by South Australia Branch co-founder, Gavin Sandford-Morgan, in the June 1991 edition of 'Præclarvm', "Jack Mortlock sold the Ghost to a fisherman on the west coast of South Australia. The fisherman (John G Wilkins) promptly cut off the back of the body, converted it into a buckboard and not only proceeded to drive over and through anything in his path in a very rough part of the country, but also drove it into the sea to unload catch from his fishing boat. The poor Ghost finally objected to this treatment by breaking an axle shaft and was left abandoned on the open beach at Port Kenny." It was from there in 1955 that Sandford-Morgan, recovered it.

Above: Silver Ghost 2104 with its second body during the ownership of Jack Mortlock. [Royal Automobile Association of South Australia,]

Right: Silver Ghost 2104 in the main street of Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula, South Australia pictured in the 'Rolls-Royce Bulletin', October 1930. [Courtesy Tom Clarke.]

Left: Silver Ghost 2104 as it was found on the beach at Port Kenny by Gavin Sandford-Morgan in 1955. [Gavin Sandford-Morgan.]

Silver Ghost 2104 was subsequently owned by SA Branch members, W John (Jack) Odgers and Rob J Odgers, then Victoria Branch members Robert A McDermott and Gary A Dubois. In 1998 as an unrestored chassis it went to the UK.

Below: Silver Ghost 2104 pictured here fully restored in the UK. [Courtesy Tom Clarke.]