



SEPARATED AT BIRTH

ROLLS-ROYCE

20/25, 25/30 AND WRAITH

1935 Rolls-Royce 20-25 Thrupp & Maberly Drophead Coupe

AN EXPANDED TWO-MODEL ROLLS-ROYCE RANGE

Rolls-Royce introduced its 40/50 HP model (more commonly known as the Silver Ghost) at the Olympia Motor Show in December 1906 and it remained in production in England until 1925 (and into 1926 for U.S.-built models produced in Springfield, Massachusetts). Rolls-Royce maintained a one-model policy with the Silver Ghost until 1922 when it introduced a less expensive companion car, the Twenty. From that point forward until World War II, Rolls-Royce would offer two ranges of automobiles: the large and small horsepower models.

Smaller and less powerful, the Twenty addressed the economic climate of the time, priced

at £1,100, for the chassis, considerably cheaper than the Silver Ghost chassis at around £1,700. Its shorter wheelbase of 129" chassis (compared to 143.5" of the Silver Ghost, and up to 150.5" after 1923) and lighter weight was propelled by a smaller engine with bore and stroke of 3" x 4.5" and displacement of 3,150 cc (versus the Silver Ghost's 7,036 cc and 7,428 cc displacement engines). The original three-speed transmission was replaced with a four-speed gearbox in 1925. The Twenty HP remained in production into 1929 with 2,940 produced.

Next came the 20/25 model, introduced in 1929 as a replacement for the Twenty with increased engine displacement of 3,680 cc (B&S of 3.25 x 4.5). A 132" wheelbase was offered in 1930 and synchronized third and fourth gears were added in 1932. This model remained in production into 1936 with 3,827 produced.



1937 Bentley 4.25 Litre Vanden Plas Tourer

VS.

BENTLEY

3½-, 4¼-LITRE AND MARK V

THIS CLASSIC PAIRING CONSISTS OF SIBLINGS, WHICH WHILE SHARING A GREAT DEAL OF MECHANICAL DNA, HAVE VERY DISTINCT PERSONALITIES. BY **RON VERSCHOOR**
PHOTOS BY BRAD ZEMCIK, DAVE TIMMONS AND RON VERSCHOOR

BADGE ENGINEERING, COURTESY OF ROLLS-ROYCE

From its earliest days, Bentley was immersed in racing and Walter Owen Bentley himself said, "The racing policy was part of the very foundation of Bentley Motors, for the two vital purposes of testing and publicizing our cars." Le Mans wins in 1924 (3-Litre), 1927 (3-Litre Super Sport), 1928 (4 ½-Litre), 1929 and 1930 (Speed Six) fortified its reputation for speed and endurance, and its magnificent 8-Litre model made for a formidable competitor to the large horsepower Rolls-Royce Phantom of the time.

Unable to survive the Great Depression's financial downturn, Bentley Motors was put up for sale in the summer of 1931. On paper, its >



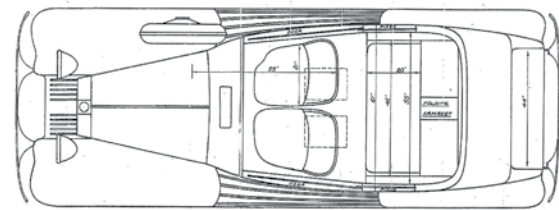
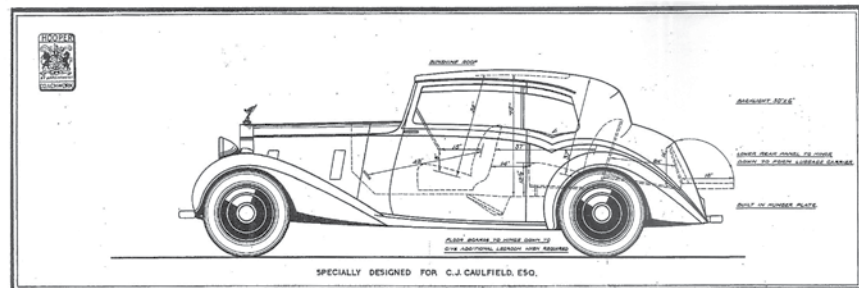
1934 Bentley 3.5-Litre Coupe, Park Ward



The Wraith engine



The Wraith chassis



HOOPER & CO. (COACHBUILDERS) LTD. 54, ST. JAMES'S ST. LONDON. HOOPER 2 DOOR SPORTS SALOON. 25-30 HP ROLLS ROYCE "V" STEERING. NO. 72

Hooper sport saloon build sheet



1937 Rolls-Royce 25-30 Two-Door Sport Saloon, Hooper

purchaser was known as the British Central Equitable Trust; in reality, the buyer was Rolls-Royce. The Bentley nameplate re-emerged at the Olympia Motor Show in 1933 on a model heavily based on the small horsepower Rolls-Royce of the time, the 20/25. Distinguished from earlier vintage Bentleys produced at Cricklewood, the new Rolls-Royce-based models are known today as Derby Bentleys.

The new Bentley, named the 3 ½-Litre, used the same 3,680 cc inline six-cylinder engine as the 20/25, but opted for twin SU carburetors, a higher compression ratio and a new crossflow head. Its wheelbase was shorter at 126" and coupled with different gear ratios, made for a decidedly more performance-oriented vehicle advertised as "The Silent Sports Car." While a wide range of custom coachwork was available on both the 20/25 and the 3 ½-Litre, the Rolls-Royce chassis was often fitted with more formal, closed coachwork, in contrast to the open tourers and sporting coupes commonly found on the Bentley chassis. Total production came to 3,827 for the 20/25; 1,177 for the 3 ½-Litre.

In 1936, the six-cylinder engine was enlarged to 4,257 cc's, with new models introduced as the Rolls-Royce 25/30 and the Bentley 4 ¼-Litre. The Bentley had quite a following by now and upon introduction of the 4 ¼-Litre model, *The Autocar* concluded, "Experience of this remarkable British car makes one realize afresh that it is not only sheer performance that counts—and the Bentley has that in full measure—but the manner of it." The Rolls-Royce model was produced into 1938 with 1,201 examples made and the Bentley continued into 1939 with 1,234 produced.

The final variants of this prewar chassis were the Rolls-Royce Wraith (1938-1939, 491 produced) and the Bentley Mark V (1939-1940 with 11 complete cars produced). Notable changes included independent front suspension and the radiator moved forward in the chassis. The Wraith wheelbase grew to 136" while the Bentley's dropped to 124".

All small horsepower Rolls-Royce and Derby Bentleys are equipped with custom coachwork and are judged in custom classes using CCA criteria. And while Rolls-Royce >



1935 Rolls-Royce 20-25 H.J. Mulliner Saloon



Terry White's 1933 Rolls-Royce 20-25 Sedanca deVille, Barker



Barry Hon's 1937 Bentley 4.25-Litre Tourer, Vanden Plas



Dick Boberg's former 1934 Bentley 3.5-Litre Saloon, Park Ward

“Unable to survive the Great Depression’s financial downturn, Bentley Motors was put up for sale in the summer of 1931. On paper, its purchaser was known as the British Central Equitable Trust; in reality, the buyer was Rolls-Royce.”



The Embricos Bentley 4.25-Litre Coupe, Pourtout



Al McEwan's 1934 Bentley 3.5-Litre Tourer, Vanden Plas



1937 Bentley 4.25-Litre Sport Saloon, Mann Egerton



1935 Bentley 3.5-Litre Sport Saloon, Rippon



Rick Zeiger's former 1938 Bentley 4.25-Litre Razor-Edge Pillarless Saloon, Park Ward



1939 Rolls-Royce Wraith Limousine, Windovers formerly owned by General Montgomery



1933 Rolls-Royce 20-25 Gurney Nutting Sedan Coupe

production of its small horsepower model totals to 5,519 (from 1929 to 1939)—more than twice that of Derby Bentley production of 2,422 (from late 1933 to 1940)—among CCCA members, Bentleys listed in our directory total 59, compared with 44 Rolls-Royce. (The reverse is found in reviewing the current Rolls-Royce Owners Club directory: 377 Rolls-Royce small horsepower cars listed, versus 182 Derby Bentleys—perhaps this is an area well suited for CCCA outreach and new member recruitment.)

Similarities abound between these siblings, as do differences.

As a testimony to Rolls-Royce engine design longevity, consider that the six-cylinder design introduced in 1922 found use not only in the models covered here, but in postwar Bentley Mark VIs, R-Types and S-Types, and Rolls-Royce Silver Wraiths, Silver Dawns and Silver Clouds into 1959, a lengthy 37-year run. Also in 1959, a new V-8 design was introduced and continued in production for more than 60 years, with Bentley Motors just announcing the end of 6.75-Litre V-8 production in its Mulsanne model.

FURTHER READING

- "Rolls-Royce 20HP, 20/25, 25/30 & Wraith in Detail," by Nick Walker
- "Rolls-Royce 20/25," by Tom Clarke
- "The Rolls-Royce Motor Car," by Anthony Bird and Ian Hallows
- "Bentley 3 ½ & 4 ¼ Litre 1933-1940 in Detail," by Nick Walker
- "Bentley: The Silent Sports Car," by Michael Ellman-Brown
- "Bentley: Fifty Years of the Marque," by Johnnie Green
- "Bentley Beauty: The Art of the Coachbuilder on the Derby Bentley 1933-1940," by Neill Fraser
- "Coachwork on Derby Bentleys: 3.5-Litre, 4.25-Litre & Mark V, 1933-1940," by James Taylor