

The car that came back to Farnhill – the Lofthouse family and the 1933 Farnhill Hall Rolls-Royce

This article, based on conversations with John Lofthouse, describes his grandfather Herman's time at Farnhill Hall where he was chauffeur to the Reddihough family from 1928 to around 1963.

In particular, it's about a Rolls-Royce, bought new by the Reddihoughs in 1933 and driven by Herman, which is still being driven today; and how, when this car paid a return visit to Farnhill Hall in 2006, John and his father Arthur Lofthouse were there to meet it and help the current owner complete his researches into its history.

How Herman came to Farnhill

Herman Lofthouse's father was the manager of a textile mill in Odsall, Bradford, and Herman was employed there, in the 1920s, involved in the transportation of goods: first driving a horse and cart and later trucks and wagons.

Needless to say, Herman was given very good references when, in the late 1920s, he applied for the job as chauffeur with the Reddihough family.

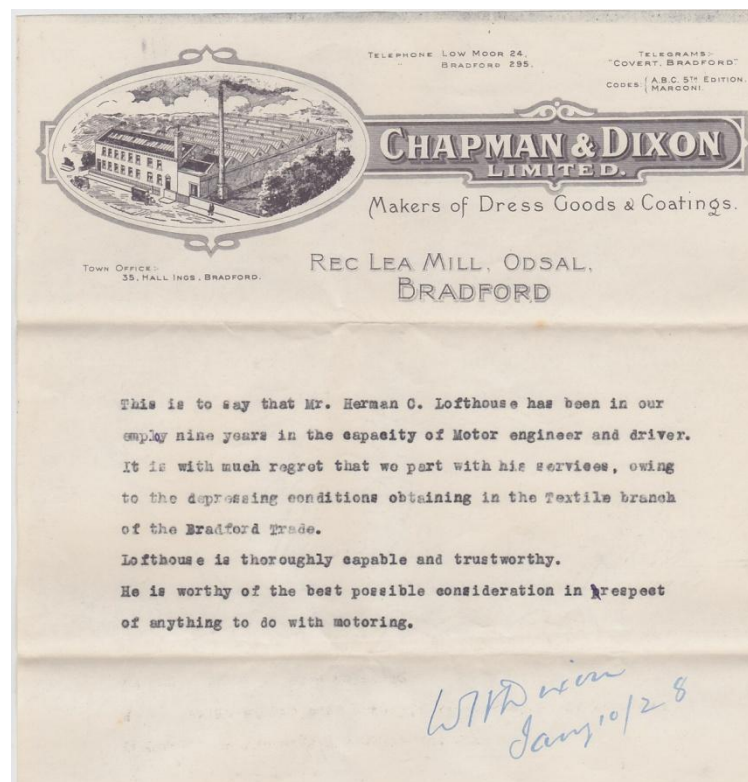


Figure 1: Herman's reference from WH Dixon of Chapman and Dixon Ltd. Although not included here, there is an equally glowing reference from AM Chapman and also one from a dentist, for whom Herman appeared to have done some chauffeuring on the side

When the Reddihoughs moved to Farnhill Hall they offered their new chauffeur a choice of houses: either Wood Cottage on Bradley Road, beyond Farnhill Wood, or the still-to-be-completed Sunny Bank, in the village.

Quite reasonably Herman chose the house nearest to Farnhill Hall, and so had to commute daily from Bradford, until Sunny Bank was ready for him and his young family to move into, in 1928.

1928 – 1933 Vauxhall

Between 1928 and 1933 the Reddihough's car was a Vauxhall.

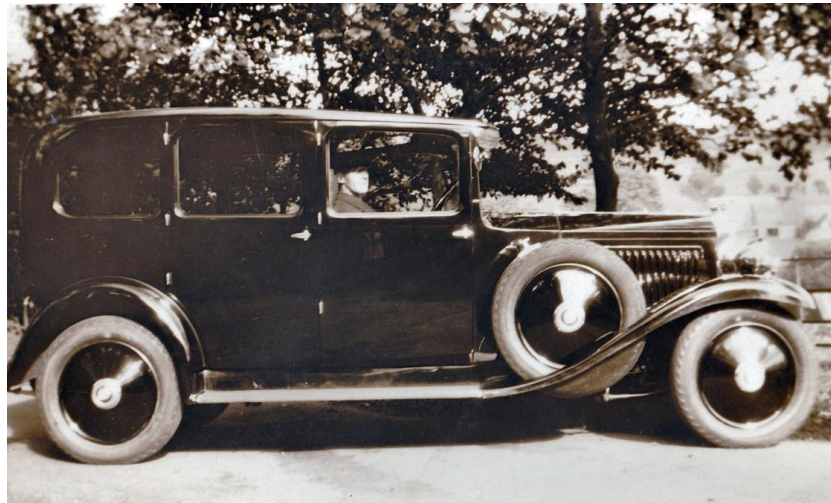


Figure 2: Herman at the wheel of the Farnhill Hall Vauxhall

This vehicle has been identified as a Vauxhall 20-60, with a coach-built 6 light limousine body.

1933 – 1954 Coach-built Rolls-Royce

In 1933 the Reddihough family bought a new Rolls-Royce.

At this time Rolls-Royce did not produce complete vehicles. Instead they produced chassis and the bodywork was produced by one of a number of specialist coach-builder; usually to a set of standard designs. The coachwork for the Farnhill Hall Rolls-Royce (a 20/25 model, chassis number GSY-59) was produced by Rippon Bros. of Huddersfield, with the driver's compartment specifically made-to-measure for Herman.

The original order still exists.

W. & Co. Ltd.—Q19908—10/32. *Ribbons* ORDER REF.: N° 10.

CHASSIS No. *GSY 59* ALLOWANCES DATE OF SALE

Works No. *8345* H.P. *2025* SOLD TO *Ribbon Bros Ltd*
 Engine No. *7173* Type *X Series* *St Johns Rd*
 Off Test. *1/1/33* D.I. Issued *Huddersfield*
 Axle Ratio *11x50* Despatched *9/6/33* *For Stock*
Exide Battery *J. to Reddibough Esq.*
Farnhill Hall
 TYRES *Dunlop* *Kildwick*
 Type *Port MP 2 Head* *Kingley*
 Size *31 X 6* COACHBUILDER..... DELIVERY REQUIRED.....
 Date of Order *11.4.33* No. *T14015* DELIVERY QUOTED *May 1933*
(w)

CAR ORDER FORM BOOK No.....

DEPOSIT PAID DATE..... £ : :
 BALANCE OF CHASSIS PRICE PAID... DATE *7.6.33* £848 : 11 : 9 : 1
 INVOICE No. *2767* DATE *1.6.33* AMOUNT £848 : 11 : 9 : 1

CHASSIS DELIVERED ON *9.6.33* TO *Ribbon Bros Ltd* BY *their rep from W.*

ERECTION PARTICULARS DATED *3/6/33* FROM *Ribbon Bros Ltd* ERECTION SHEET *72.10/4/33*
N° 4 INSTRUCTION BOOK SENT TO *Ribbon Bros Ltd* *Huddersfield* ON *10.6.33*
 STEERING COLUMN..... LEVERS *Standard*

	Dis- count.	Order No.	£	s.	d.	Invoice Folio.
CHASSIS <i>11/4</i> WHEELBASE.	<i>20%</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>1050</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>2767</i>
FITTINGS—UNTARNISHABLE.	<i>-</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	
RADIATOR SHUTTERS—UNTARNISHABLE.	<i>-</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	
SPRINGS FOR						
BODY <i>Enclosed Limousine</i> WEIGHT <i>9</i> CWT.						
SEATING <i>4/5</i> USUALLY <i>2</i>						
LUGGAGE: MAX <i>1</i> CWT AVERAGE <i>2</i> CWT	<i>-</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	
ALLOWANCE FOR ACCESSORIES—STANDARD <i>35</i> lbs						
SPECIAL <i>Nil</i>						
CAR FOR USE IN <i>the U.K. Towns and touring</i>						
FINISH OF BONNET HINGE MOULDINGS <i>polished</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	
LUGGAGE GRID—TYPE <i>6</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>T14015</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2767</i>
WHEEL CARRIERS <i>to offside</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>T14015</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2767</i>
<i>Locks to bonnet</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>T14015</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2767</i>

Figure 3: Order for new Rolls-Royce GSY-59 – cost, just under £850

Once completed, the new car was registered and acquired the Bradford registration plate KY 5236.

Shortly after being purchased, the new car was photographed in the grounds of Farnhill Hall.

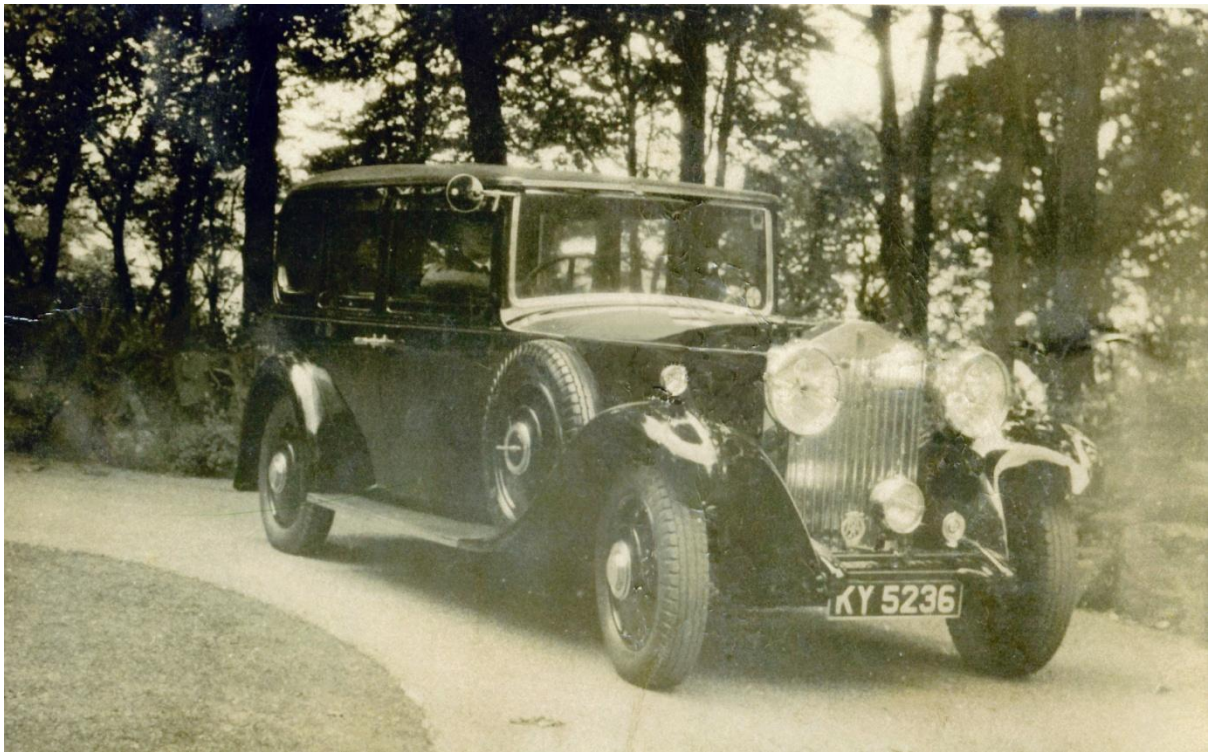


Figure 4: 1933 Rolls-Royce in the grounds of Farnhill Hall – with Herman at the wheel

At this time, chauffeurs were not only required to drive cars and keep them clean but were also expected to perform the routine maintenance tasks needed to keep their vehicles in good running order.

Rolls-Royce were particularly careful about who could call themselves “driver mechanics”. The minimum requirements were:

- Attendance at a special training course
- 30000 miles or three years being in sole charge of a Rolls-Royce
- Satisfactory inspection of the vehicle by a Rolls-Royce engineer

After attending a training course at the Rolls-Royce factory in Derby, Herman was awarded his Certificate of Merit and cap badge in 1937. Rolls-Royce today call this award “chauffeuring’s highest”.

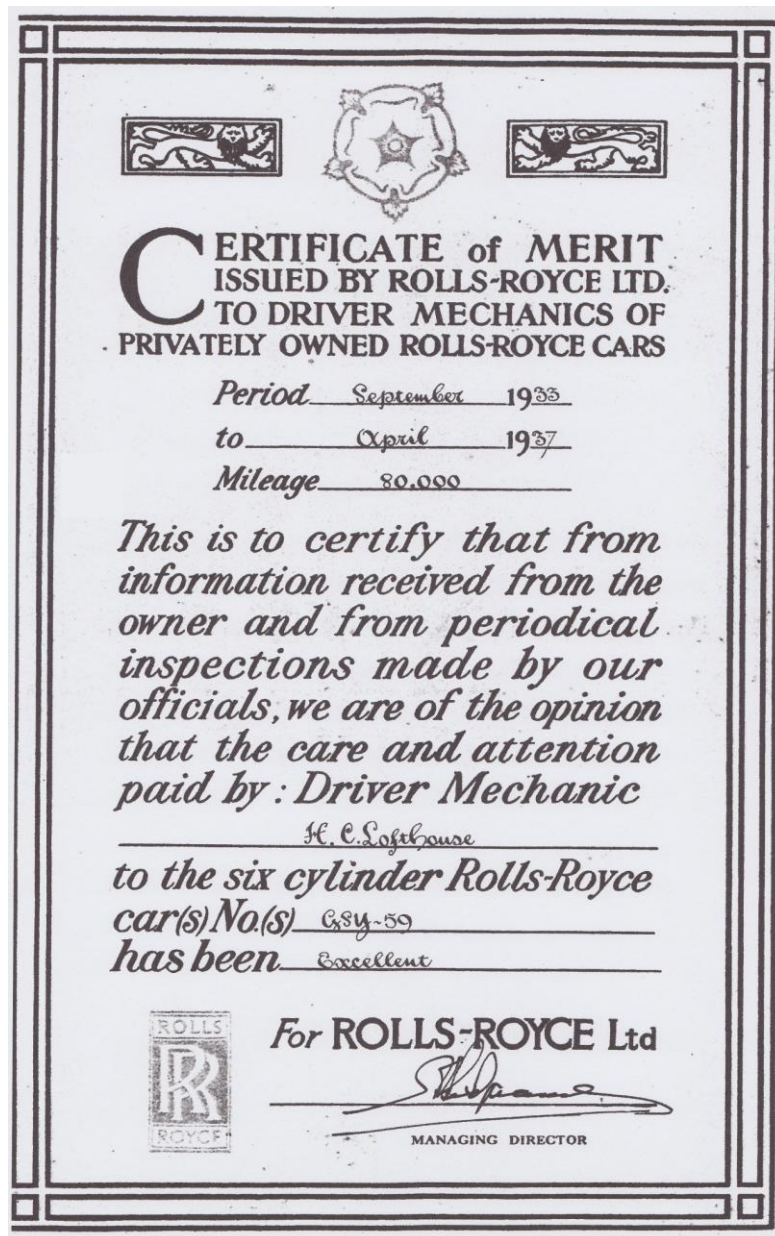


Figure 5: Herman's Driver-Mechanic certificate



Figure 6: Herman's Rolls-Royce cap-badge. The actual size is $\frac{3}{4}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " approx.

Each cap badge has a unique number stamped on the rear (Herman's is #3829) and, as the accompanying letter of commendation (below) makes clear, was a highly sought after item. If one of these red badges was lost, Rolls-Royce would provide a replacement but in black-and-silver only.

Also included in the letter of commendation was a £5 note – equivalent to more than £250 at 2012 prices.

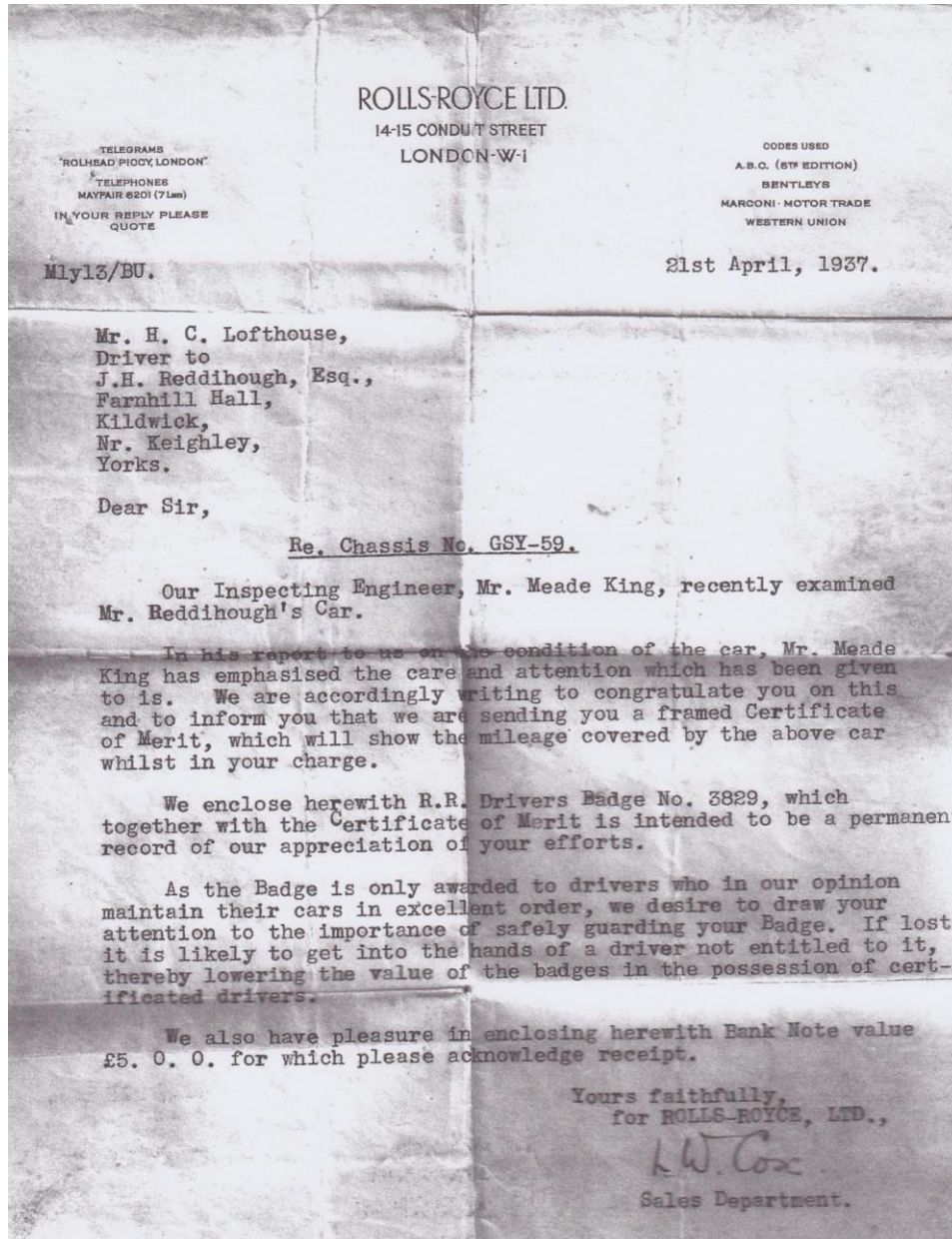


Figure 7: Letter of commendation from Rolls-Royce

A note on Rolls-Royce logo colours: Rolls-Royce changed the colour of their RR logo from red to black in May 1933. This change had been planned for almost a year and new badges had been ordered from Spinck's (?) in the middle of 1932. Cars for export were receiving black badges from late 1932.

The reason for the change was that when the badge had originally been conceived, cars were either painted black, or had polished metal bonnets. Colours other than black were rare, and also considered a bit vulgar.

By the 1930s, however, fashions had changed and quite a few cars were being painted black and maroon, or black and grey or dark green, etc. Rolls-Royce felt that the red of their logo might clash with these new colours and decided on the change to black.

It was a coincidence that Henry Royce died in June 1933, just as the company stopped using the red badges, and the company took the opportunity to suggest that the change had actually been made as a mark of respect to Sir Henry – making a virtue out of a necessity.

How Herman came to be supplied with a red cap badge as late as 1937 isn't clear, but it has been suggested that Rolls-Royce were simply using up old stock !

It's unclear whether the motor-house at Farnhill Hall was either in the old coach-house or a specially built structure. It certainly had (and still has) an inspection pit, which Arthur Lofthouse could remember having to go down into to help his father. Arthur often visited his father at work, fetching flasks of tea and sandwiches, and helping out by cleaning the wheels, the wheel-arches and the tyres: the rest of the car was his father's own domain.

When required, Herman would be summoned to the Hall by means of a bell in the kitchen.

Most of the journeys he made were local, to Cononley or to Crosshills; or to the Reddihough's other homes at St. Anne's and in the Cotswolds. On Sundays, Herman had to drive Mr. Reddihough *from* but not *to* the Baptist Church in Cononley, as is described at

<http://lakelanddawndesigns.com/cpick/THE%20HISTORY%20OF%20CONONLEY.pdf>

Jonathan Herbert Reddihough was a trustee and benefactor of the Chapel. Reddihough was one of the village's most important landowners with an estate which was essentially that once owned by the Swire family. He was a Bradford wool merchant and on Sundays he would walk, wearing clogs, from his home at Farnhill Hall to Cononley Baptist Chapel. His chauffeur would collect him after the service for the journey home.

In addition, Herman had to drive Mr. Reddihough to and from work each day to one of his mills in either Bradford or Morton. It's possible that one of these trips was captured accidentally by a photographer from a local newspaper.



Figure 8: Clipping from the Bradford Telegraph and Argus. The first trial run of trolley-buses through Bingley was on Monday, 17 April 1939; with the route between Bradford and Crossflatts opening fully on 7 May 1939. The route was converted to buses in 1963

The above newspaper clipping was found among Herman's papers after his daughter died. But why did he keep this – he had no particular interest in buses ? Now look at the vehicle *behind* the bus – it's a Rolls-Royce. Could this be Herman driving Mr. Reddihough home after work in Bradford ? We'll never know.

Between 1933 and 1937 the car had travelled 80000 miles. A remarkable distance for the times and particularly when it is borne in mind that it was not used as an all-year vehicle. A contact of the current owner, a former worker at Rippon Bros., can remember visiting Farnhill Hall regularly to decommission the vehicle for winter and put it up on blocks: a process that took about eight hours.

Arthur also remembered coming home on leave during the second World War and seeing the car decommissioned, and up on blocks, presumably for the duration of hostilities.

During the war, with so many men away on active service, Herman's role at Farnhill Hall became more generalised. He himself was a member of the Home Guard and, when German PoWs were imprisoned in Skipton, it was his job to oversee those that were sent to work on the Farnhill Hall farm.

After the war, with petrol available once more, he resumed his chauffeuring duties; but with a reduced number of staff at Farnhill Hall he combined this with the job of gardener.

The car was sold in 1954 – but, apparently, not before Herman had taken a souvenir (see later).

Subsequent vehicles

The Reddihoughs subsequently bought a second-hand 1938 Rolls-Royce Wraith, which was altered to allow both doors on the passenger-side to open out from the centre; hinged on opposite sides. This provided easier access for Mrs. Reddihough, who was by then in a wheelchair.

John Lofthouse remembers this car clearly. He particularly remembers that his grandfather would sometimes pass him on his way to South Craven School and, if there were no passengers on board, would give him a lift. Despite protestations, Herman wouldn't let John out at the end of the street and instead drove the Rolls-Royce, with its young passenger in the back seat, right up to the front gates of the school. On one such occasion, the headmaster was given to comment on the unanticipated arrival of a VIP.

The Wraith was sold in November 1962 and was replaced with a Rover.

Herman retired shortly afterwards, due to increasing ill-health. He died, a well known character in the village, in 1968.

2006 – The 1933 Rolls-Royce comes home

After many years, the Farnhill Hall 1933 Rolls-Royce came into the possession of an enthusiast living in Suffolk, who spent much time and money on restoring it to its former glory. Researching its history, however, proved to be a bit of a problem.

He knew that it was originally registered to a Mr. Reddihough and that it had a Keighley registration. Rolls-Royce were able to inform him that the same Mr. Reddihough continued to own the car up until the end of the war but between then and 1957, when a new log-book was issued, was a total blank.

It took a lot of patient detective work before, in 2006, on its way to a rally at Harewood House the following day, the 73-year old Rolls-Royce turned once more into the drive of Farnhill Hall where it was met by a reception party that included the son and grandson of its original driver.



Figure 9: The 1933 Rolls-Royce back at Farnhill Hall in 2006. There is no doubt that the car is in beautiful condition; however, if you compare this with the photograph in Figure 4 you may notice that the passenger-side bumper badge shown here is the wrong one.

On seeing the car again and discussing its history with the current owner, Arthur remembered the “souvenir” that Herman had taken from it before it was sold in 1954. He was able to present the owner with the original RAC bumper badge, which was fixed in place in time for visit to Harewood.



Figure 10: Arthur and John – Arthur holding the car's original RAC badge



Figure 11: The original RAC badge, presented by Arthur and fitted prior to 2006 Harewood House rally

2015 – The 1933 vehicle at the Rolls Royce North of England Rally, Harewood House

On the 9th August 2015, the 82 year-old 1933 Rolls Royce was present at the Rolls Royce North of England Rally, held at Harewood House.



Figure 12: The Farnhill Hall Rolls Royce at the 2015 Harewood House rally

Acknowledgements

Kildwick and Farnhill Local History Group would like to thank John Lofthouse for suggesting this as a topic for the website, and for providing the photographs and documents.

The section on the 2006 visit to Farnhill Hall uses information taken from an article written by the current owner of the 1933 Rolls-Royce and published in the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts Club magazine. The current owner has also kindly read a draft of this text and made valuable corrections and additional contributions, including the note on Rolls-Royce logo colours.

Information on the trolley-bus service between Bradford and Crossflatts was kindly researched and provided by Paul Haywood.