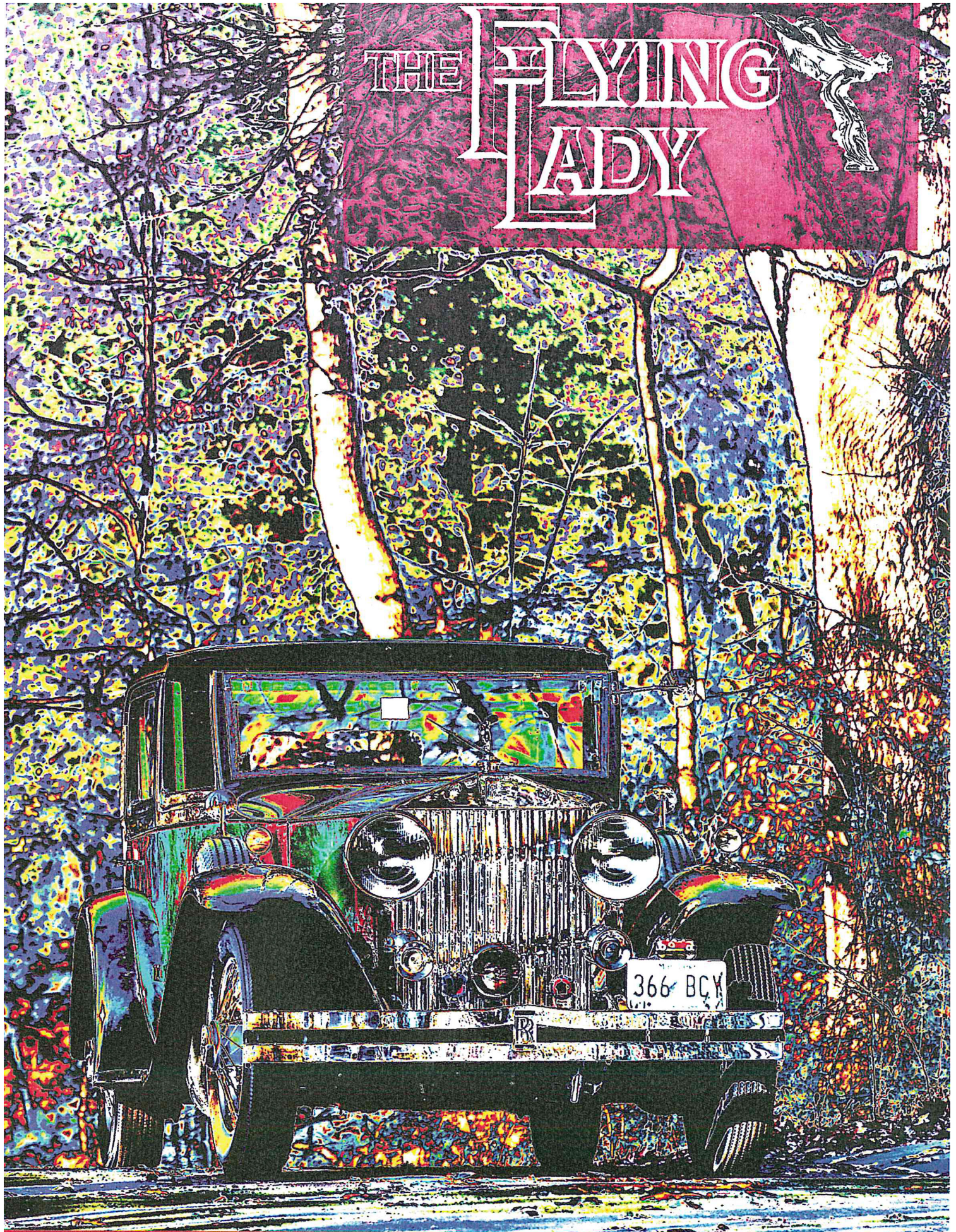
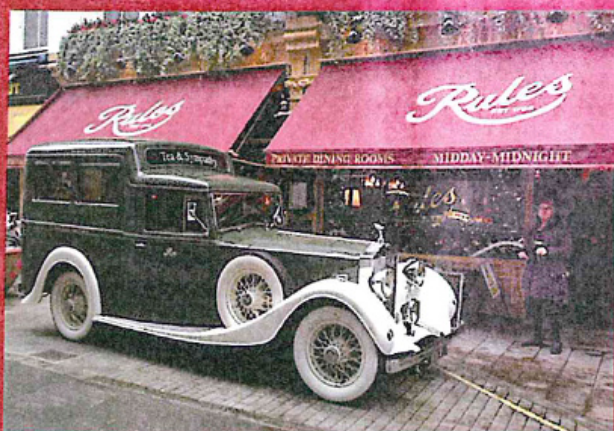


THE FLYING LADY



Bubbles of Rules

aka 1935 Rolls-Royce 20/25 GHG22
William Williams (VA)



INTRODUCTION: THE POSSIBILITY OF PARADISE

We like to anthropomorphize our cars. For example, "Miss Agnes" (prominently featured in John D. MacDonald's "Travis McGee" detective novels) is a prewar Phantom III estate lorry, now on display at the Rolls-Royce Foundation museum. Similarly, "Bloody Mary" is a contemporary Phantom owned by chanteuse Lady Gaga. And, closer to home, fellow Virginians Phil and Sue Brooks own a magnificent Bentley Vanden Plas that writes letters to the deceased woman who owned the car from 1937 to 1955. Even in our household, our Continental R was dubbed "d'Artagnan" at the moment of acquisition, while our Spur has been "Lola" ever since our daughter lamented, "Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets" (after the Richard Adler/Jerry Ross song in the 1955 musical play *Damn Yankees*).

So, while others might find it unusual to hear of a Rolls-Royce named "Bubbles," we anthropomorphizers simply become more intrigued and anxious to meet the car. Bubbles does not disappoint. The car's proportions are genuinely heroic. It's not just a shooting brake, it's the consummate shooting estate. As might be expected, Bubbles has a history filled with adventure, enhanced with occasional mystery. And, if there is such a thing as a paradise for motorcars, actually or figuratively, Bubbles has probably found it.

Bubbles is currently owned by John Mayhew in London, who also owns Rules restaurant in Covent Garden—hence the name, "Bubbles of Rules." Not only is Rules the oldest restaurant in London (founded in 1789), it's one of the most famous restaurants in the world. The menu is an homage to all things British, with an array of traditional foods such as Steak & Kidney Pie and Braised Rabbit & Black Pudding. Rules also serves an assortment of game dishes, including grouse, hare and pheasant.

Rules is a vessel filled with British history, once frequented by great authors, including Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, John Galsworthy, and H.G. Wells. It's where the Prince of Wales entertained Lilly Langtree, and where novelists such as John Le Carre and Graham Greene, created

scenes of romance and intrigue. Recently, a scene from the PBS series "Downton Abbey" was filmed at Rules.

Rules has welcomed famous actors and playwrights from every era. It was the first place Clark Gable wanted to see on his first visit to England; the first place sought by Gertrude Lawrence after the Blitz; and, the place that friends instinctively gathered to mourn on the day that Noel Coward died. In London theater circles, Rules is referred to as "the unofficial green room."

The game dishes served at Rules frequently originate from John Mayhew's country estate at Lartington in the High Pennines. Rules' patrons may schedule hunting trips at the Estate and, when they do, it's likely that Bubbles will be there to meet them. All of which brings us back to the possibility that Bubbles may have found actual or figurative paradise. It's a great car story. One look confirms that Bubbles is unique. Further investigation confirms that Bubbles has been rescued and restored by an imaginative and indulgent owner. And then there's the days divided between the iconic epicenter of London's West End and the idyllic country estate in the High Pennines.

But Bubbles hasn't always resided in paradise. No motorcar could replicate Bubbles' journey during the past seventy-eight years without encountering many moments of danger and adventure.

The adventure began in 1935. Rules was already 136 years old. The entire British Empire was celebrating the Silver Jubilee anniversary of the reign of King George V. Like most of the world, people in England and America were suffering during the great depression. Financial success seemed to be fickle and fleeting, which might have been the inspiration behind the introduction of a new board game in America called "Monopoly." Bubbles was introduced too, as a Rolls-Royce 20/25 with chassis number GHG22.

THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE

While not yet endowed with a name, GHG22 was endowed with a future. A prominent physician from Wimpole Street in Marylebone ordered GHG22, to be bodied as a sports saloon by renowned coachbuilder H.J. Mulliner. Sports saloons had become very popular, possibly because they functioned as limousines yet appeared more stylish and contemporary. The Mulliner



John Mayhew of the Rules restaurant strikes the appropriate Great White Hunter pose.

version was particularly attractive, as exemplified by photographs of Mulliners' coachwork on CRF9.

Surprisingly, there are no known photographs or records of Bubbles ever having been completed as a sports saloon. However, the records from Rolls-Royce indicate that Bubbles was bound for Mulliners when leaving the works at Derby. Additionally, records from Rolls-Royce indicate that the good doctor took delivery of Bubbles. Thus, it would seem that a youthful and gentrified version of Bubbles enjoyed some portion of early life on Wimpole Street. There has always been something peculiarly special about Wimpole Street. It's not that the homes are stately and fashionable, though they are, but the street has, for its modest size, received unusual notoriety. For example, there was a popular play (and resultant film) during the 1930s entitled, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* which dealt with the triumph of romance over dysfunction in the family of poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Similarly, in his play *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw chose Wimpole Street for the residence of Professor Henry Higgins. As a result, Wimpole Street was later immortalized in song as the ethereal "Street Where You Live" when *Pygmalion* was adapted as the Broadway musical play (and resultant film), *My Fair Lady*.

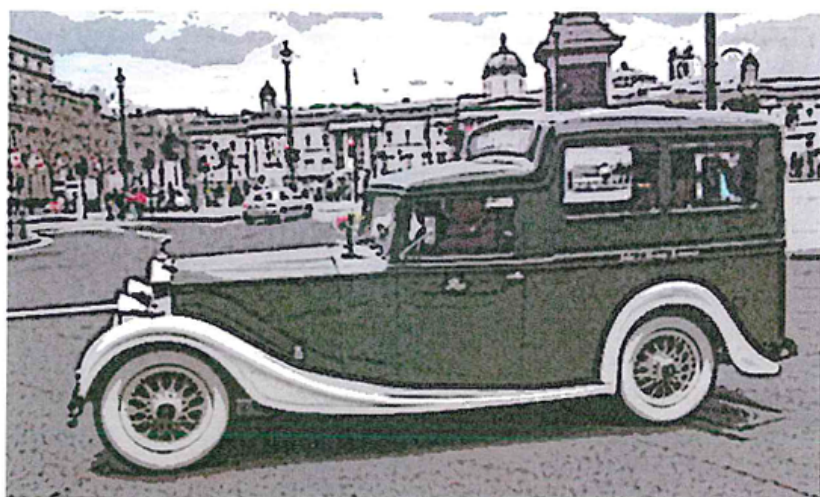


Of course, none of this had much to do with Bubbles. Still, there is the possibility that Bubbles may have added to the lore of Wimpole Street. As a 20/25, Bubbles' 3.7-liter engine was rated at 25.4 horsepower by the Royal Automobile Club. However, when Bubbles' brake horsepower was actually tested by the craftsmen at Derby it was 50 when silenced and 57 when "unsilenced." If fate were to have supplied the good doctor with

a safe opportunity to "put the hammer down," particularly if Bubbles was "unsilenced," the episode might still be legendary on Wimpole Street.

GOING HUNTING

Sometime between 1935 and the 1940, and probably in 1938 Bubbles was converted to the shooting brake we see today. No one (except maybe Bubbles) knows for certain where or when the work was done. Estate conversions were common at the time, but most of the work on Bubbles remains truly unique. For example, most converted estates were done in wood, but



metal was used throughout Bubbles' body. The tall roofline was (and still is) one of a kind.

Bubbles emerged from the conversion process as the consummate vehicle for hunting. Access to the rear section was facilitated by a tall rear door and a folding step. Inside the rear was a pair of benches, enabling six to eight hunters to travel in relative comfort. Across the raised face of the rear section

as a large window, enabling spotters to look for game. The large windows on both sides, much like the windows on passenger trains, could be lowered for ventilation, even to allow shooting from inside the car. Storage compartments for guns were stashed under the front seats. The front and rear bumpers had holes at each end, that poles could be inserted at the four corners of the car. The poles supported a large awning, capable of shielding Bubbles from the sun and the rain.

When the conversion was finally completed, the reasoning behind Bubbles' unique configuration was revealed. The largest and most fierce animals to walk the earth were in Africa. Bubbles was bound for Rhodesia.

Life in Rhodesia, both Northern and Southern, could be harsh. Roads into the interior were little more than dirt paths. During the rainy season (November to April) the roads could become impassable oceans of mud. At the beginning of the dry season (April to July) the roads could turn into adventuresome mazes of rutted potholes. And, later in the dry season, the roads could supply enough dust to make the plumes from moving vehicles visible from great distances. There are specific records of Bubbles' hunting exploits in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, although it's very likely that the car is used for hunting grazing animals, such as zebra, antelope and waterbuck. It's also likely that Bubbles transported hunters to areas where they dismounted and proceeded on foot in search of more dangerous and elusive game, such as lions, leopards, crocodiles, buffalo and black rhinoceros.



THE WAR YEARS
Bubbles survived the rigors of Africa and arrived in Europe sometime immediately before or soon after the beginning of World War II. The car's owners during the war years are unknown, but Bubbles is endowed with a consistent and longstanding oral history of having been captured by the Germans and pressed into service as a staff car (or, more likely, a recreational vehicle) for officers of the Wehrmacht.

Later, Bubbles was reputed to have been discovered, along with other hastily abandoned "booty," in a warehouse behind an accordion factory in Torgau, Germany. Such a discovery would have immediately preceded the "link up" of invading American and Russian soldiers, and the timing would have been critical. Had the Americans failed to arrive before the Russians, Bubbles might have ended up as the star attraction for target practice. Fortunately, however, Bubbles came to the attention of American liberators and the word must have spread, since the car was acquired and brought to America by Mr. P.K. Wrigley, of chewing gum fame.

PLAY BALL!

The Wrigley family owned most of Santa Catalina Island in California, which became Bubbles' new home. Despite some speculation that Bubbles was acquired primarily for hunting, it's likely that Bubbles performed a variety of tasks associated with hospitality and husbandry. P.K. Wrigley was a noted car collector, with several fine Duesenbergs, and Bubbles was certainly an interesting addition to his collection.

The Wrigley's initiated development of Catalina Island, including the active



promotion of tourism. They also had an abiding interest in conserving and preserving the island's flora and fauna. For example, under the stewardship of the Wrigleys, the island became home to a herd of approximately 150 American Bison, generated from 14 animals left behind by a film crew in 1924. If Bubbles' sojourn on Catalina resulted in less frequent and less rambunctious opportunities for hunting, a new exercise in sportsmanship was provided. The Wrigley family owned the Chicago Cubs baseball team and, throughout most of the 1940s and early 1950s, Catalina was the site of the team's spring training facility. P.K. Wrigley constructed a stadium on Catalina that had precisely the same playing field dimensions as Wrigley Field in Chicago.

Teams from both the National and American Leagues came to play pre-season exhibition games at the Cubs' stadium on Catalina. Like all visitors, the ball players arrived by boat or airplane. Given Bubbles' sturdy and commodious construction, it's likely that many players, including some of the greatest players in the history of baseball, were transported to and from their lodgings, and around the island. For some young players, it may have been their first ride in a Rolls-Royce. For some older players, it may have been their last.

Bubbles was later purchased by Edwin B. Stanton, a Los Angeles oilman who owned 90% of Santa Cruz Island. For nearly fifty years, from 1937 through 1987, the Stanton family operated a cattle ranch on the island. It's likely that Bubbles' customary activities with the Stantons on Santa Cruz were similar to those with the Wrigleys on Catalina, the main difference being more cattle and fewer ball players. Also, there were several hunting lodges on the island, although they were not operated by the Stanton family and had no connection with the Stanton ranch.

Hunters came to Santa Cruz in search of feral pigs. And, while Bubbles had no connection to hunting activities on properties apart from the Stanton ranch, it's quite possible that the Stantons or their guests may have, on occasion, loaded up Bubbles and gone out to plunk a few wild porkers. In any event, Bubbles was gone by 1987, when the Stanton family transferred most of the ranch property to The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. National Park Service.

RESCUE AND RESTORATION

Bubbles then passed through the hands of two other collectors in California until the 1990s, when acquired by new owners on the East Coast. By the early 21st century Bubbles was equipped as a mobile cocktail lounge and called "The Chitty Brake." Perhaps it was time for a rescue.

Whether needed or not, rescue came in 2004 when John Mayhew purchased Bubbles from Hyman Ltd. Bubbles arrived in England in June of 2004. The windscreen wipers were missing and there were dents, dings, scratches, and cracks. Still, for the first time in over in over sixty years Bubbles was home. Indeed, it was at this auspicious moment that the car was given its name. As Mayhew describes it, "We named him 'Bubbles' in view of the Wrigley chewing gum connection."

Since 2004, several notable automotive experts have participated in Bubbles' restoration and care. For example, the resplendent paint combination of Olive Green over Old English White is the work of the Carrosserie Company. When in London, Bubbles frequently resides with Frank Dale & Stepsons. The car has appeared at numerous shows and functions in Great Britain and continental Europe.

Despite a regimen of loving care, Bubbles is far from being a "trailer queen." Rolls-Royce cars are made to be needed and used. As previously noted, Bubbles provides yeoman service as the intriguing "mascot" for Rules Restaurant. And, during the hunting season, Bubbles transports guests from the local train station to the Lartington estate. But, best of all, Bubbles still works as a shooting brake. As John Mayhew has said, "I'm not too interested in making ... [Bubbles] too nice to get dirty." ■

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