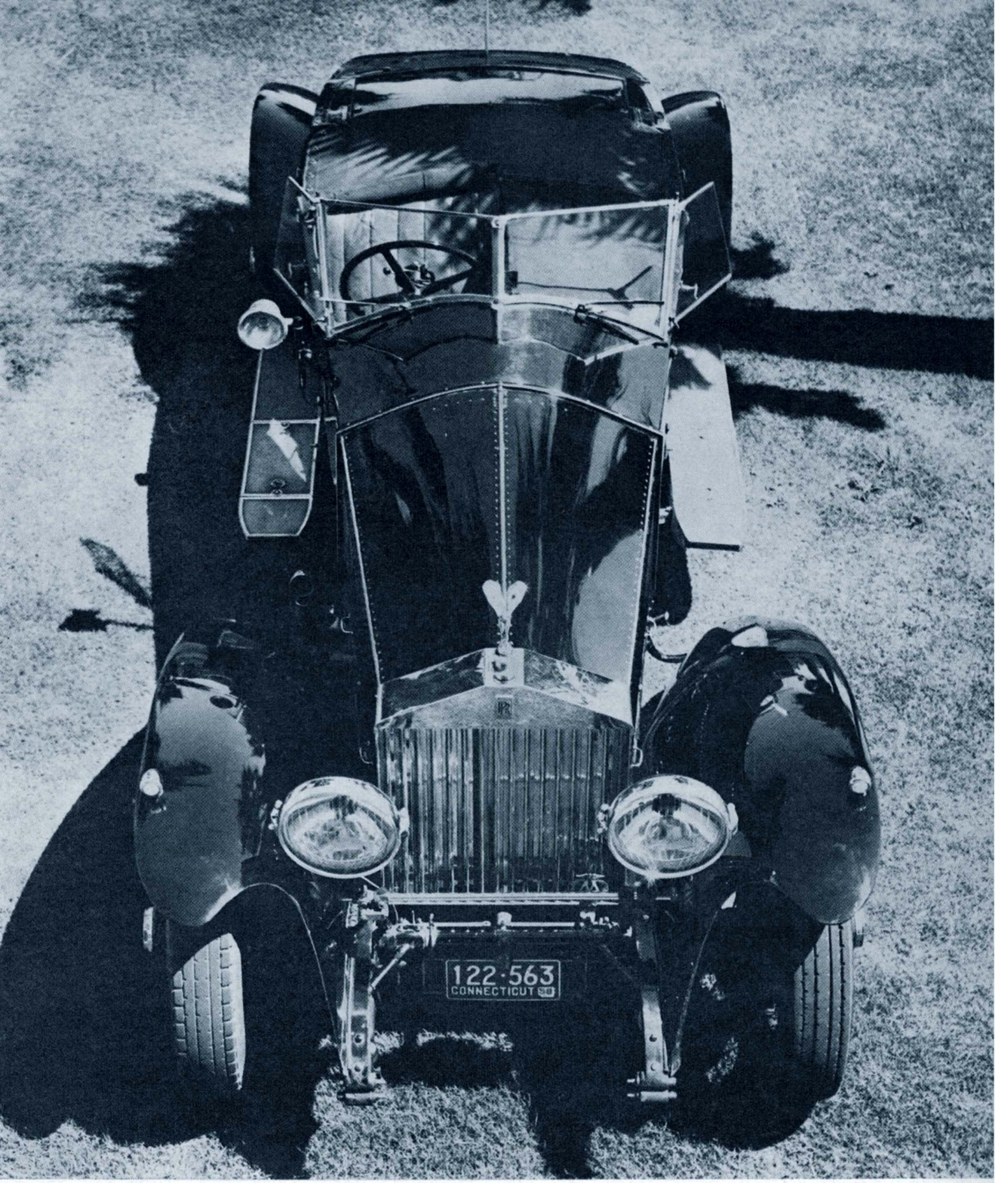


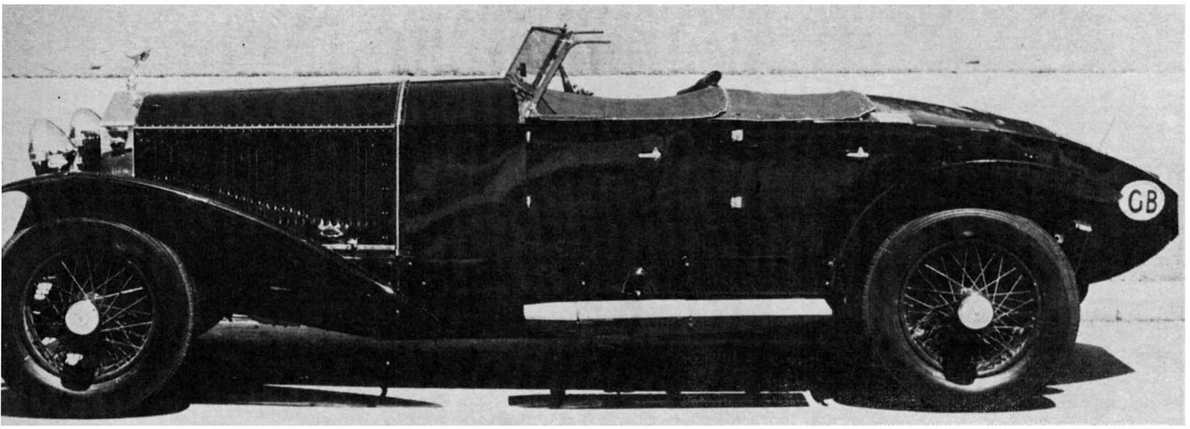
SALON

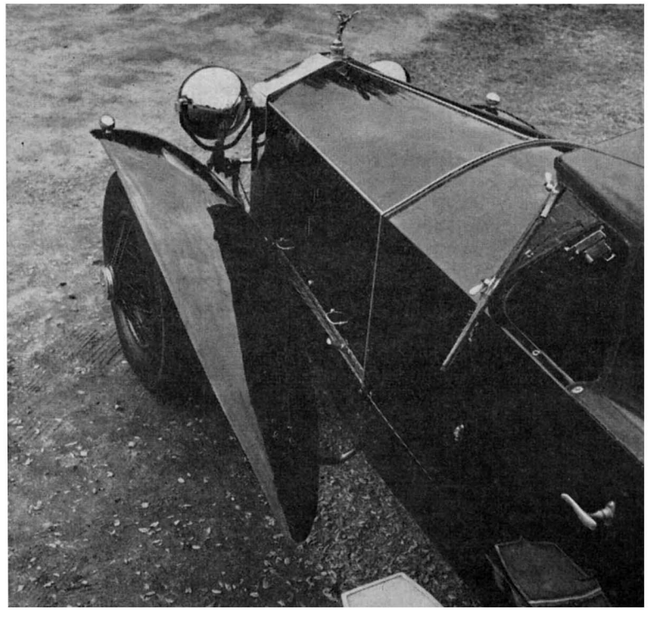
The "New Phantom"

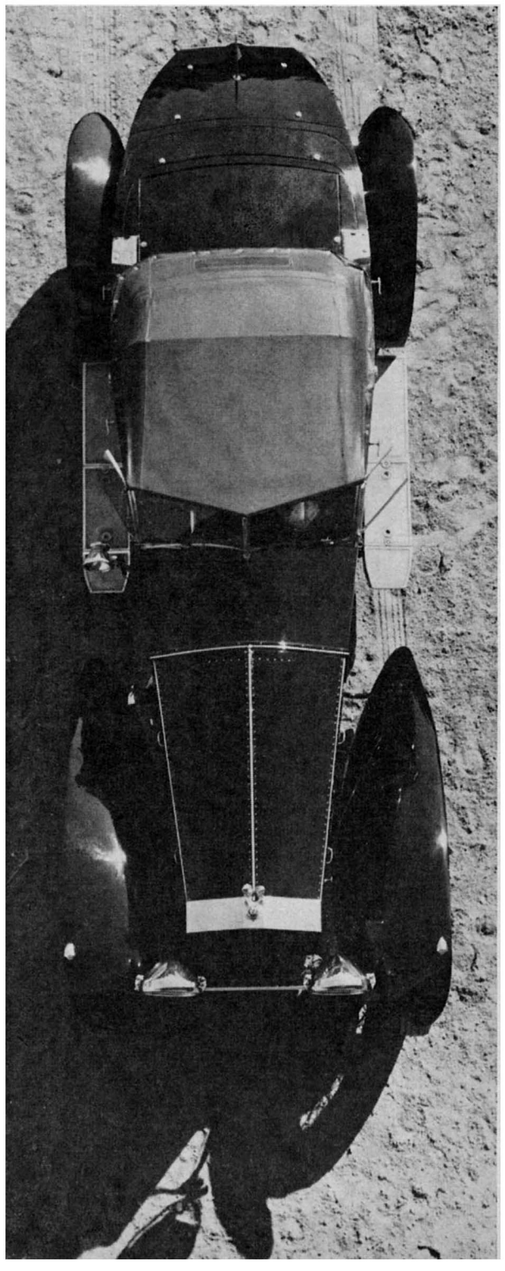
Thirty-two years later, it submitted happily to a complete road test

BY IAN GRAHAM

PHOTOGRAPHY: POOLE, PARKHURST, GRAHAM







The astonishing expanses of the Phantom I's curious Barker body look even greater when the tiny "hood" is raised over the front compartment. After nearly 200,000 miles of daily service, the phaeton bears honorable battle scars that would disqualify it from any concours where character was not all-important. That "radio aerial" on the rear deck is instead a staff for a yacht club flag. It is difficult to compare this experimental car with the standard models of the period because of such features as the phaeton's V windshield and relative lowness. It hardly seems obsolete even with 21-inch tires and without independent front suspension.

In October 1926 the "New Phantom" was announced by Rolls-Royce, 19 years after its predecessor the Silver Ghost went into production. The overhead-valve engine was entirely new and able to deliver perhaps 25% more power, while servo-assisted four-wheel brakes would match the higher speed. Yet the old Ghost was not laid; the new car steered with the same small, fat wheel covered in brownish hard rubber, the drive was still through a gigantic torque tube "sewn" to the rear axle with innumerable bolts, and the body rested on this axle through cantilever springs.

Robust and powerful this car certainly was, yet it somehow lacks the charm of the Ghost, and of its successor the Phantom II. Nevertheless a large number are still to be found in the U.S. (most of them produced at the Springfield, Mass., factory) while in England there must be at least a hundred in daily use as hearses.

The car featured here, which has also been in regular use throughout its life except during the war years, was not a production car, but one of those retained by the company as a test bed for new features. The chassis number is 16-EX, and the engine parts bear various experimental numbers.

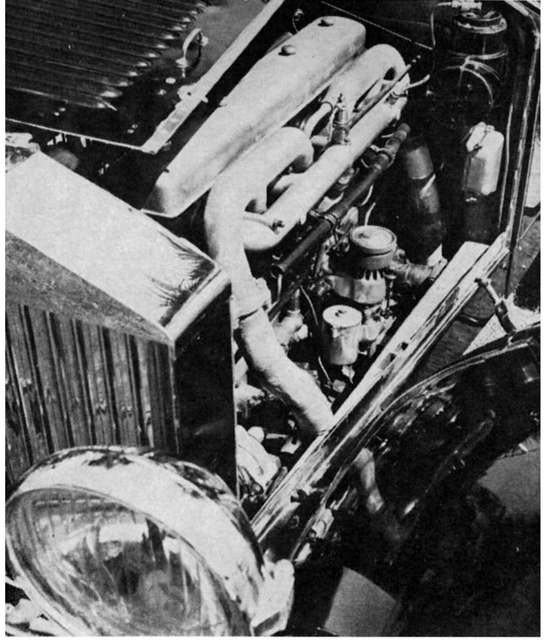
The body, built by Barker but obviously derived from Delage and Voisin designs, might also appear to be experimental—a sort of stylist's dream, unhampered by tiresome considerations of luggage space, ease of entry, or of making tight the many hinged panels in the deck which conceal spare wheel, top and rear seats.

Apparently three cars were built, with bodies differing only in trifling details. An old photograph of one with side ventilators (lacking in my car) appeared in Road and Track in August 1953.

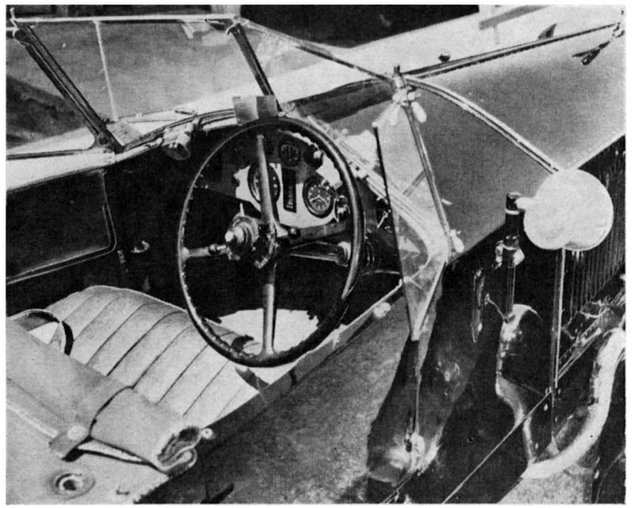
With peacock blue sides, polished aluminum fenders, rear deck and hood top, and aluminum discs over the wire wheels, my car must have been a wonderful sight in the Twenties. It sped past other cars laboring along the highway with only the noise of air rushing into its carburetor (silent tires without cross-cuts were used).

During its first year with the company it was taken to Venice for the Schneider Trophy races as a staff car, and was afterwards loaned to Lawrence of Arabia to tear about France in; this I learned when the car was spotted one day in the Rolls-Royce service department in London by the engineer who had taken it to Venice. Also during this period it was fitted with the aluminum head and recessed radiator shutters found on later production cars, as well as one or two excrescences which have no purpose now.

The first private owner was a Mr. Kruse; next, in 1935, was Sir Heneage Ogilvie, the surgeon. Soon afterwards, Sir Heneage wrote me, a "damned fool cyclist" made him take to the hedge, damaging the wheels, midship section and steering wheel, and, more important, one of the surgeon's hands. Some of the resulting $30,000 damages went into repairing the car, and it was at this time that it was painted black and acquired a Phantom II steering wheel and a jackstaff on the rear deck, for the owner was an enthusiastic



The monster stroke (5.50 inches) gives such quantities of low-speed torque that acceleration in 4th gear is smooth from 10 miles per hour up. The driver's door conceals the right-hand gearshift lever.



sailor and liked to fly the burgee of whichever yacht club he was on his way to visit.

Bought after the war by Henry Peat, the car used to take him up to Scotland each year and to his office in London on most days, when it would be parked across the street from my apartment. It received many covetous glances from my direction, and then I heard he would sell it!

As I own no modern car, the odometer has been busy, particularly so on two trips we did together. One was through Germany to the south of Italy and back through France. Visiting the Daimler-Benz museum in Stuttgart on the way, I was invited by an official to bring my car up in the elevator. Then the director came in; he peered at the car, and all he said was "Oh yes, Rolls-Royce; we know that make."

In Italy the reception was tumultuous, and in trying to thread my way through Amalfi during their annual *festa* I had a hard time repelling boarders. At one time there were 11 boys on running boards, fenders and tail, and the marks of their shoes remain on the paint to this day. Fortunately the aluminum was not dented. But in one respect the Italians were always disappointed: they would wait by the car to hear it start, and when it did, their faces fell: *"E bellissima, ma non si sente"*—you can't hear it. This was the moment to open the cut-out.

The mechanical trouble on this tour amounted to a broken bolt in a door latch. I do not carry any spare parts; just a few tools and a kit of Araldite epoxy resin and hardener which is invaluable for small bodywork repairs. I have used it very successfully to stop the leak from an oil line worn through by rubbing on something, and to fashion a new generator brush holder and repair the high-tension slip-ring cheeks of the magneto when they were burned through by the sparks tracking along the dirty surface. This happened one night in upstate New York. There was a nasty smell, but no interruption of the journey. We continued on coil ignition alone.

My latest tour, 10,000 miles wandering through the Eastern United States, down through Mexico City and then to Los Angeles, was completely free of mechanical trouble although I did have a fright one day after a picnic lunch in Louisiana, when horrid noises came from the engine on starting up. Putting my ear to the bonnet I could hear heavy pieces of metal clashing together. So this was the end of the trip, I thought, in an isolated part of the bayou country—but the noise was quickly traced to chattering gears in the generator drive, caused by a sticking brush. Once again, as with the magneto—poor maintenance on my part.

When I first had the car, oil consumption was very high until new compression rings and Duraflex scraper rings were installed. Now, 25,000 miles later, the consumption is still low, nearly 1500 miles per quart.

More oil is consumed—and replaced with infinitely greater trouble—in the many chassis lubrication points, some of which are located with devilish ingenuity so as to be almost inaccessible. This is the great curse of this car. Yet one cannot really regret the many grimy hours spent with the oil gun; my car is a delight every morning, starting instantly in any weather, never temperamental, pulling quietly up Mexican mountains on 65-octane gas or sweeping past cars 30 years younger stalled at the roadside with vapor lock—or merely standing across the street like a big cat at rest, full of the suggestion of power, and full of a beauty that has not dimmed for me after years of fond contemplation.

Ed. Note: Since Ian Graham wrote his tale of love and we actually tested his car (next page), it has become the property of Leon Clark, who plays end for the Los Angeles Rams.

ROLLS PHANTOM I

Ed. Note: Our classic car road tests are usually a synthesis of material published when the car was new, but this is an actual test made by R&T on the Salon car.

JULY 1958. It would be nice to say that Ian Graham's offer of his 1927 Rolls for test was the "opportunity of a lifetime" but it wouldn't quite be true, because Phil Hill wanted us to do similarly with his magnificent 1931 Pierce-Arrow (Road & Track, April 1955). However, the opportunity to test drive a rare and unusual classic doesn't come every day—or even every year—and when the Barker-bodied torpedo phaeton pulled up in front of our offices, our test crew literally dropped everything and off we went.

In assessing the report on this car, readers should note both its age (32 years) and the mileage (in excess of 180,000 miles). Furthermore, the engine had not been specially tuned in any way, and it had just completed a tour to California from New York via Mexico City!

The internal body width of the torpedo is narrow by modern standards (though quite adequate for two) and even though this was considered a very low sporting-type body in its day, one certainly gets an impression of sitting quite high up. This gives an excellent view of the road and a feeling of great security. With right-hand steering the right-hand gear control lever is a boon for such as us, who are not ambidextrous. The clutch action is light, with a rather long pedal travel, and upward gear changes proved to be very simple if a slight pause was allowed before a firm and positive gear lever movement was made. The gears, incidentally, are not as quiet as we had been led to hope for after reading R-R literature of that era.

You can feel 6 huge cylinders working under the hood, but for all that the powerplant is remarkably smooth and quiet. Most outstanding, it has tremendous torque at very low revolutions per minute. In fact, the gears are almost superfluous if you aren't in a hurry.

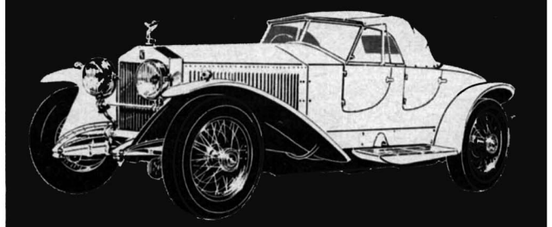
On the open road the engine feels very comfortable at a steady 60 mph (only 2180 rpm), but we were somewhat shocked at the amount of front-end flexing and moderate shake. Perhaps it is more noticeable because of the high seats and long expanse of automobile located out in front. Here again, we must stop and remember: in 1927, Rolls-Royce had used four wheel brakes for only three years, the rear springs were still cantilever types, and independent suspension with an X-type frame was still 11 years away.

As for the actual performance tests, the famous R-R clutch is supposed to be extremely durable. The catalog said "indestructible even by continued slipping." However, this one allowed us only one good standing ¼ mile check (also equivalent to 0 to 60 mph in 24.0 seconds), and on subsequent checks it slipped rather badly after each upshift (remember the 180,000 miles). Once the clutch was "home," it held well enough for the Tapley readings and the high-speed runs. We rate the top-speed potential as an honest 80; perhaps the car would do a little better than that when new. Our best time, as shown, was equivalent to 77.1 mph with the needle showing 78 mph.

We made no mileage checks, but 10 to 12 miles per gallon is the usual range in traffic and on the highway. Graham reported that he frequently achieved as much as 16 mpg on long trips by the expedient of accelerating to 65 mph, releasing the clutch, and coasting down to about 50 mph before repeating the process. This technique certainly takes advantage of the considerable inertia available (2.5 tons), but may also account for the clutch trouble we encountered.

In spite of rather harsh treatment for such a fine old lady, she came through none the worse for wear. Treated with proper respect, we believe she's good for another 31 years of faithful service.

ROAD & TRACK CLASSIC TEST 27



ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM I

SPECIFICATIONS

List price (1927)	$14,000
Curb weight	4730
Test weight	4950
distribution, %	47/53
Dimensions, length	191
width	72
height	60
Wheelbase	144
Tread, f and r	56
Tire size	7.00-21
Brake lining area	na
Steering, turns	2.5
turning circle	49
Engine type	6 cyl, ohv
Bore & stroke	4.25 x 5.50
Displacement, cu in	467.7
cc	7668
Compression ratio	4.50
Bhp @ rpm (est)	107 @ 2750
equivalent mph	75.7
Torque, lb-ft (est)	320 @ 1200
equivalent mph	33.0

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4th), mph	80.0
best timed run	77.1
3rd (2750)	51
2nd (2750)	34
1st (2750)	22

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg	10/12

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec	6.5
0-40 mph	10.9
0-50 mph	16.8
0-60 mph	24.0
0-70 mph	35.8
0-80 mph	
0-90 mph	
0-100 mph	
Standing ¼ mile	24.0
speed at end, mph	60

GEAR RATIOS

O/d (n.a.), overall	
4th (1.00)	3.72
3rd (1.48)	5.52
2nd (2.21)	8.25
1st (3.40)	12.6

TAPLEY DATA

4th, lb/ton @ mph	185 @ 32
3rd	275 @ 23
2nd	375 @ 18
1st	450 @ 12
Total drag at 60 mph, lb	225

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt)	46.3
Cu ft/ton mile	119
Mph/1000 rpm (4th)	27.5
Engine revs/mile	2180
Piston travel, ft/mile	2000
Rpm @ 2500 ft/min	2725
equivalent mph	75.0
R&T wear index	43.6

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph	actual 32.5
40 mph	40.0
50 mph	48.1
60 mph	57.2
70 mph	68.1
80 mph	
90 mph	
100 mph