

HRH PRINCE ARTHUR, THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT AND STRATHEARN
and the
THE FIRST ROYCE MOTOR CAR

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HRH the Duke of Connaught seated beside the Hon Charles Rolls at the wheel of the first Royce car. Seen here at Folkestone railway station on 5 August 1904. [Tom Clarke's dissertation on the pre-40/50 h.p. cars, 1903-1907, in Fasal and Goodman's 'The Edwardian Rolls-Royce', page 10.]

The Duke of Connaught it appears was the only member of the Royal Family to ride in a Royce car, only three of which were built, all in 1904. What's more he was driven by an enthusiastic Charles Rolls.

The Hon Charles Stewart Rolls (1877-1910) drove the Duke in Henry Royce's first car. The Royce was only four months old. Rolls used it as a demonstrator and Royce recalled in 1923 that Rolls, "ran our first attempted car for thousands of miles with great enthusiasm."

Rolls left London at 5 a.m. on 5 August 1904 and reached Folkestone at 9 a.m. in time for the Duke's arrival by train. After driving the Duke on a tour of inspection along the coast he returned to London the same day, a round trip of 220 miles. Royalty and reliability, an extraordinary achievement for Rolls and the small 10 h.p. Royce, and all before the new 'Rolls-Royce' name appeared.

Prince Arthur (1850-1942) was the seventh child and third son of Queen Victoria (1819-1901) and Prince Albert (1819-1861). He was his mother's favourite son and reminded her of her beloved Albert. He displeased her very rarely and one of Victoria's only criticisms was when he followed the fashion and parted his hair in the middle! The full wrath of Victoria's displeasure was saved for her eldest son and heir apparent, 'Bertie', whom she excluded from any matters of state.



Mother and son, Queen Victoria and Prince Arthur. [National Portrait Gallery.]

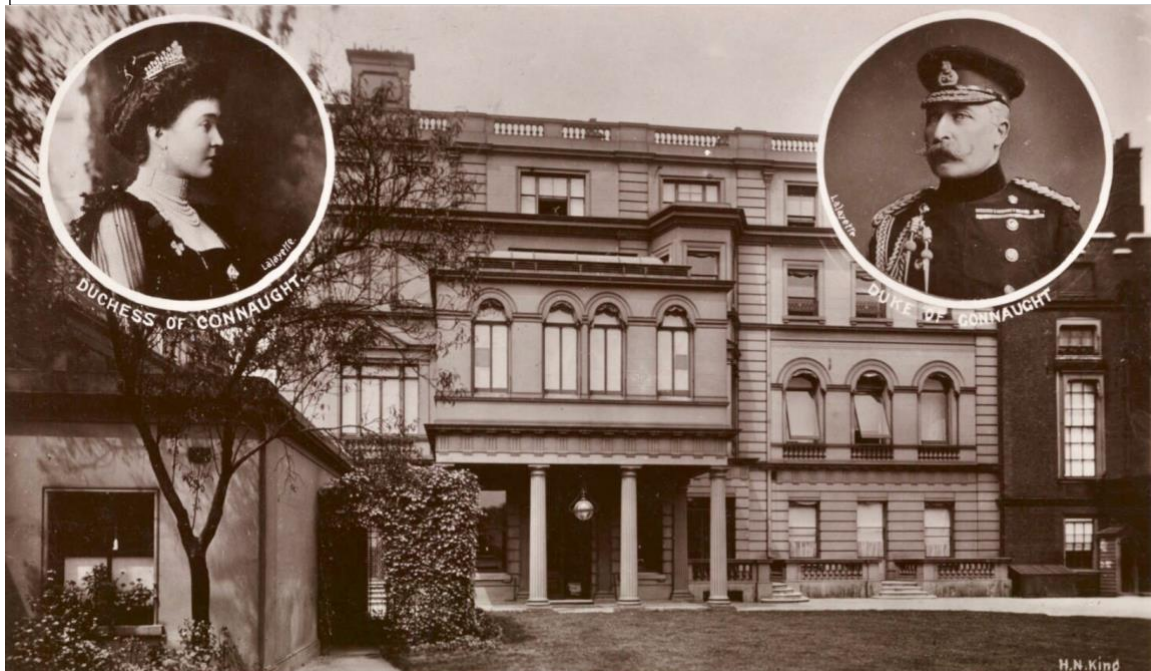
Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Princess Louise Margaret, Duchess of Connaught in 1885. [Royal Collection Trust.]



Brothers, HM King Edward VII and HRH the Duke of Connaught at the Royal Review in Edinburgh, 18 September 1905. [Postcard.]



Clarence House was the London home of the Duke and Duchess from 1901. The Duchess died at Clarence House in 1917. It remained the Duke's London residence until his death in 1942. The Queen Mother later lived at Clarence House and now it's the London home of the Prince of Wales. [Postcard]



Prince Arthur was created Duke of Connaught and Strathearn on 24 May 1874, his mother's birthday. He married Princess Louise Marguerite of Prussia (1860-1917) in 1879 and they had three children.

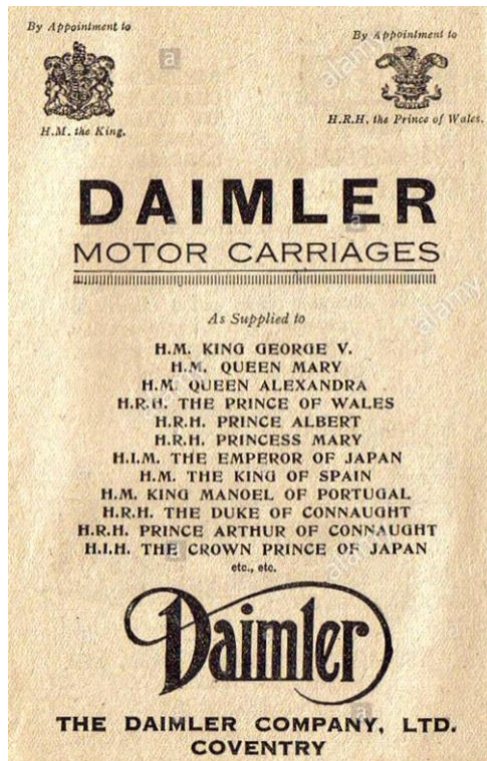
The Duke, a successful career soldier, was promoted to full General in 1893 and Field Marshal in 1902. He entered the Royal Military College, Woolwich, in 1866 and started his career as a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. The Duke served in Canada, Egypt, India, Ireland and Malta. He returned to Canada as Governor-General from 1911 to 1916 and then served in World War I.

Robert Baden-Powell (1857-1941) was attached to the Duke's staff in India and founded the Boy Scouts in 1907. The Duke was an early President of the Scout Association.

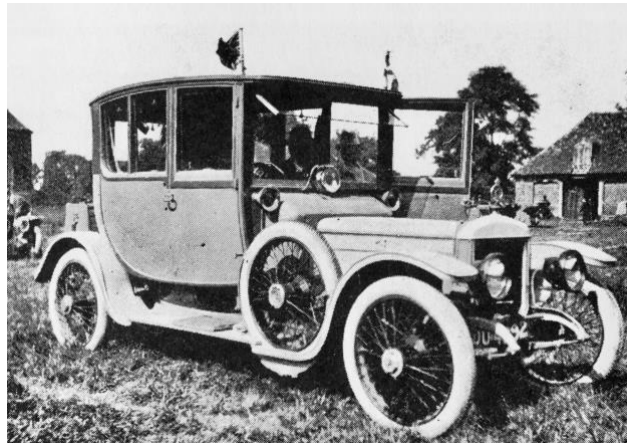
The Duke's elder brother Prince Albert became HM King Edward VII (1841-1910) on the death of their mother on 22 January, 1901. While still the Prince of Wales, King Edward ordered three Daimlers. The first one, a 6 h.p. phaeton, was delivered on 29 March 1900. The Duke followed his brother's example as a loyal user of Daimlers. The Royal Family's patronage of Daimler would last for sixty years.

The first Royal Daimler a 6 h.p. mail phaeton by Hooper & Co delivered to the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, in June 1900. Seated is Mr S Letzer, "The Prince of Wales Mechanician"! [Smith, 'Royal Daimlers', p 12.]





Left: A 1922 Daimler advertisement. The list includes HRH Prince Arthur of Connaught (1883-1938). He was the son of the Duke and Duchess He served as Governor-General of the Union of South Africa from 1920 to 1924 and was also loyal to the Royal Family's patronage of Daimler. Sadly, Arthur Sr outlived his son.

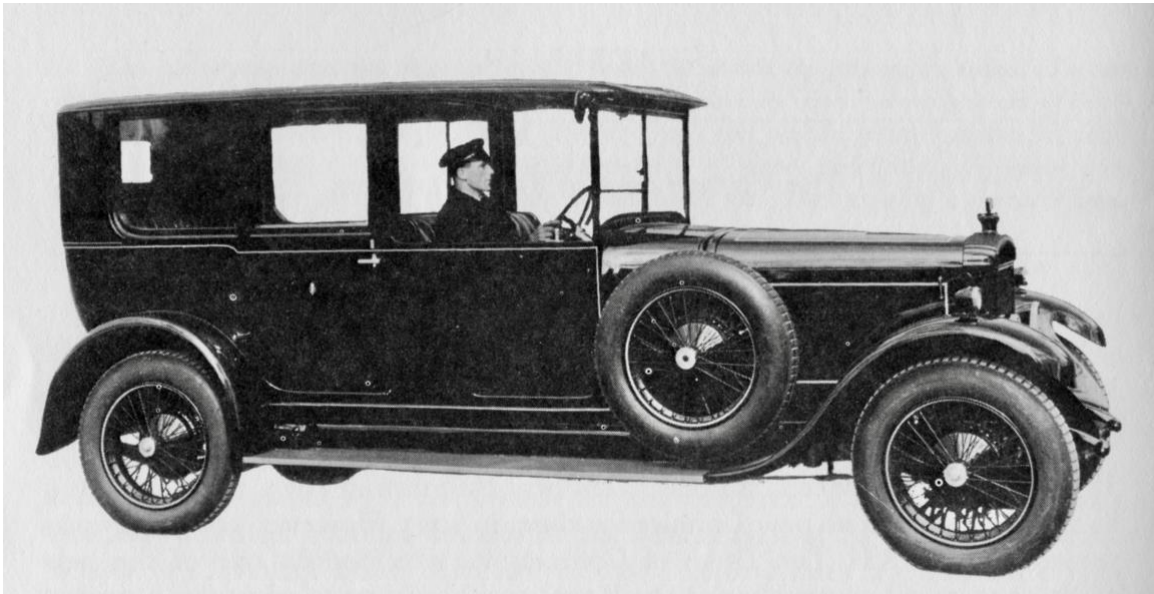


Above right: In the Prince Henry Tour of 1911, from Hamburg to London, the Duke in this Daimler headed the British team of 28. HRH Prince Henry of Prussia headed the German team of 37 in a Benz. Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, also in the British team, drove a Lorraine-Dietrich landaulette. Four Rolls-Royces competed in the tour. It was a friendly and social match between the German and British automobile clubs [Image, Smith, 'Royal Daimlers', p 92.]

In 1907 the Duke ordered two Daimlers both with limousine landaulette bodies. One was finished in November 1907 and the other in October 1908 when both were shipped to Malta. In April 1912 Hooper & Co, the Royal Warrant holders, built a limousine landaulette body on the Duke's new Daimler.

After the Duke took delivery of his 1927 25/85 h.p. Daimler, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Malcolm Murray (1867–1938), the Comptroller of the Duke's Household, wrote to the London Daimler agents, Messrs Stratton-Instone Ltd, on 30 December 1927,

"Dear Sirs, I am desired by H R H the Duke of Connaught to let you know how pleased His Royal Highness is with his new 25/85 hp Daimler Car. The engine leaves nothing to be desired, and Messrs. Hooper have done the coachwork to His Royal Highness' satisfaction. As you know the Duke of Connaught has used nothing but Daimler Cars for about 20 years, and no Cars could have been more satisfactory. This period includes service in Malta and five years in Canada, the latter a very trying experience on any Car, both on account of the roads, as well as the intense cold in winter. They withstood both splendidly."



The 1927 25/28 h.p. Hooper limousine for the Duke of Connaught. It was painted the Royal colours of maroon and black. [Smith, 'Royal Daimlers', p 170.]

A formal Hooper & Co photograph of the first Royal Daimler Straight Eight which was supplied to HRH the Duke of Connaught in May 1934.
[Smith, 'Royal Daimlers' p 204.]





Above: The Duke in the rear compartment of 1914 Silver Ghost, chassis 33GB, a Salmons landaulette visiting the Western Front during World War I. The military number was M.17794 with M.177 showing here and a photo in Fasal and Goodman's 'Edwardian Rolls-Royce' shows ...94, confirming the identity. Behind is 1909 Silver Ghost, chassis 1331, a Barker landaulette with a later updated taper bonnet. It was purchased by the War Office in 1916. [National Library of Scotland.]

Below: Field Marshal the Duke of Connaught in a Royal Daimler is cheered by cadets as he leaves the Royal Military College, Sandhurst on 29 September 1929. [Smith, 'Royal Daimlers', p 186.]



In 1928 the Duke withdrew from public life. He was an exemplary hard-working Royal. His patronage of Daimler, however, continued into retirement and the first Royal Daimler Straight Eight was supplied to the Duke in May 1934.

Now came a switch in the Duke's automotive allegiance. In November 1938 he ordered a Rolls-Royce Wraith. The 1939 Wraith, chassis WRB6, a Park Ward limousine, was handed over to Captain Fitzroy Fyers, MVO, Equerry to the Duke on 7 March 1939. The mudguards were painted black and the lower panels, scuttle and bonnet in Royal Lake. A bracket and standard holder was fitted as on his Daimler. Pastouna wrote in 'Royal Rolls-Royce Motor Cars' that the Duke traded in "his old Daimler", but which one is not recorded.



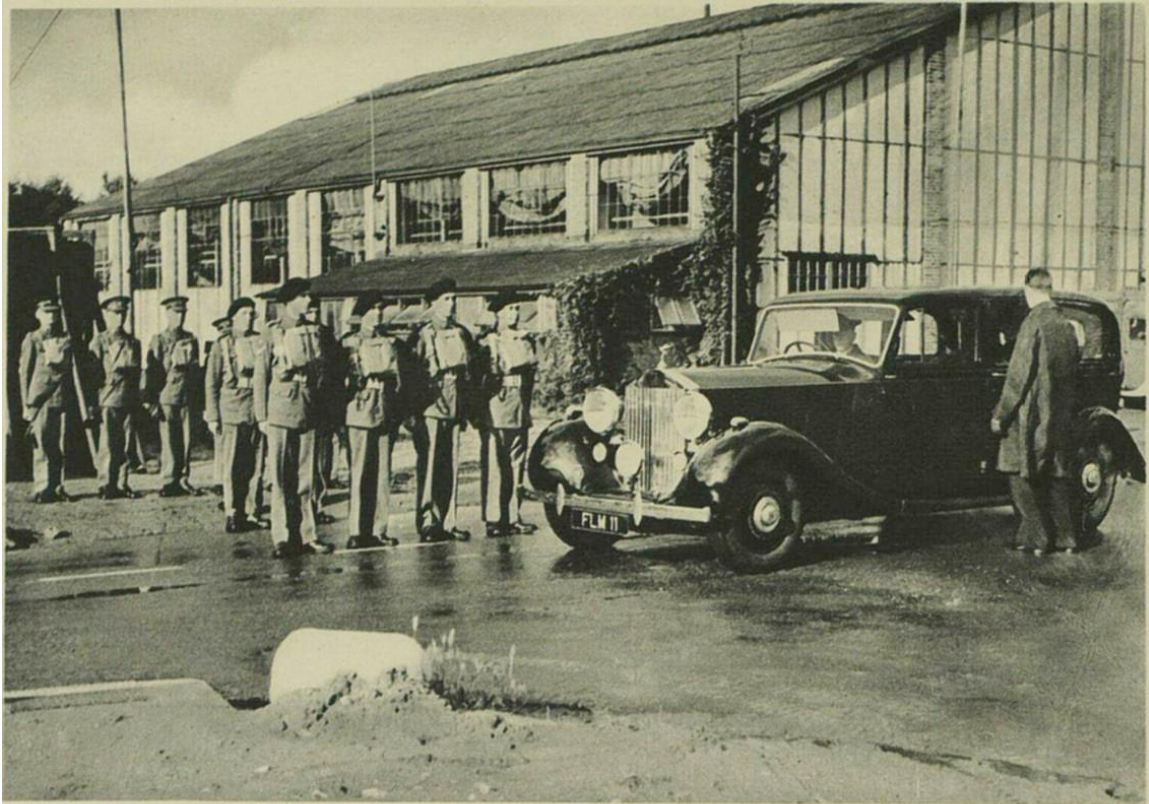
*Above: The Duke's Park Ward bodied Wraith WRB6 in 1939.
[Rolls-Royce Bulletin June 1939, page 45. Courtesy of Tom Clarke.]*

Inset: Interior of Wraith WRB6. [Courtesy of Tom Clarke.]

After the Duke's death in 1942 at the age of 91 the Wraith was acquired by Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester. It was used in Australia during his term as Governor-General from 1945 to 1947, along with his Phantom III, 3AX195, a Barker limousine and 1939 Wraith, WMB62, a Thrupp & Maberly limousine.

The Duke's exclusive patronage of Daimler over 30 years from 1907 to 1938 had ended. Perhaps he was influenced by other Royal family members who had new Rolls-Royces in the 1930s. As mentioned, the Duke of Gloucester had a Phantom III and a Wraith. Princess Victoria, sister of HM King George V, had two 1933 20/25 h.p. cars, chassis GWX9, a Park Ward limousine and GWX37 a Park Ward saloon. Also in this group was Prince George the Duke of Kent and his 1937 Phantom III, chassis 3AZ43, a Barker touring limousine.

When the Duke first stepped into his Rolls-Royce Wraith he was 88 years old. Did he perhaps recall that drive with Charles Rolls in Henry Royce's first car 35 years earlier?



H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT INSPECTING THE MEN AND MACHINES OF A TANK TRAINING CORPS. OWING TO THE DUKE'S GREAT AGE (HE IS NEARLY NINETY) HE SAT IN HIS CAR, A ROLLS-ROYCE, DURING THE INSPECTION.

The Duke's lifelong devotion to duty is nicely summed up in this photograph and caption. [Illustrated London News 28 October 1939 p 32., Courtesy of Tom Clarke.]

Acknowledgements: Tom Clarke for his expert advice; Tom C Clarke, 'The Rolls-Royce Wraith'; and, Brian E Smith, 'Royal Daimlers'.