

# Body by R Fry & Sons

*Roger Fry with Ian Berg*

*For over 40 years Club member Roger Fry has been restoring cars in Western Australia. Roger originally trained as a carpenter and the story of how he established his business is fascinating. The standard of work coming out of Roger's shop is the equal of any around the world and he has developed a global reputation as a master coachbuilder with multiple award-winning creations to his credit. Roger has provided the background to his enterprise:*

Emigrating from England, Roger and Christine established themselves in the wheat belt in Western Australia. A return to the UK in 1967 for family reasons and the subsequent experience of working in a restoration shop gave Roger an introduction to the car restoration business. Once again coming back to Western Australia, Roger imported his first Rolls-Royce, a 25/30 chassis GRP79 in 1973 and subsequently restored it for himself. At the Federal Concourse of the RROC in Western Australia in 1979, the car so impressed a bystander that Roger was asked if he would restore a Bentley for him. And so began the restoration business with the first project being a Franay

style 4¼ litre Bentley. Since then, Roger has been responsible for the complete rebuild of some 55 Rolls-Royce and Bentley motorcars and eight other makes including a second Franay styled car for a New Zealand buyer. Many of the cars have been sourced as projects by Roger himself through contacts in the UK and USA before being offered to Australian customers and subsequently restored to their required specifications.



*The body plate says it all 'R Fry & Sons, Perth, Western Australia'.*



*A recent photograph of Roger's workshop, located in a rural setting outside of Perth.*



*Roger's own Phantom II, 94PY. This car was ex USA and Switzerland and Roger rebuilt it from a complete wreck.*

The workshop, located in Roleystone about 30km from of the centre of Perth, provides a complete restoration service. A typical project consists of a total chassis restoration and rebody with everything, apart from the paintwork, handled in house. Over the years Roger has employed several craftsmen including a former Park Ward coachbuilder and a Rolls-Royce trained mechanic. However, the business now is strictly a family affair. Roger and Christine's son, Jason, completed an apprenticeship in panel beating and spray painting and worked in the business for 25 years before his untimely passing. Son Aaron is now responsible for metal work with Roger on mechanical, body design and framing. Daughter Lisa completes all the upholstery and tops for the cars and was the first female apprentice in the field in Western Australia.



*The replica C-type Jaguar currently in the workshop.*



*Margaret and Andrew Bayley's 1921 Silver Ghost chassis 106AG.*



*Roger's own Alvis Speed 20.*

Most of the restorations involve a rebody, and Roger is very particular about understanding the customer's requirements in terms of the body style, sizing of seating arrangement and fittings before the project is finally committed to. Usually this will involve extensive research into design styles and review of original coachbuilder's drawings. How long the whole restoration takes depends on many things including the condition of the car and the body style sought. A straight-forward restoration could be completed in a year if the entire team were dedicated to the project. However, to ensure work consistency, several projects are on the go at the same time. At present a 1912 Silver Ghost, chassis 1853E, is being completed, as is a replica C-Type Jaguar, Roger's own 3½ litre Bentley, and on hand is also a Rolls-Royce Phantom I and a Phantom III.

Rolls-Royce has been the predominant marque through the workshop and the list includes 16 Silver Ghosts, three Phantom I's, six Phantom IIs, two Phantom IIIs, two 20hp models and two 25/30s, a number that surely must be a record in Australia. Other cars that have been restored include five WO Bentleys, eight Derby Bentleys, three post-war Rolls-Royce and Bentleys, two Hispano Suizas, a Bean, an Alvis, and a veteran Renault. Roger has also restored a Ford Model T ambulance for the St John's Ambulance Service as a promotional vehicle for their 50th anniversary.



*Ian and Sue Berg's 1921 Silver Ghost chassis 62JG.*



*Roger's 3½ litre Bentley currently nearing completion in his workshop.*



*Margaret and Andrew Bayley's 1929 Phantom II 98WJ.*

A particularly challenging rebuild was the 1912 Silver Ghost chassis 2145. The car was originally fitted with Barker cabriolet coachwork, long gone, and a reproduction of the original body was sought. Roger visited the UK and Ireland to study similar cars and the splendid body, framed in Tasmanian Oak and clad in aluminium was subsequently constructed. The car has long left our shores and is now owned by 20-Ghost Club members Albert and Monique Eberhard from Portugal. Another notable car that passed through the workshop was the late John Auld's 14 litre aircraft-engined Hispano-Suiza from 1915 which on the road proved to be exceptionally powerful and fast. It is now in the Jay Leno collection.



1912 Silver Ghost chassis 2145, a reproduction of a Barker cabriolet, pictured in 2004 with Jason and Roger Fry, Ted Luckhurst and Matt Henderson. Both Ted and Matt worked for Roger for 20 years and are now on their own. Matt still does the paintwork on Roger's projects.



David Ekberg's 1927 Phantom I 69EF as photographed at the 2022 RROC Victoria concourse.



The coachwork for 2145 under construction.



John Smith and Roger Fry alongside John's 1924 Silver Ghost 58TM.



**Above and Left:** The magnificent reproduction Barker body on chassis 2145.



A well-known car in Australian Rolls-Royce circles which is currently nearing completion is 20-Ghost member Peter Moran's 1912 Silver Ghost chassis 1853E (See the back cover of the *Gazette* for photographs). This car was originally owned by Sol Green in Melbourne (see *20-Ghost Gazette* Spring 2020) and was restored in the 1960s by Eric Rainsford who built a Roi des Belges body. Peter has commissioned a D-fronted limousine body, as well as a touring body for summer use based on a Barker design, which will complete an exhaustive restoration conducted over many years. This car is spectacular, with an extraordinary amount of attention being applied to every detail.



*Keith Drew's 1923 Silver Ghost, chassis 88LK. The body is a reproduction of the original Waring Bros roadster.*



*1925 Silver Ghost chassis 67AU built for G Bukhardt.*



*George Forbes 20hp chassis GOK74 showing the body under construction. Note the bucks for the mudguards.*



*Brian Tilbury's 1922 Silver Ghost, chassis 4PG open drive limousine.*

Roger is also completing his own 3½ litre Bentley chassis B119FC at present and has in his personal stable a Phantom II Continental chassis 94PY, a car we have seen on several 20-Ghost tours, and a very original PII Windover's limousine which we are yet to see, as well as an Alvis Speed 20.

Originally, Rolls-Royce only provided the chassis, drive train, bonnet and radiator. The coachbuilder then completed the car to the customer's requirements. We are very fortunate to have in Australia a coachbuilder like Roger Fry and his family who can practice this craft to the same high standard as the best of the coachbuilders from the past. The accompanying selection of photos shows the wide variety of styles and projects that have been undertaken by 'R Fry & Sons'.



*A Phantom I under construction for D Bartlett, chassis unknown.*



*The same Phantom I following completion.*



*George Lucey Phantom I, 98DC, pictured with Jason and Roger Fry.*



*1929 Phantom II 61WJ, now owned by Nathan Clements.*



*Photographed in 1997, this Phantom II is now in Germany.*



*G Burkhardt Phantom II, UK92*



*Julian and Cheryl Walter, 1920 Silver Ghost, chassis, 51FW.*



*Alan and Maria Tribe's 1913 Silver Ghost, chassis 2316.*



*The 1912 Silver Ghost chassis 1853E belongs to Peter Moran and is being restored in Roger Fry's workshops. It includes some exquisite detail such as the woven cane effect on the side of the body. The restoration of the car is very nearly complete, see the R Fry & Sons story on page 14.*