

# Wrapped Up in Rapson's Inventions

## Part I

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*Puncture-proof tires, self-cleaning spark plugs, engine-powered permanent lifting jacks, dipping headlamps, easy-winding tops—who wouldn't have welcomed the motoring inventions of Frederick Lionel Rapson? His pursuit of driver convenience led to forty-two British (and many overseas) patents as well as endless thoughtful details on the cars he fitted out. Yet his was a short life with limited commercial success. He deserved better but did not achieve the wider public acceptance that would have brought him fortune rather than notoriety alone.*

### Early Life and Into the Army

Rapson was born as Frederick Eyers on April 21, 1888 at Ryde on the Isle of Wight, the eighth child of William Pomeroy Eyers (1832–1905, a blacksmith) and Mary Jane Eyers (née Rapson, 1842–1915, a laundress). His siblings were all born between 1863–1884 but, curiously, his parents married only in 1880 after the birth of their sixth child. His father was not recorded living with his family in any of the censuses from 1861 and presumably spent much time away from home. In 1891 Frederick was living at 18 School Street in Ryde with his mother and two sisters, Ethel and Rose, but from March 27, 1901 and now almost 13 years old he was a resident at Leopold House, 199 Burdett Road in east London. This was a Dr. Barnardo's home for orphaned and disadvantaged boys aged between about 10–13 years that operated here from 1883–1912. The home provided school training only, so in March 1902 he was moved on to the main Stepney home where practical skills were taught. Rapson later recorded his early experiences, such as becoming familiar with the internal combustion engine aged 11, and driving a Panhard at 14, but it must be doubtful that the latter at least was whilst at Dr. Barnardo's.

The story of how Frederick came to be at Dr. Barnardo's makes sad reading. An inspector from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children found his Ryde home to be "a den of iniquity of the vilest kind" and noted that his mother was drunk and that both she and Frederick had been in the Parkhurst workhouse. His mother could not find work and lived

off the immoral earnings of two of her daughters, with Frederick forced to act as lookout for policemen. The sisters' heavy drinking led to constant rows. The father, who was described as similarly drunken, worthless and immoral, had been charged with criminal assault on one of his daughters about six years earlier. Although acquitted for lack of evidence, his guilt was generally believed and he had moved out of the family home. Frederick was healthy and intelligent and doing well at school but with such an unhappy background it is clear his chances in life were limited. Frederick would have seized any chance to further himself. His mother at first refused to let him go but eventually consented. In the circumstances, his subsequent achievements earn him the highest credit.

In December 1901 Dr. Barnardo's declined a request from one of Frederick's other married sisters, Mary Jane, to allow him to have Christmas with her in Dorset. Frederick perhaps missed some of his family or could not accept the regime in his new home because on June 8, 1902 he absconded. After ten days Dr. Barnardo's ceased to search for him. It is from this period that Frederick might have covered his tracks by using his mother's maiden name, Rapson. (There can be no doubt that Frederick Eyers and Frederick

Rapson are one and the same. Personal and family details recorded for Eyers by Barnardo's match those in the army record of Rapson.)

So what did the boy do next? A clue emerges from a later account of his early achievements. Here he claimed that he had worked in the engine room of the Union Castle liner *The Scot*, aged 10. The quoted age must be an error because he was still at school then but this work might have been around 1902, when he



Frederick Lionel Rapson (1888–1933)

*Frederick Eyers aged almost 13 when received at the Dr. Barnardo's Home (his name misspelled).*



Courtesy of Barnardo's, copyright Barnardo's

was 14. It might not be a coincidence that at about this time his brother Harry was working as a steward on another ship of the same line, the *Kildonan Castle*. A further claim made by Rapson was that he had completed a three-year apprenticeship at an "Allsop's garage, London" (presumably after he had absconded from Dr. Barnardo's). This was actually E. & W. Allsop at Halfway Garages, Walton on Thames (later to become Rapson tire agents). Rapson later stated, in a 1923 article, that he had been driving for 22 years. This would place his first motoring experience in 1902. Furthermore, Rapson declared in 1917 that in 1902 he had even discussed car jack designs with the Hon. C.S. Rolls (1877–1910), the Panhard agent, who thought a system of sprags could be used to raise cars. (Rapson's first jack invention was based on powered sprags.) Rolls had only just begun his business at Lillie Hall in west London. Rolls's family supported various charities so it is possible man and boy met that way. Was this how Rapson got to drive a Panhard?

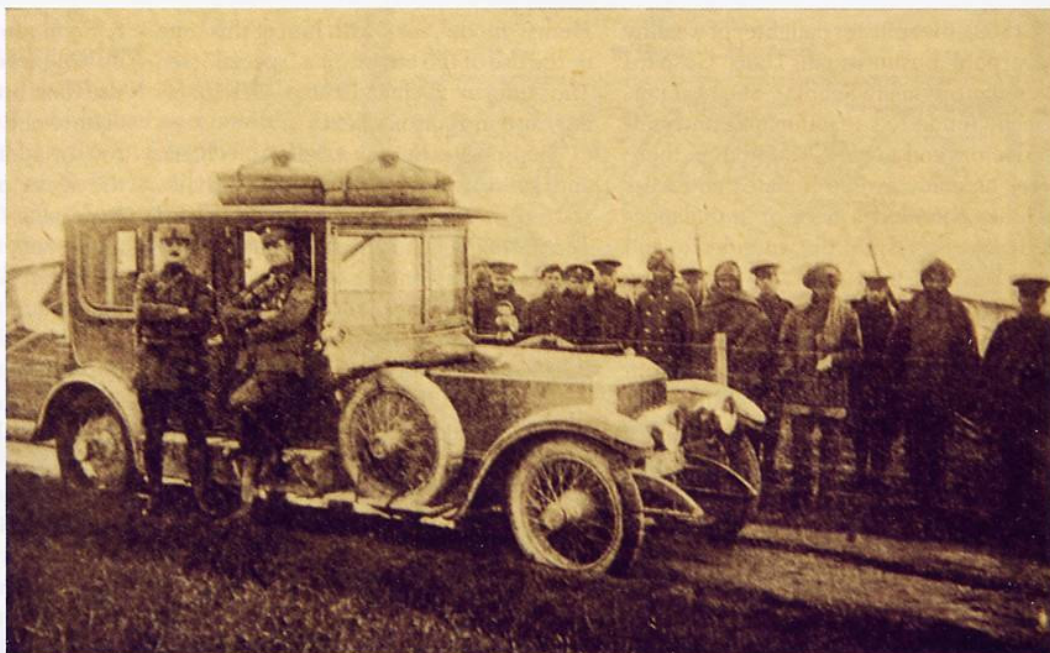


Rapson's father died in February 1905 in Mitcham, Surrey, and by December that year his widow had moved to Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex. Frederick joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Coldstream Guards the same month, signing up using his mother's maiden name and describing his previous occupation as "general labourer." The Army probably assisted him with education because he sat for two education certificates in 1906 and became a clerk. He was discharged as medically unfit in September 1907 with the rank of Lance Corporal and moved to 16 Finborough Road in Tooting. He was described as 5.9" tall, fair with blue-grey eyes and light brown hair, a "good clerk . . . well-educated and intelligent man."

It was in 1908, Rapson claimed, that he became the engineer-in-charge of royal cars at Kensington Palace, taking part in the 1911 coronation procession and driving H.R.H. The Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll (a daughter of Queen Victoria), until the outbreak of WW I in 1914. He taught other royal coachmen how to drive cars and became acquainted with younger members of the Royal Household. In addition, in 1912 it seems that he demonstrated Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost cars for that company's Spanish agent Marquis Don Carlos de Salamanca.

During this period Frederick had married Rose Playle (1890–1976) in Walthamstow, London, in September 1910. Their marriage certificate records his father's name as William Rapson. (This was probably done for reasons of social propriety. Frederick's change of name must have been known to his family as his sister Ethel, and her husband, were witnesses at the wedding.) The first of their two children, Frederick, was born on June 28, 1911 at the family's home at 27 Boundary Road, Leyton, London.

On September 5, 1914, shortly after the outbreak of war, he signed up at the Army Service Corps' Motor Transport Depot in Aldershot and was given the rank of acting Sergeant. In this period he



1914 Silver Ghost 38MA Holmes limousine at the Western Front. Rapson by the front door with Count Lafitte. Note the rifles mounted on the side spare wheels.

was living at 20 Alderney Street in Pimlico, central London and not in Palace staff quarters. From October 2<sup>nd</sup> he served in France as a driver in the King's Messenger Service (K.M.S.) and was in charge of all the Rolls-Royce staff cars given or loaned by their owners for the war effort. He drove with a French interpreter, Count Maurice le Lafitte who later lost his life to an aerial bomb. Rapson was at the front long enough to earn the so-called "Mons" Star campaign medal. One of Rapson's mounts was a 1914 Silver Ghost, chassis 38MA, a Holmes limousine carrying six spare wheels. Frequent wheel changing under extreme conditions must have turned his mind towards better jacking systems.

Rapson recorded that he was injured on March 12, 1915 by a blow to the head from a rifle butt (circumstances not explained). As a consequence, he was adversely affected by the concussion of heavy artillery and, after a spell in hospital at St. Omer in France, he was transferred to the Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich. When sufficiently recovered he declined a discharge but remained at the barracks for a while as a drill instructor.

At his own request and with the recommendation of Lord Ilchester of the K.M.S., he was discharged "Free" to enable him to join the Mechanical Transport Division of the Union Defence Force in South Africa. He set sail for the Cape on May 20, 1915 but



Rapson in the army uniform of the South African Infantry.

not long after his arrival misfortune struck again. Rapson wrote later that he was "... invalided suffering from fits brought on by the heat in Africa acting on the clot of blood in my head. . . ." He was repatriated from the Wynberg Military Hospital in Cape Town on July 17 when hostilities ended in southern Africa and was transferred to Arrowe Hall in Birkenhead, near Liverpool.

Arrowe Hall had been purchased and converted at her own expense into an Auxiliary Military Hospital in November 1914 by Miss Dora Susan Cecilia Schintz



(b. 1869), the spinster daughter of wealthy Liverpool businessman Hans Gaspard Schintz (originally Schinz). She also personally funded its maintenance and staff of doctors and nurses. At one time there were as many as 300 inmates and Miss Schintz provided a fleet of ambulances and cars to transport the wounded to and from the hospital.

Miss Schintz was an extremely wealthy lady. Her Swiss-born father was a millionaire who lived in Liverpool from the 1860s and traded there as Reyher & Schintz. He became a British subject in 1875. His wealth came from saltpeter mined in northern Chile by his company, the Tamarugal Nitrates Co., and earned him the epithet "The Nitrate King." When he died in 1912 Miss Schintz inherited a share of his considerable fortune, including his stake in the Société de Produits Chimiques et Engrais d'Auby in France (the shares later being sold cheaply). She owned the vast "Thickthorn" estate near Kenilworth in Warwickshire, which her father had purchased for her in 1906, and where she ran a stud for hackney horses. She also owned an Argentinian ranch near Buenos Aires. Rapson was now associated with considerable wealth and Miss Schintz was to give him the financial support he needed for a new life in business.



Miss Schintz around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Courtesy of the Collenette family

Henry" model, seen with him at this time or the use of the engine in a "special" (see *The Autocar* 29 Jan. 1921 p. 211 for its later use in Rapson's fleet).

Rapson was by now a skilled mechanic and keen inventor. From 1917 articles started to appear in *The Autocar* (and *The Motor* which called him the "young Edison of the motor world") showing his inventions for such devices as dipping headlamps and powered car jacks. By 1918 he had a team of men working under him on the fleet of cars at Childwall Hall. A biographical article written in 1926 claimed he was kind and generous, quick-thinking, musical, and a first-class athlete. These were probably the attractive qualities that won him Miss Schintz's patronage. He became known to some as "Bulldog" Rapson, because he was so tenacious.

The Rapsons had set up home at "Brightside," Green Lane, Waverley in the West Derby area of Liverpool after the war and in early 1919 their second son, Lionel, was born there on February

6. Soon afterwards Rapson and his family followed Miss Schintz south when she took up residence in her new home, "Hurtwood Edge" near Cranleigh in Surrey. In addition, Miss Schintz soon took the lease on the extensive "Ottershaw Park" near Chertsey and finally purchased the estate in September 1921. Around October 1921 Rapson bought a large house at 2 Acacia Road in fashionable St. John's Wood, London. Here Rose and the children were installed, with a nanny, whilst Rapson only used the home for his days in London on business. Freddie attended nearby Arnold House school (as later did Lionel) and University College, London. Rapson, meanwhile, ran his infant business life from the workshops in The Bothy behind the Ottershaw mansion and had an apartment in the mansion from 1925–28. Miss Schintz's many cars, including a Lanchester, Rolls-Royces, Napier, Daimler 30 hp, Austin 20 hp and Armstrong Siddeley 30 hp were maintained and driven by Rapson and a small team of chauffeurs. It is possible Rapson engineered this move south so as to be only a few miles from Brooklands racetrack for the testing of his emerging tire designs. However, Miss Schintz claimed the move was for the sake of her ailing mother who would benefit from the "beautiful countryside of Surrey."

## Early Motor Days, and a Post-War Patron

As he came into prominence Rapson revealed in 1919 that he had been involved in preparing a Grand Prix-winning car (for whom was not stated). This cannot be proven independently and might simply mean a touring car later in private hands such as the 100 hp Benz, probably a "Prince

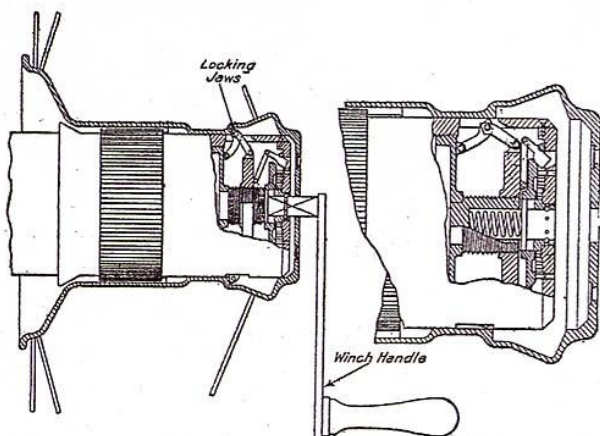


Rapson's first advertisement, in *The Motor* for 1 Jan. 1918, shows that he already had two inventions in production. It also showed his Rolls-Royce and military association. The artist was Hawley Morgan.



## Business by Patent

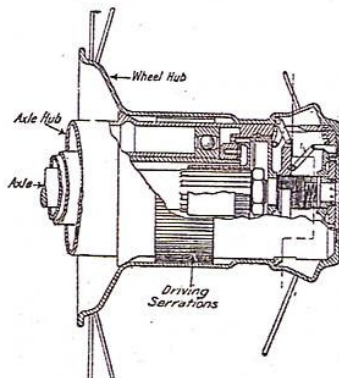
His wartime experiences on the Western front led Rapson to devise solutions to the problems he had encountered. For example, he designed special linked crutches to help soldiers who had lost the arm and leg on the same side, an idea that gained him some public credit. Motoring-related patents included permanent engine-powered (and also manual) lifting jacks, unpuncturable and/or long-lasting tires, frictionless screw threads, and miscellaneous coachwork and accessory fittings. In general his designs tended towards safety and convenience. Two curious unrelated patents concerned the manufacture of hats.



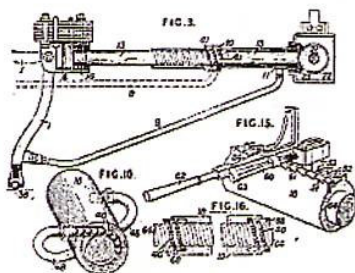
Wheel nearly in position.

Wheel unlocked.

Rapson's wheel locking system, using the same handle from the top and jack systems.



Wheel fixed in position.



Patent 116995 of July 1918 for the long-arm permanent jacks with Rapson's supposedly frictionless screw threads which were the staple in many of his patents.

DECEMBER 30, 1922.

The Garage and Motor Agent

503



In all Three Cases—Just a question of Wind!

### SOUND ADVICE ON PRESSURES.

**RAPSON TYRE USERS!** If you wish to glide don't blow your tyres up hard! The moment you do so you defeat the object of the inventor. Rapson tyres were designed to absorb road shocks, and if our recommended pressures are adhered to the riding of any car is immediately improved by at least 25 per cent. Road inequalities should be absorbed at the point of contact, viz., by the tyres. A low-pressure, shock-absorbing tyre springs every part of the chassis. It damps out vibrations, stops rattles, and adds years to the life of any car. "I would never have believed that any tyre could have improved the riding of a ROLLS-ROYCE to such an extent until I tried Rapson's." That statement was made by no less an authority than the Managing Director of Messrs. Barker and Co., Limited, the well-known Rolls-Royce coachbuilders. "You are the first tyre manufacturer in the world to recommend pressures which fulfil my requirements." This from the designer and manufacturer of the super-suspended Land Rover car. These two progressive firms represent the last word in comfort as regards body work and chassis suspension, yet both agree that Rapson tyre comfort is very necessary—even on their world-famous products.

### SOMETHING FOR NOTHING!

With every tyre sold we provide, in addition to guaranteed mileage, a magnificent shock absorber and fuel saver, free of charge! These marvellous accessories are built into every Rapson Cord tyre, and although invisible we are always ready to prove, by comparative tests on the road, that both actually exist.

### TREMENDOUS PRICE REDUCTIONS!

The world's best Cord tyre now cheaper than non-guaranteed ordinary passenger.

A FEW POPULAR SIZES FOLLOW.

(Full price list sent post free on request.)

R. E. Cord.	Guaranteed minimum mileage
800 x 150 Cover ...	10 15 9
Deflector Tube ...	2 4 6
Total	13 1 3
820 x 150 Cover ...	8 10 0
Deflector Tube ...	1 15 4
Total	9 25 4
815 x 105 Cover ...	5 3 3
Deflector Tube ...	1 10 0
Total	6 13 3
30 x 24 Cover ...	3 18 3
Deflector Tube ...	1 6 3
Total	5 4 6
710 x 90 Cover ...	3 7 0
Deflector Tube ...	1 2 8
Total	4 9 8
20 x 3 Cover ...	2 17 0
(700 x 80) Deflector Tube ...	0 18 9
Total	3 15 3

TRADERS: Handle this trouble-free tyre and sell definite mileage.

**RAPSON**  
TYRE & JACK COY. LTD.  
Head Office and Works:  
Burlington Road, New Malden, Surrey.  
London Office and Showrooms:  
477, Oxford Street, W.1.

"The Garage" Advertisements are valuable to YOU.

Although Rapson's tires were not the well-base balloon type, he recommended much lower pressures for his cord tires than beaded edge tires would normally be run at.



The latest Rapson jack which hooks on to fittings attach to the axle.

One of several Rapson jack designs, this one showing the highly regarded portable type with hook-on system to the axle.



November 2, 1921.

The Motor 77

Tyre Manufacturer by Appointment to



H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

Under R.A.C. Observation.

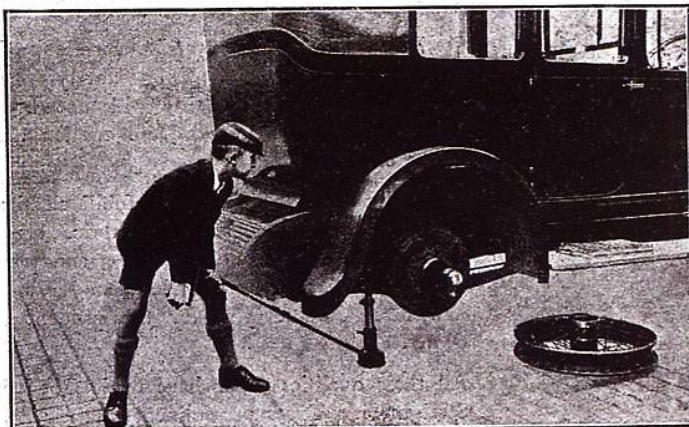
The first of the Club's New  
Official Demonstrations.

Jack Manufacturer by Appointment to



H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

Heavy Daimler Landaulette raised from the "Bare Rim" to wheel-changing clearance by a child aged ten.



"JACK"—THE GIANT LIFTER.—Under R.A.C. observation (with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales and members of his suite as interested spectators) Master Freddie Rapson, aged 10, and weighing but 53 stone, raised this very heavy Daimler with amazing ease from the bare rim sufficiently high to fit an 895 x 150 mm. oversize Rapson tyre. Later Mr. F. Lionel Rapson raised the same car by merely turning the crank with one finger, and finally, to prove the efficiency of the mechanism, he completely removed the crank and raised the car by turning the operating shaft with his bare fingers. The time taken to position the jack beneath the rear axle, without grovelling, and to raise the wheel from the bare rim to oversize tyre-changing clearance was 42 seconds! A Rolls-Royce was raised in 34 seconds; an Armstrong-Siddeley in 25 seconds, and an A.C. light car in 18 seconds. These times include positioning the jack under the rear axle (without grovelling), and lifting from the bare rim in each instance. At the end of each lift, that is, when the jack was fully extended, the various cars were shaken, but in no case was there any danger of the car toppling over, or the jack head slipping!

**ADVICE TO MOTORISTS.**—Safety First. Motorists buying new cars should insist on being supplied with a safe jack, and one that will go under with the rim bare, so that, in the event of a tyre blowing off, the "change" need cause no more trouble than lifting from an ordinary flat tyre.

**APPEAL TO CHASSIS MANUFACTURERS.**—Safety First. Study the interest of the man you sell your car to, and don't send him on the road with a jack that is not safe. We fully guarantee our Rapson Jack.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1.—To raise and safely support any weight of car.                        | 5.—To eliminate grovelling beneath the rear axle.    |
| 2.—To automatically lock itself to the axle.                             | 6.—To automatically locate to own height adjustment. |
| 3.—To provide sufficient lift from the bare rim to change any size tyre. | 7.—To raise the heaviest car with minimum effort.    |
| 4.—To eliminate the use of blocks.                                       | 8.—To be the safest jack in the world.               |

New Reduced Price List and Catalogue will be sent on application to

MOTORISTS ARE ADVISED  
TO ORDER THIS  
100 % EFFICIENT JACK  
THROUGH THEIR LOCAL  
DEALERS

Telephone - - MALDEN 1902.

**RAPSON**  
TYRE & JACK WORKS  
BURLINGTON ROAD  
NEW MALDEN  
SURREY

F. LIONEL RAPSON, Proprietor.

TRADERS ARE ADVISED  
TO GET IN TOUCH WITH  
F. LIONEL RAPSON.  
DURING THE MOTOR SHOW

Telegrams: "Rapsono, New Malden, Surrey."

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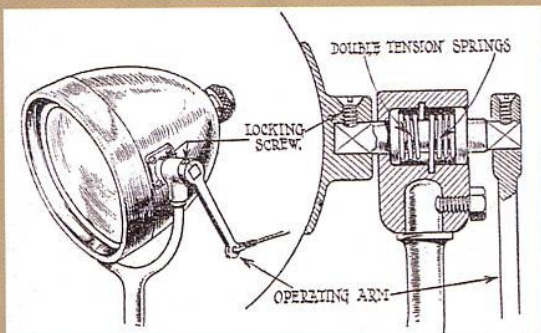
KINDLY MENTION "THE MOTOR" WHEN CORRESPONDING WITH ADVERTISERS.

Rapson's son Freddie demonstrating the jack in front of the Prince of Wales and his entourage, evidence of Rapson's useful royal connections.

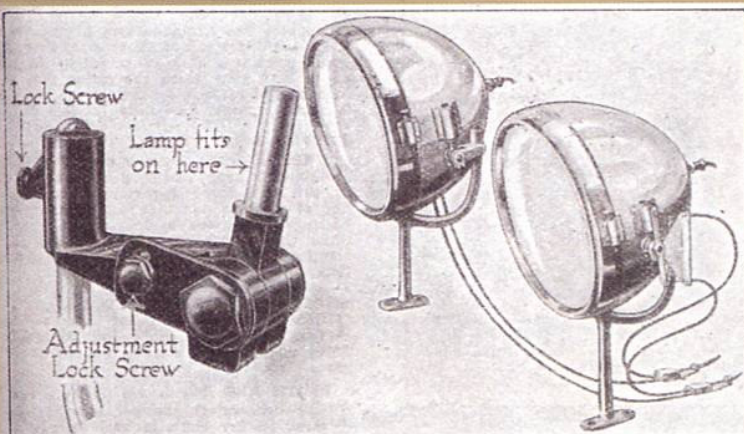


A Rapson rocking headlamp dipper on a Bentley (the mechanism, formerly cable-operated, now in one fixed position). The plate claimed 1920 patent 32500 but Rapson was not successful in protecting this device.

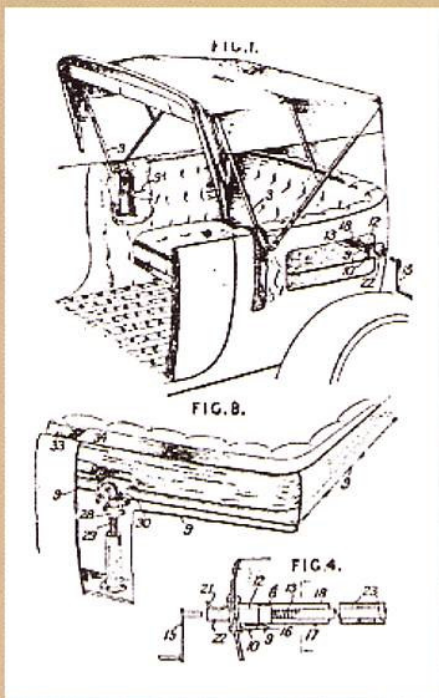
The final form of Rapson's cable-operated headlamp dipping system. The controls could be either in the steering wheel or on the dashboard.



A closeup view of the headlamp mechanism.

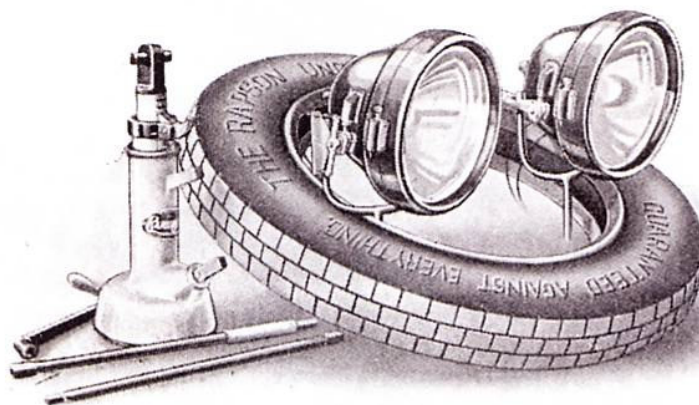




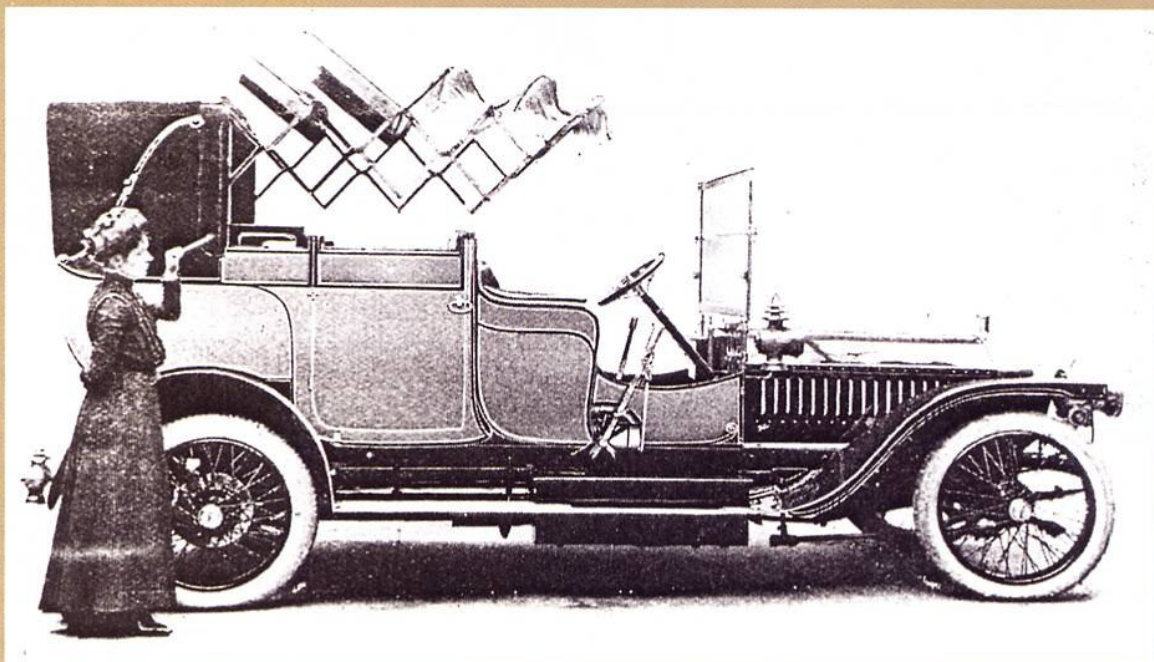
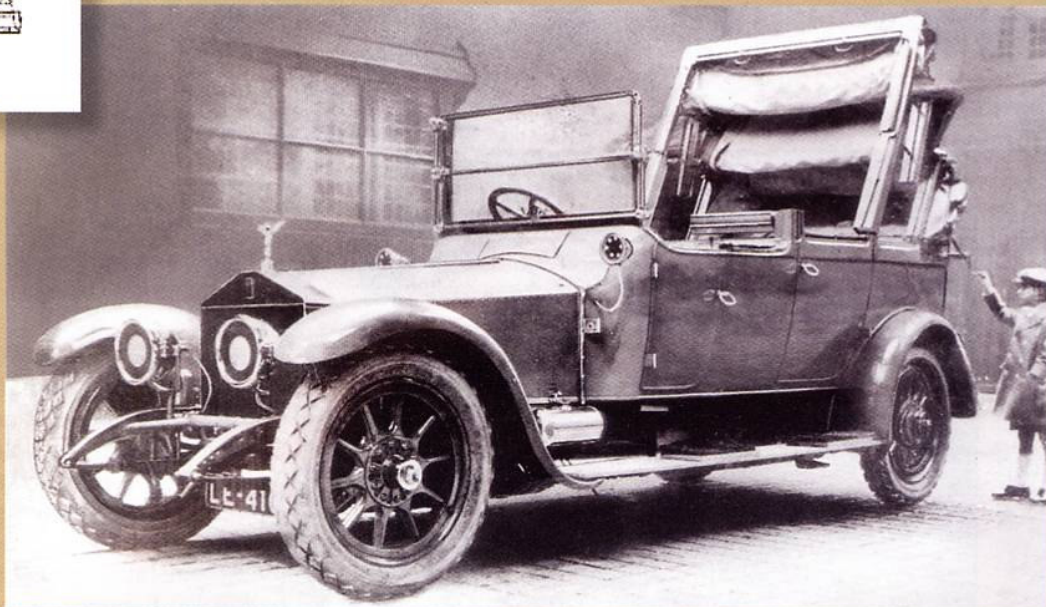


The June 1920 patent 134368 for the winding top. It is unlikely that this system opened or closed the front portion.

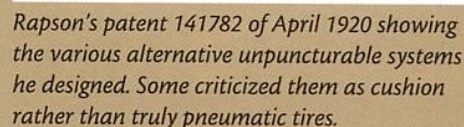
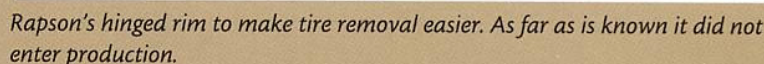
An unidentified 1911–12 pre-1900 series Silver Ghost at Childwall Hall with ca. 1918 cabriolet coachwork and carrying the registration LE4107 (that Rapson would move to other Rolls-Royces). His son Freddie is showing one of the first winding top examples. This is probably chassis 1737, formerly a Rothschild landaulette, acquired by Miss Schintz. 1737 was with Barker & Co. in December 1916. The hood is the replacement taper type used to modernize early cars. Two telltale features make Barker the likely coachbuilder: the front fender ending under the running board, and a curved recess in the B-pillar just above the rear door handle.



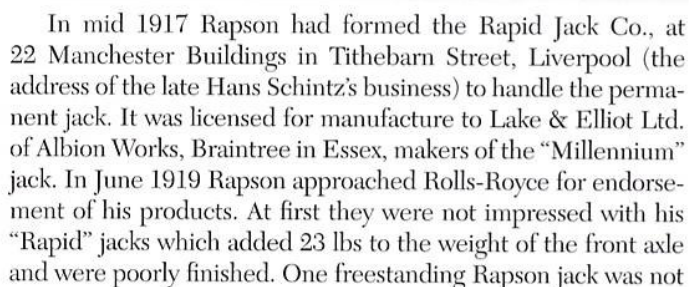
Neatly summing up his three patent strengths, these products appeared in the sumptuous advertising of 1922. A seven-page brochure on the The Rapson Super Jack later appeared and included cartoons by the celebrated H.M. Bateman (1887–1970).







*A caricature summing up the doubts in some quarters about Rapson's ability to complete a 10,000 mile test with his new tires. The artist was Alick P.F. Ritchie.*



secure enough to prevent a Rolls-Royce mechanic from shaking the car to the ground. Things later improved and in due course the jacks were accepted even on the new 20 hp though never given public Rolls-Royce approval. However, the prestigious coachbuilders Barker & Co. undertook to fit both the top system and permanent jacks to order.

As his patents accumulated, in June 1919 he formed Rapson Automobile Patents Ltd. to exploit what was claimed to be his 200 Rapson patents (and applications). He brought in A. Wilfred Oyler, the tire manufacturer, as Managing Director and Rayner Roberts as a director. Capital was set at £150,000. Motoring pioneer S.F. Edge announced he would join as Chairman if the company's flotation was successful (and technically it was by December 1919 but only through Miss Schintz's share). The business was based at Oyler's address, 35 New Cavendish Street, London W.1. (Rayner Roberts had written about Rapson, his tires and other inventions, in *The Autocar* 22 March 1919 so he might have been a "front" for Rapson in these early stages of publicity.) A Rapson letter in *The Autocar* 20 September 1919 claimed that he had been inventing for seventeen years and, in a weary tone, implied it was now time to pass on his inventions.

The early post-1918 years saw a big growth in motoring and an endless fascination for gadgets and accessories, many of them spurious, to make motoring more reliable. Rapson now had Oyster's making his new tires at their Skew works and, after an agreement on January 1, 1920, North British Rubber Co. to distribute them. From 1920–24 Rapson's companies exhibited at Olympia.





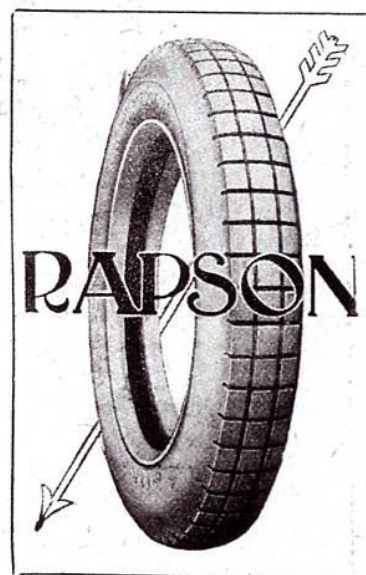
**FACTORIES:**  
LONDON  
and  
Richmond-on-Thames.

**OYLER'S**

**TYRE  
MANUFACTURERS**

35, New Cavendish Street,  
Great Portland Street, W.1.

**ALL BRITISH  
ALL RUBBER**



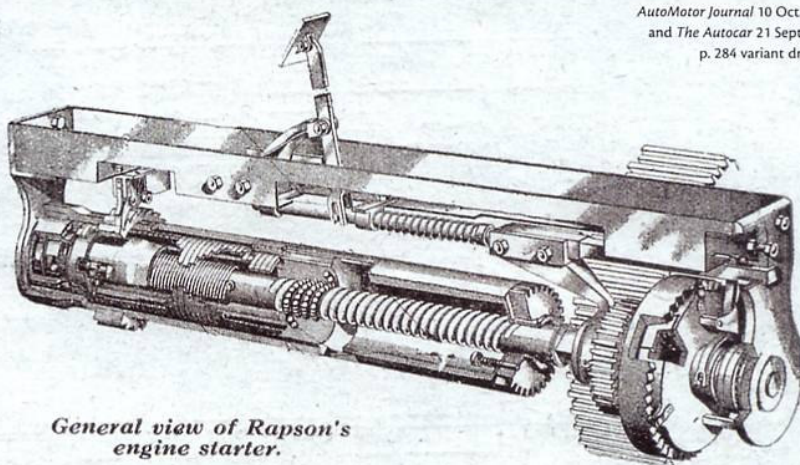
**Northern Depot:**  
22, Parsonage, Blackfriars Street,  
MANCHESTER.  
**Irish Depot:**  
**OSBOURNE & GILES,**  
10, Victoria Square,  
BELFAST.

*Advertisements in "The Garage" pay Readers and Advertisers alike.*

*An early 1920 advertisement showing Rapson's tires now in production.*

Inventing was one thing, exploiting the patents through licensing was another. Edgar Norman Duffield (b. 1880), the prolific writer for *AutoMotor Journal*, joined as an executive and it seems more of the inventions were then licensed to mainstream manufacturers, using the "Rapid" or Rapson name. The ideas that were not patented included the headlamp dipping system that was deliberately left free for others to copy (so it was claimed but in fact applications 32500 of 1920 and 34746 of 1922 simply failed to gain acceptance), an "electric compressed vapour starter" (that did not get off to a good start!), and an anti-rattle window device. The inflated figure of 200 patents could mean overseas registrations or patent applications that subsequently did not find Patent Office acceptance. Duffield, who did not stay long with Rapson, will be heard from later with an assessment of the inventor.

*The Autocar* 22 March 1919 noted that the Lynton Wheel Co. was about to make Rapson's pressed steel disc wheels, and the Blackhall Engineering Co. Ltd. of Glasgow would be making the winding top system (as well as Rapson's spare wheel canister). The same handle for the hood would be used for the "Rapid" jacks, both systems exploiting Rapson's frictionless



*General view of Rapson's engine starter.*

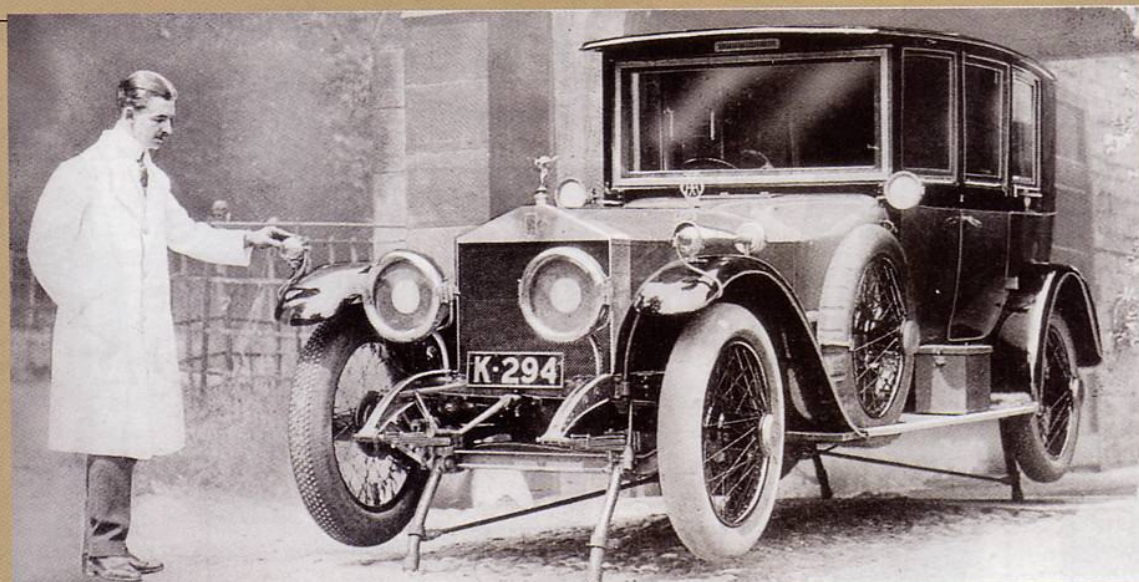
*AutoMotor Journal* 10 Oct. 1918,  
and *The Autocar* 21 Sept. 1918  
p. 284 variant drawing

*The spring-operated engine starter utilizing Rapson's frictionless threads, also licensed to Lake & Elliot of Braintree. Rapson withdrew it because the springs could not keep their tension.*

screw threads, and for Rapson's new wheel locking system. The Rapson car, an idea floated in 1919, did not find favor with any company for manufacture. Its novelty was a powertrain that could be moved in and out from one body to another. However, no patents for it can be traced. At the end of 1920 Rapson was working on a suspension system, again not patented. He was at risk of spreading his talents thinly rather than promoting the more marketable designs.



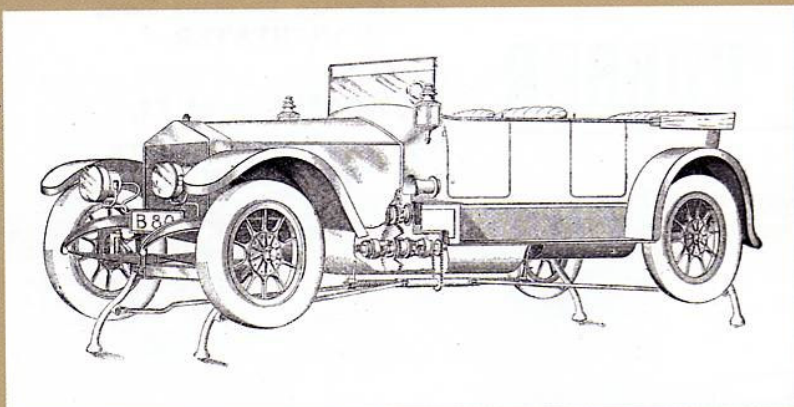
Miss Schintz's 1914 Silver Ghost **5EB** Mulliner saloon (its second body) at Childwall Hall, Liverpool, with Rapson demonstrating its engine-powered "Rapid" jacks. Each leg had rollers but it cannot have been an ideal system on soft ground, and the strain on the slender legs, arms, and pins must have been considerable. It was claimed the car could also be rolled around whilst on the jacks. The cost of the system (and its weight of 2 cwt) soon saw it replaced with a manual



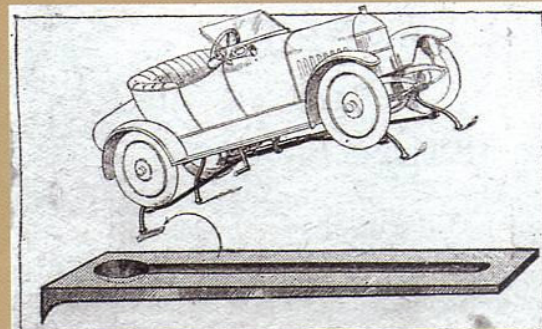
version. The body shown could have been by either Arthur Mulliner in Northampton, or H. J. Mulliner in London. All that survives

from this scene is the stone arch and buttress behind. The historic house and most of the stable yard have been demolished.

The Motor 25 Sept. 1917 p. 172



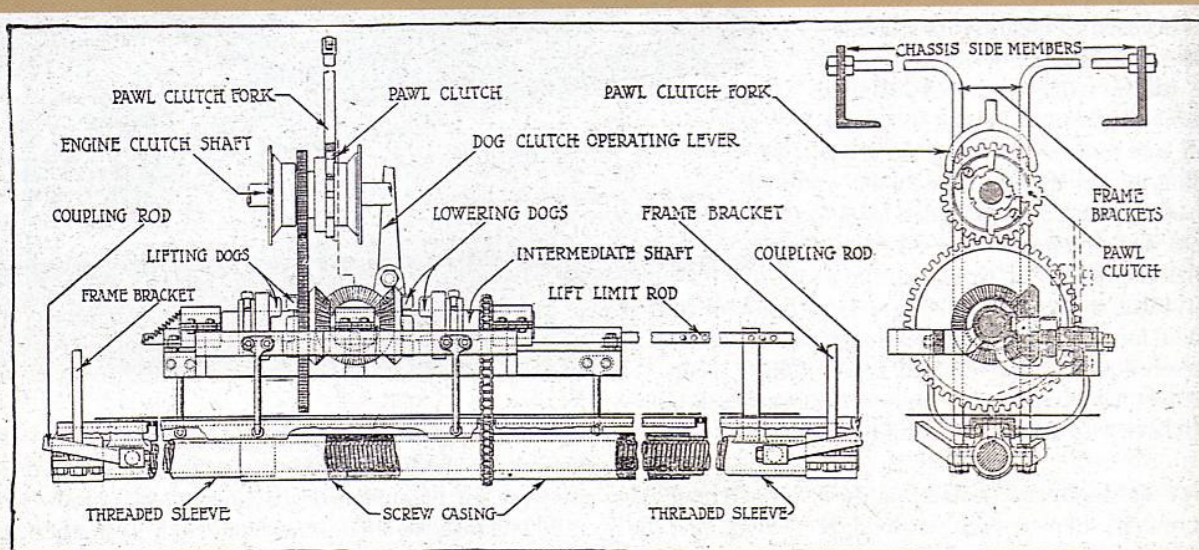
Possibly Rapson's own drawing, or from a patent, to show the engine-powered system.



The mooring plates for the Rapid jack. At the top a plate is seen in use on a gradient; below, a plate shown on a larger scale to illustrate the groove and cup for the jack leg.

On soft ground mooring plates had to be inserted into the jack arms.

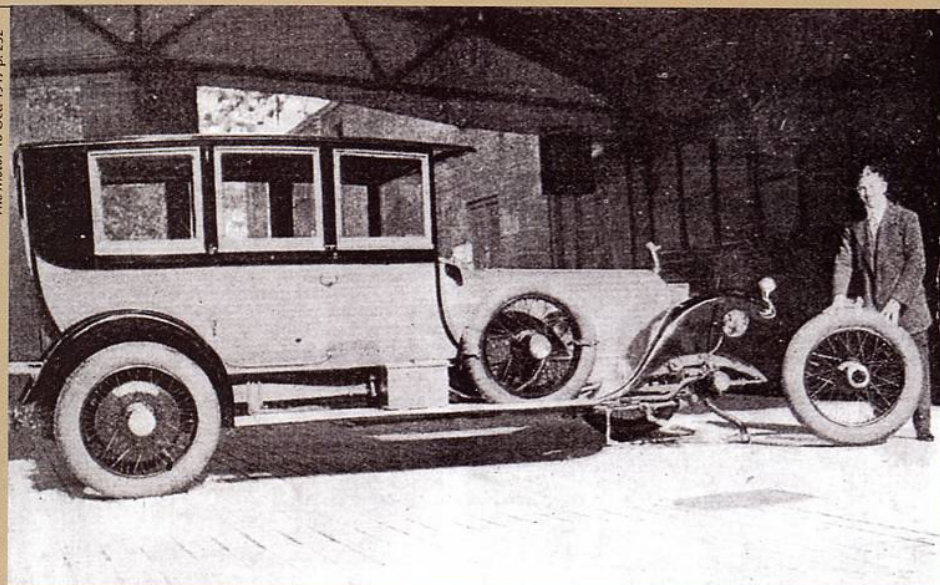
The Autocar 28 July 1917 p. 86



Figs. 3 and 4.—Side and end views of the mechanism connecting the engine clutchshaft to the lifting screw when the engine is utilised for the work.

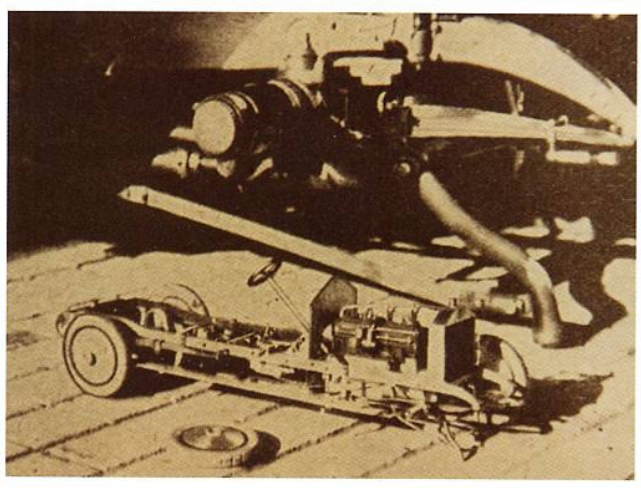
The engine-powered jacking system layout in the middle of the chassis near the gearbox.



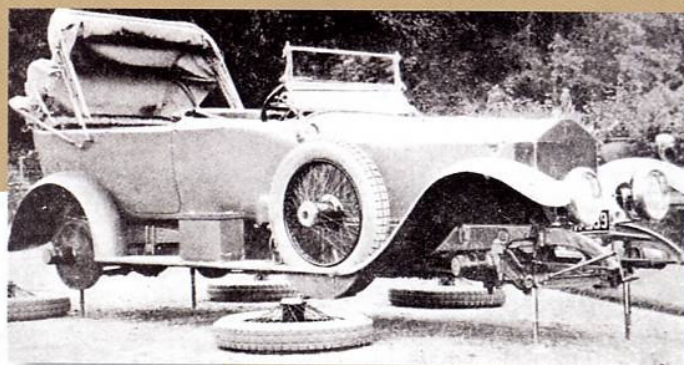
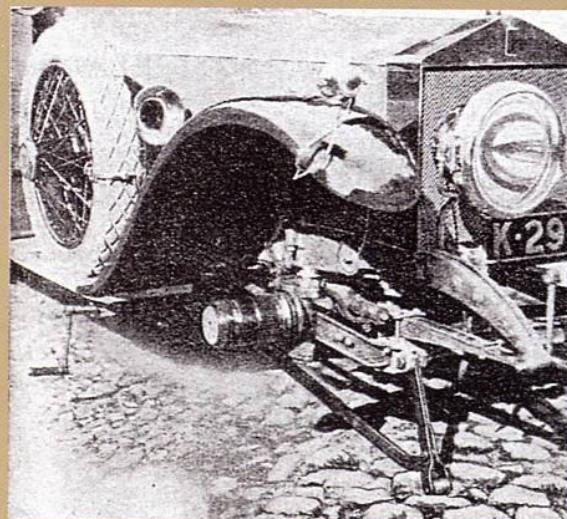


Rapson with Silver Ghost 5EB in the Childwall Hall garage demonstrating the permanent manual jacks which replaced the engine-powered type on this car. It took 7 seconds to raise the car.

The subsequent manual version of the system could be wound from the side for each wheel. Fitted here to Silver Ghost 5EB formerly with engine-powered jacks. Winding the handle lowered the jack which then remained at that point as a fulcrum and the car was drawn forward as it rose.

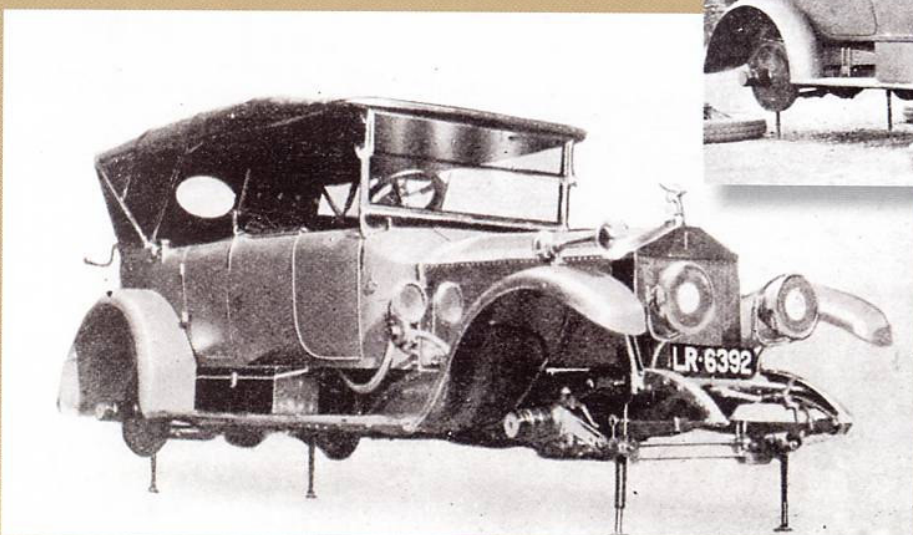


A neat model of the Silver Ghost chassis made for Rapson by Bernard & Needs, to show how his systems worked.

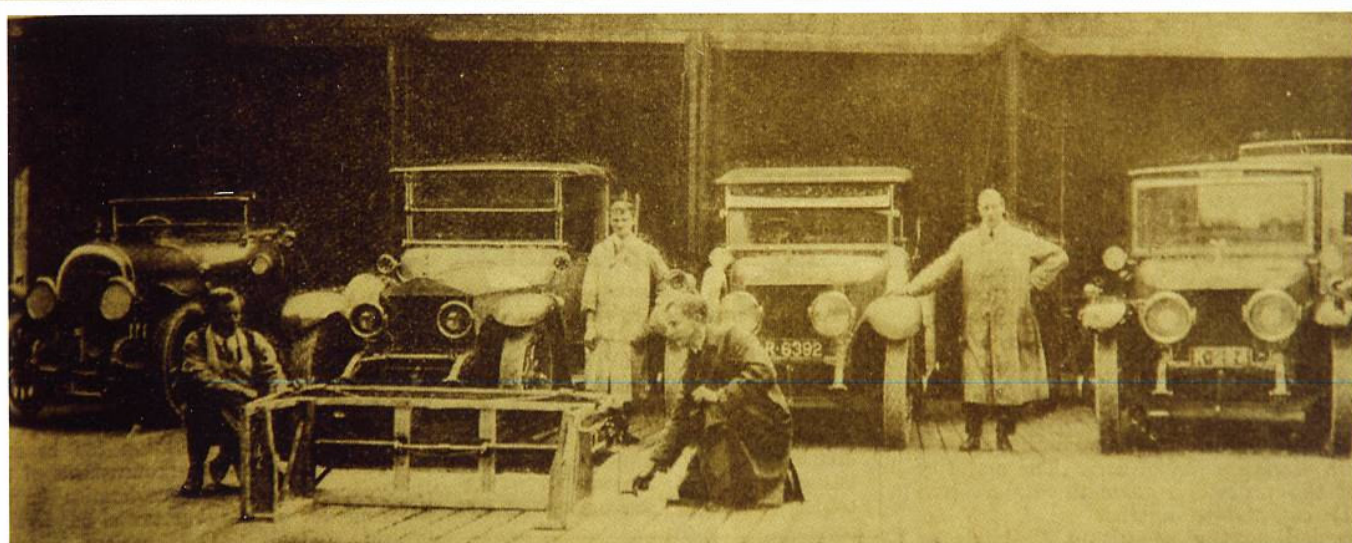
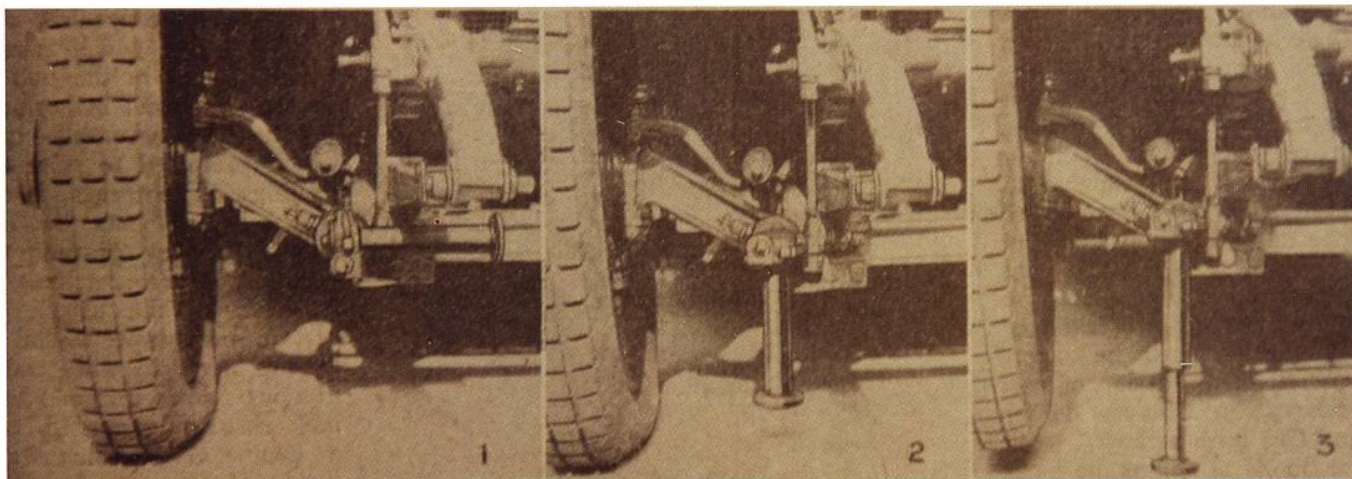


Above: Miss Schintz's 1915 Silver Ghost 32RD Watson of Liverpool tourer, a body possibly ex 5EB, showing the permanent swivelling jacks as well as the top system, headlamp dippers, and Rapson tires.

Left: Miss Schintz's 1915 Silver Ghost 21CB Barker tourer showing the manual permanent swivelling jacks. It sported a polished aluminium hood.





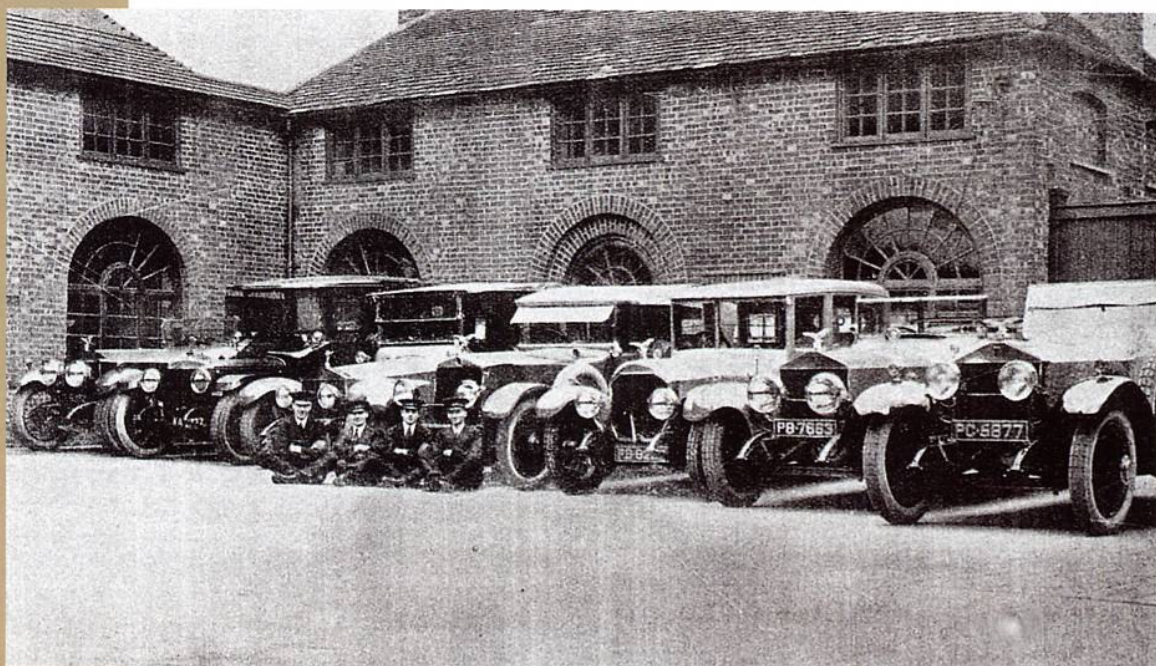




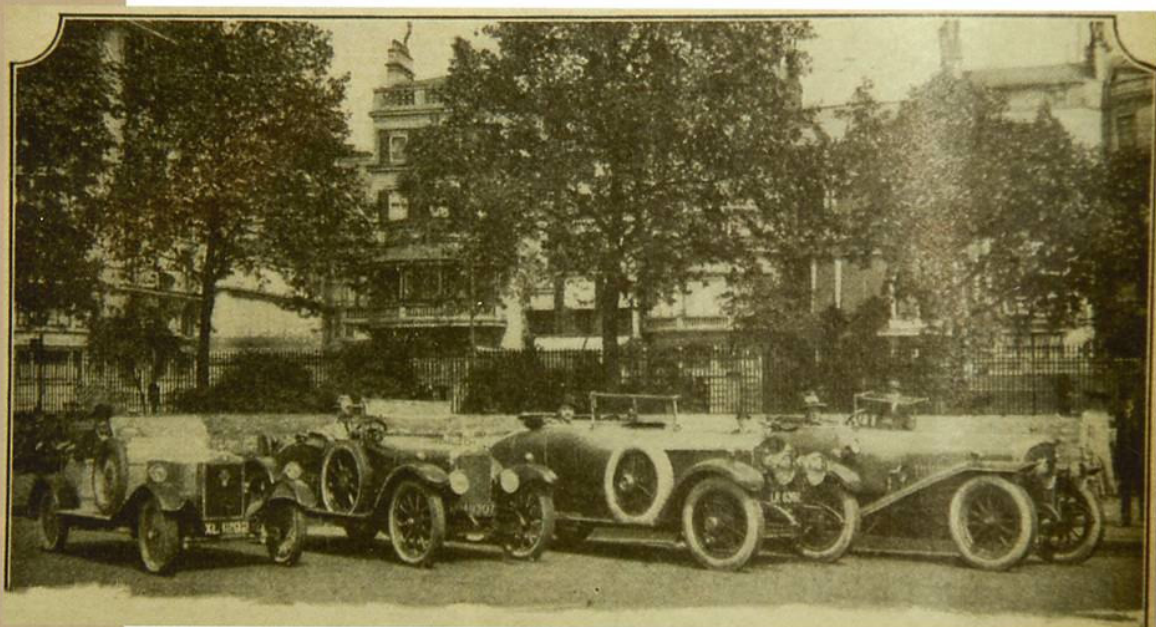
Opposite Top:  
The manual  
permanent  
swivelling jacks  
seen from the  
front on one of the  
Ghosts.

Opposite Center:  
The garage at  
Childwall Hall  
in 1919. (l-r)  
Probably the 100  
hp Benz (with a  
bulbous coupe  
body like Rapson's  
later Rolls-Royces)  
used for tests at  
Brooklands, and  
Silver Ghosts  
LE4107 (probably  
chassis 1737),  
LR6392 (21CB)  
and K294 (SEB).  
Rapson's men  
in the foreground  
are checking his top  
winding system on a  
body frame.

Opposite Bottom:  
The garage at The  
Bothy, Ottershaw  
Park, in the early  
1920s. From the  
left, Daimler  
XA2722, Silver  
Ghost coupe 70JG  
(now PB7863),  
the second Silver  
Ghost coupe 21CB,  
an A.C., the 1911  
Ghost cabriolet  
(possibly 1911  
chassis 1737),  
and the bulbous  
coupe on the 100  
hp Benz, seen in  
the 1919 Childwall  
Hall image. Other  
cars were absent  
on this occasion  
such as the 1922  
40 hp. Lanchester  
registered PD6682  
and Silver Ghost  
70YE. The building  
survives but without  
the glass canopy.



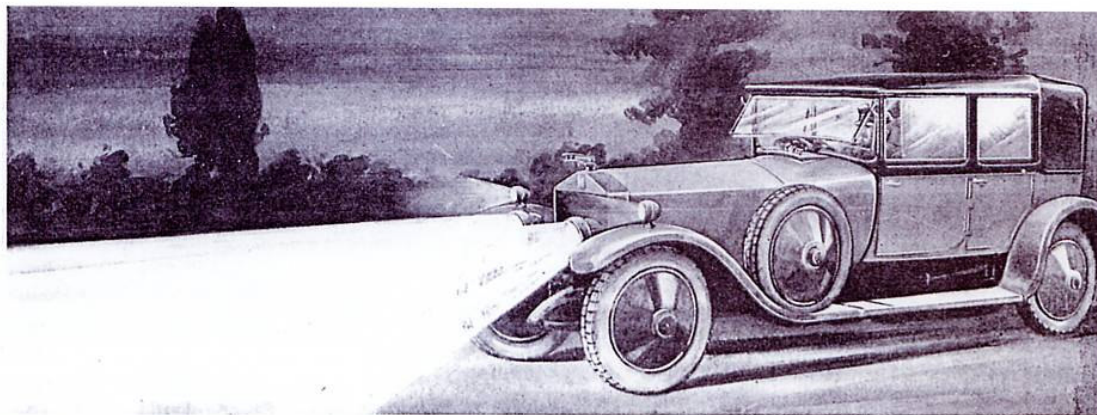
Some of the Schintz cars used by Rapson for tire and accessory promotion, and his four chauffeurs, during 1921. (l-r) At The Bothy, 1915 Silver Ghost bulbous coupe LR6392 (21CB), Daimler XA2722, Ghost LE4107 (i.e. probably 1737), a Lanchester cabriolet, 1921 Napier PB8232, 1921 Ghost PB7863 bulbous coupe (70JG) and 1920 Ghost PC5877 (70YE). Most of the cars carry Rapson's eagle mascot. This image also appeared in the Daily Mirror during the early thirties coverage of Miss Schintz's court case.



Two of Rapson's cars, Silver Ghost 21CB and the 100 hp Benz (with registration ending in 47), joined for tire tests by a 12 hp ABC and 14 hp Sunbeam on the left.

To be continued.





The Prince of Wales's 1922 Silver Ghost **58UG** Barker cabriolet de ville, totally equipped with Rapson's products (except for the winder for the top) and shown as part of a full-page Rapson advertisement; evidence of the support the Prince gave to Rapson.

H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES' ROLLS-ROYCE CAR, FITTED WITH RAPSON TYRES, RAPSON JACKS AND RAPSON ANTI-DAZZLE DIPPING HEADLIGHTS.

# Wrapped Up in Rapson's Inventions

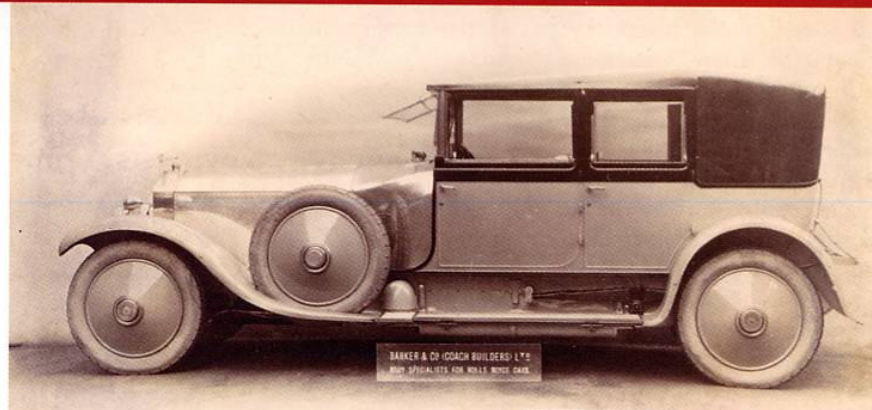
## Part II

© Tom Clarke and John Athersuch (UK), 2008

### Publicity, Royal and Roycean

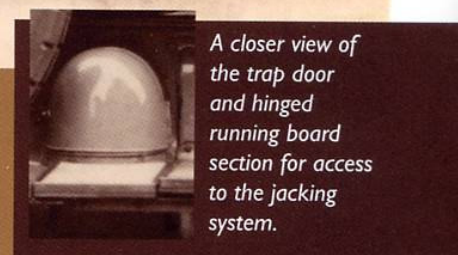
Rapson's new tires obtained the royal warrants of both the King and the Prince of Wales, and other royalty as well, followed by praise from the Prime Minister, David Lloyd-George. Rapson had by now had so much publicity in motor magazines, and had patented so frequently, that *The Autocar* for June 14, 1919 felt able to refer to a problem that "need not take the brains of a Rapson to carry it out!" To keep his publicity exclusive he used the Rolls-Royces in Miss Schintz's fleet to show off the convenience of his special fittings, and the cars were also loaned to journalists for more extensive tests, especially when Rapson's tires were being questioned. Failures had begun to occur in the canvas-wall tires made by Oylor's for Rapson and this, coupled with public doubts about delayed tests of Rapson's tires, led Oylor to resign from the company.

The first car actually fitted with a Rapson invention was the 1911/12-type Silver Ghost registered LE4107, shown earlier, rebodied around 1918 as a  $\frac{3}{4}$  cabriolet and fitted with Rapson's winding top system. It is likely this was chassis **1737**, a Rothschild landaulette when new and known to be with Miss Schintz in 1919.



Courtesy of Michael Power

**58UG** with Rapson tires, headlamp dipper cable under the front wing, and almost certainly engine-powered jacks accessed via the domed access cover behind the spare wheel. The car carried a biplane radiator mascot and, on a dome above the scuttle vent, either a spider or a large ant mascot! The same jacking system and access cover were fitted to the Maharaja of Patiala's Silver Ghost.



A closer view of the trap door and hinged running board section for access to the jacking system.

It was finally sold only in 1928 so it must have been a favorite of his.

Miss Schintz had new Rolls-Royces before meeting Rapson and used early K registration numbers from Liverpool, probably from previous family cars. The first was 1914 Silver Ghost **5EB**, registered K294, a Watson of Liverpool torpedo. This was rebodied in or before

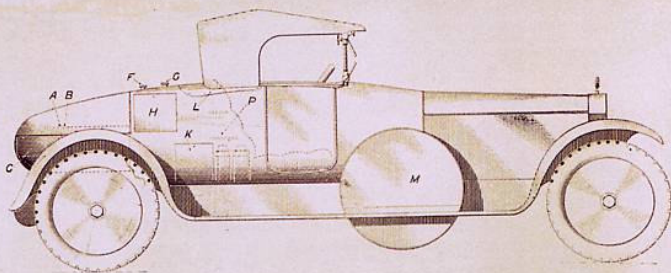
1917 as a Mulliner 2d6l saloon and in that form Rapson used it for his new fittings. It is likely that the Watson body was fitted to Miss Schintz's next car, 1915 Silver Ghost **32RD**, purchased new and registered K239.

It was in Rapson's name by August 1918 and sold by 1922. **5EB** was sold in 1921.





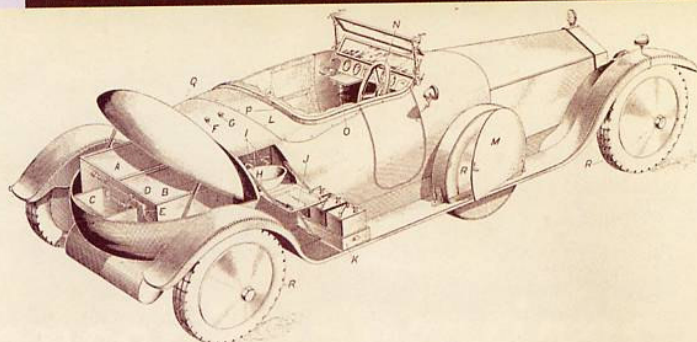




Original 1919 drawings for 1921 Silver Ghost **70JG** or 1915 **21CB**, neither built quite like this proposal. For example, the concealed top was not fitted (instead the normal type above the body was used), and Rapson's spare wheel canister shown here was not fitted. These drawings probably do show the type on the Benz referred to in this story.

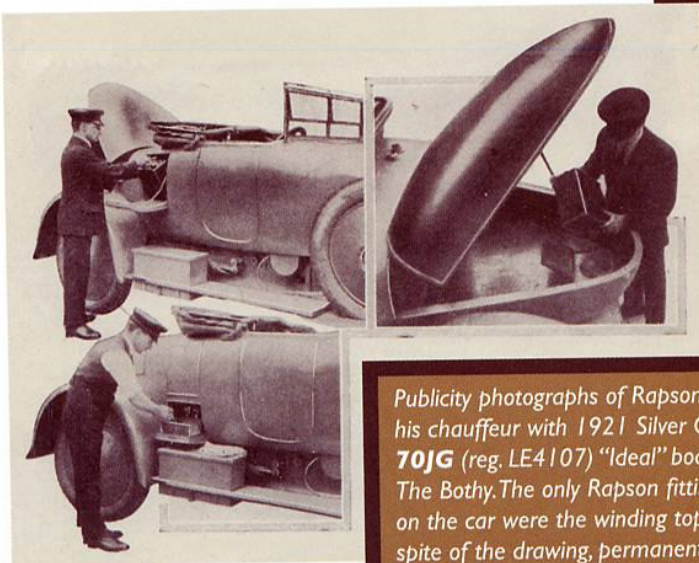
Rolls-Royce Owner Aug. 1963 pp. 4 & 8, taken from an unknown period journal

In 1919 Miss Schintz added 1914 Silver Ghost **37TB**, a landaulette, to the fleet but it was sold as early as 1921. It is possible Miss Schintz was backing some dealing by Rapson because cars in the immediate postwar period were expensive and could give a good return on money (£3,500 was asked for 37TB). In 1920 she purchased new Silver Ghost **70YE** (believed to be the tourer registered PC5877), a Barker torpedo which was in Rapson's name by 1922 and sold before 1926. But the most memorable of Miss Schintz's cars was 1921 Silver Ghost **70JG**, registered LE4107 (the number borrowed from the 1911 Silver Ghost described

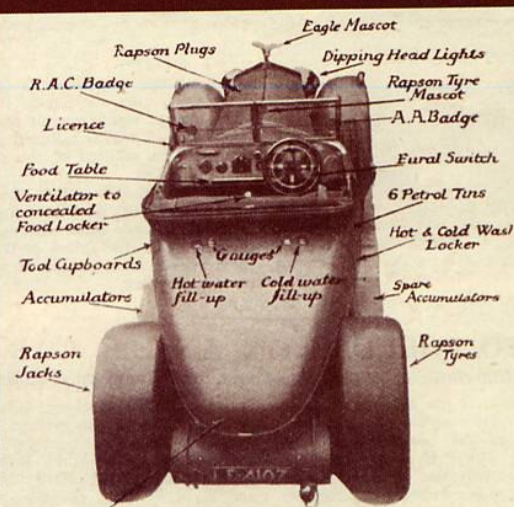


- A three-quarter view showing:—
- A & B, Suitcase and Dressing case.
  - C & D, The built-in funnel and tank spanner.
  - E, The "Rapson" jack handle.
  - F, Hot water inlet.
  - G, Cold water inlet.
  - H & I, The wash basin and taps.
  - J, A towel rack on the cover.
  - K, One of the petrol storage drawers.
  - L, The removable hood cover.
  - M, Rapson patent spare-wheel cover.
  - N, The cigar lighter.
  - O, The flexible spot lamp.
  - P, Food locker below hood space.
  - Q, Tool drawer to balance wash basin.

Inside the front compartment.  
The hinged flap folds down to make a table revealing locker P behind.



Publicity photographs of Rapson and his chauffeur with 1921 Silver Ghost **70JG** (reg. LE4107) "Ideal" body at The Bothy. The only Rapson fittings not on the car were the winding top and, in spite of the drawing, permanent jacks. Instead, a portable jack (Rapson's of course) was carried.

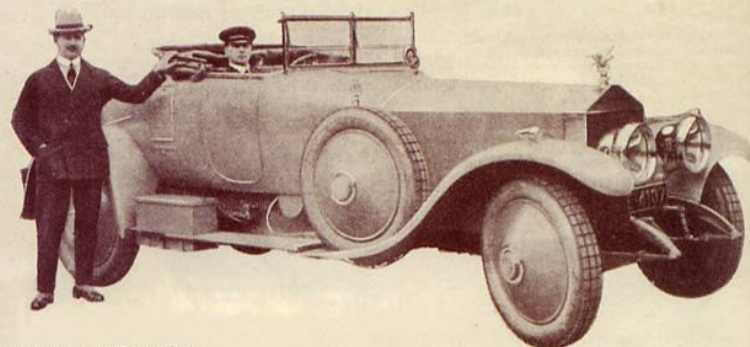


- INSIDE**
- 1 Cupboard containing all spares, oil, etc.
  - 2 Suit and Dressing Cases
  - 3 Permanent Petrol Funnel
  - 4 Cooking utensils
  - 5 Kodak Photography Outfit, etc.

Plan view of Mr. Rapson's "Ideal" touring car, indicating the situation of the various points of equipment.

earlier) but also registered PB7863. It was a Barker coupe, a special bulbous Rapson design incorporating innumerable features. It was known to be in the United States in the 1930s.

With up to three bulbous coupes known with Rapson from 1919 onwards it must be likely that he regarded this as a unique design with sales potential to customers who appreciated his levels of equipment specification. Cars that carried all his accessories were deemed "Rapsonized".



The Autocar 9 Apr. 1921 p. 653-4



Nearside view of **70JG** (now registered PB7863) showing the angled trunk lid and other variations from the similar coupe body on 21CB. Rapson regularly highlighted his royal users and their warrants.

## Laying Down Rubber

The number of buyers opting for Rapson's expensive permanent jacks would always have been limited to the mainly luxury car market (critics questioned the need for carrying so much extra weight around), and there was much competition for headlamp dippers. For greater turnover there is no doubt that tires were going to be Rapson's main concern for the rest of the 1920s after the upheaval with Oyler's. Tires were the Achilles heel of motoring at this time, particularly due to the large number of horseshoe nails on the roads, and Rapson would have made a fortune had his tires been made both reliable and economic. He had made himself a hostage to fortune by actually guaranteeing one design as unpuncturable. This claim had been made even earlier by the dubious American motor pioneer E.J. Pennington. Working in England in 1896 he claimed his "Pennington Autocar" had non-puncturable tires of his own design.

In late 1921, in the middle of the postwar economic slump, work began on extending Rapson's near-new tire factory in New Malden, south London, formerly the Victor Tire Co. Ltd.'s premises. The cost of the freehold site by mortgage was £27,000. Additional land was purchased and the number of buildings almost doubled, bringing the final cost to at least £250,000 when all equipment was installed (though Rapson claimed £300,000). The factory was able to make all the rubber needed. Workers came from Oyler's in nearby Richmond to join Rapson. On January 4, 1922 he registered the Rapson Tire & Jack Co. Ltd. to take over his existing Rapson Tire & Jack Works. Rapson was Governing Director joined by Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey (from the Royal Household), Capt. F. McKay Hay (representing mortgage holders in Miss Schintz's property) and Major Paul R.D. Grattan as directors, with John Lomax as Company Secretary. Authorized capital was £40,000, and debentures were issued for £150,000 (all of this being Miss Schintz's money). George G. Warr was an early additional director but resigned in June 1922. Arthur Keston joined as a director from July 1924 to May 1927 and latterly covered for Rapson during a lengthy illness.

THE GRAPHIC, MARCH 4, 1922

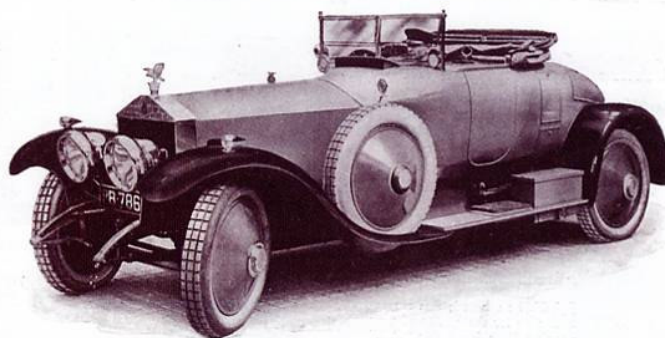
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## ROYAL USERS OF Rapson Inventions



H.M. King George V  
H.M. Queen Mary  
H.M. Queen Alexandra  
H.R.H. Prince of Wales  
H.R.H. Duke of York  
H.R.H. Prince Henry  
H.R.H. Princess Mary  
H.R.H. Duke of Connaught

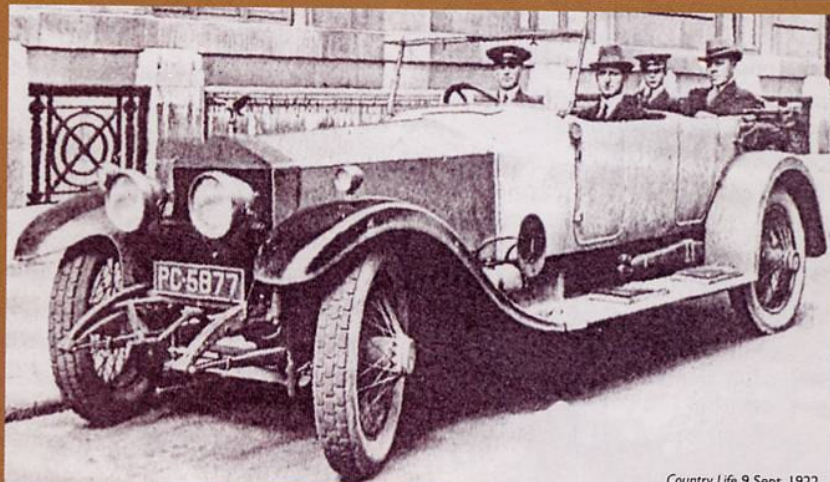


Telegrams:  
RAPSONO,  
NEW MALDEN.

**RAPSON**  
TYRE & JACK COY. LTD.

Telephone:  
MALDEN  
190 - 191 - 192.

BURLINGTON ROAD • NEW MALDEN • SURREY

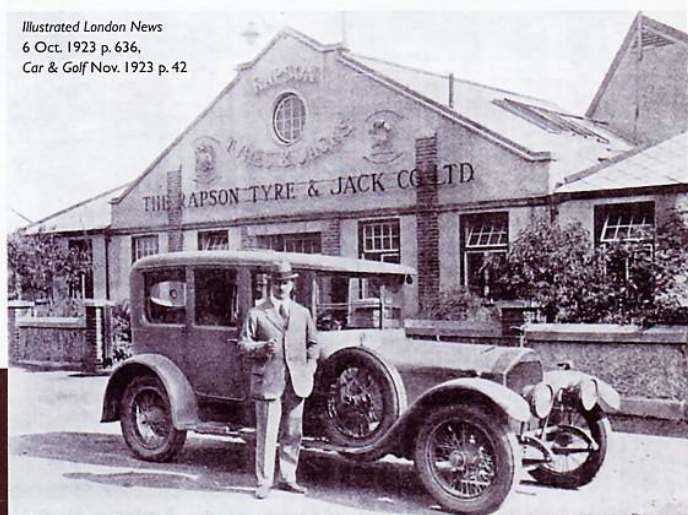


Country Life 9 Sept. 1922

Believed to be 1920 Silver Ghost **70YE** Barker tourer sporting Rapson's eagle mascot, his jacks, dippers with smaller headlamps, and the new-type tires. The body is not the tourer formerly on 21CB. Two of Rapson's four drivers are shown.



Illustrated London News  
6 Oct. 1923 p. 636,  
Car & Golf Nov. 1923 p. 42



Rapson outside the Albert Road side of his new factory with his 1921 Napier 40 hp PB8232 in which he had already covered 75,000 miles. This building does not survive.

Rapson's new central London showroom.

Car & Golf 31 Mar. 1922

Courtesy of John Day



A bulldog mascot on a Silver Ghost town cap presented to "Bulldog" Rapson by his workers in December 1922.

At one point the factory at Burlington Road adjoining Albert Road, New Malden, had more than 73 employees, mostly ex-servicemen, and a showroom was taken at 477 Oxford Street in central London. Henry F.J. Coe was chief engineer (and later had the sad job of petitioning for the winding up of the company). Rapson managed to attract Thomas Alfred Beazley, originally a gun designer, from the Dunlop tire company to set up the systems for tire manufacture. He had been with Dunlop since before 1905 and had assisted at Gordon Bennett and other races. Herbert L.J. Butler became the general manager for the tire business.

Just prior to his tire factory starting production a six-page brochure, *Making Good*, was issued based on a lavish 10-page advertisement in *AutoMotor Journal* of December 8, 1921, a testament to his successes. But very quickly his canvas-

wall tires began to fail, long before the tread had worn through, and new systems had to be introduced at great cost and upheaval to switch to cord tires. From September 1922 only cord types were made.

It is said that Rapson was encouraged by the Prince of Wales to start his own factory and the presence of Halsey, noted above, does indicate a closeness to royal circles. Rapson was socially ambitious

but his royal association, which cannot be denied, might have blinded him to the need for realism. Halsey later wrote that Rapson "is a terrible optimist." Time was to show that he was not suited to the hard business life as losses started to mount after the tire failures.

In July 1922 Rapson's flare for publicity led him to issue *Three British Inventions*, a 16-page booklet of his principal designs. Lavish and expensive full-page advertisements were taken out in *Coun-*

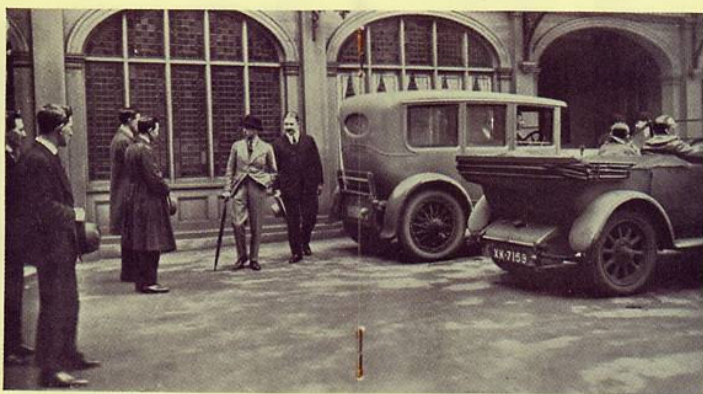
In the book reviews on p. 9230 we present a book about the first Bentley at Le Mans in 1923. The racing surface then was largely unpaved, consisting of gravel and mud. Chassis 141's driver, John Duff, had so much faith in the sturdy straight-sided Rapson tires he had put on his car that he felt comfortable in racing without spare tires to save weight and thereby time even if he had to run an entire lap on a flat tire. Rapson lost no time to play this up in their advertising. When Duff repeated his strategy at the year's next big race, the Grand Prix de Tourisme in Spain and a Rapson-shod Bentley won Le Mans the next year, Rapson felt fully vindicated.





# ACHIEVEMENT!

RAPSON—"Vide the Press"—"THE ROLLS ROYCE OF TYRES."



AT ST JAMES'S PALACE.

H.R.H. The Prince of Wales inspects the Cars and Staff at the completion of the Official R.A.C. Road Trials of the Rapson Tyre in which the twelve tyres entered ran,

## OVER 250,000 TYRE MILES WITHOUT A PUNCTURE

Rapson's 1927 brochure Achievement included the June 1923 royal review of his Napier, the Westcar (out of view), together with the Crossley company's car, that had all completed Rapson's RAC tire trial by June 20<sup>th</sup>. The Prince of Wales is seen at St. James's Palace with Rapson and meeting his staff. Not only did the brochure highlight royal endorsement but also the claim "The Rolls-Royce of tires"!

try Life, Illustrated London News, and high-class motoring magazines. He was producing 600 tires per week at this time and demand was high. A real setback was the bad publicity that resulted from the earlier failures of his canvas-wall tires, the type initially made for him by Oylers.

At his new factory Rapson clawed back his market with partial refunds for defective tires and by switching to cord tires. In February 1923 he felt able to issue an advertisement that actually referred to his failures but also stressed the efforts he had made to recover quality.

Meanwhile, since January 8 Rapson's Napier, and a borrowed Crossley 19.6 hp tourer and Westcar light-car, had been running continuously in an RAC-observed trial of his tires. Rapson hoped to win the RAC Dewar Trophy; and the Crossley an RAC award for the longest



## Three British Inventions!



### Royal Users:

H.M. KING GEORGE V.  
H.M. QUEEN MARY  
H.M. QUEEN ALEXANDRA  
H.R.H. PRINCE OF WALES  
H.R.H. DUKE OF YORK  
H.R.H. PRINCE HENRY  
H.R.H. PRINCESS MARY  
H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

JULY

1922



LIONEL RAPSON

Tyre and Jack Manufacturer to H.M. The King  
Tyre and Jack Manufacturer to H.R.H. The Prince of Wales

## RAPSON

Telephone:  
MALDEN 190-191-192

Factory:  
BURLINGTON ROAD, NEW MALDEN, SURREY

Telephone:  
HARROGATE, NEW MALDEN

Telephone:  
MAYFAIR 1008-1007

Show Rooms:  
477 Oxford Street, London, W.1

Telephone:  
HARROGATE, NEW MALDEN

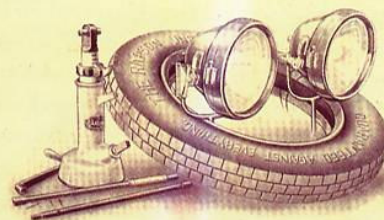
Pages from Rapson's publicity brochure Three British Inventions, showing his large works facing Burlington Road, adjoining Albert Road, and his city showroom.



The Rapson Show Rooms:  
477 OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1

Telephone:  
Mayfair  
1008-1007

Telegram:  
Rapson,  
Werns, London



### EFFICIENCY!

All enquiries to  
The Rapson Factory:  
BURLINGTON RD.,  
NEW MALDEN,  
SURREY

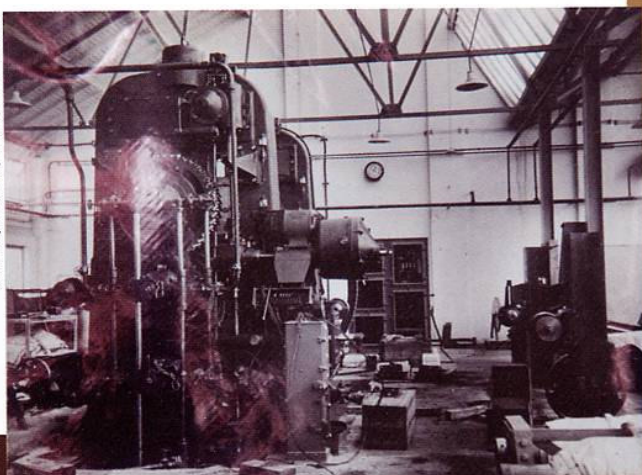
Telephone:  
MALDEN:  
190-191-192

Telegram:  
Rapson,  
New Malden



James G. Green, Ltd., 1 Bridge Place, Victoria, N.W.1.





The special 130-ton calendering machine designed by Thomas Beazley, seen inside Rapson's factory and used for the fabric inside the tires. In spite of safety rails three men lost arms operating it. On the panels of the glass saw-tooth roof, and visible from the air, Rapson painted his company name and "Guaranteed against everything".

continuous drive. The Crossley completed 25,000 miles, the longest then achieved. The trial ended on June 20<sup>th</sup> with all tires on the Westcar running 10,000 miles, three on the Crossley achieving the 25,000 miles, and one tire on the Napier reaching 40,000 miles and two others over 39,000 miles. The winner of the Dewar Trophy was to be announced in October. Soon after the trial ended Rapson was able to show the cars to the Prince of Wales at St. James's Palace in a special review.

*The Motor* noted in October 1923 that Rapson's range included special tires for the Government's armored cars, a tropical tire with heavy side walls, and of course the designs for British home use. Rapson's latest double-tread "oversize" design was intended to lengthen tire life by exposing a second tread layer when the first was worn away. At that point soft rubber strips filling the lower grooves could be torn out to complete a "new" tread pattern. Rapson's "oversize" tires were designed to fit on existing rims but to operate at lower pressures to give more comfort.

The tires were mostly beaded edge in design but straight-sided tires (a type already popular in the US market) were now also offered by Rapson. The even newer well-base wheels with low-pressure balloon tires would soon cut the ground from under his offerings because of their greater comfort and general reliability. Rapson only produced tubes for balloon tires. Nevertheless, in October 1923 he learned that he had won the prestigious RAC Dewar Challenge Trophy for the long-distance tests of his tires earlier in the year, a tremendous achievement and a publicity coup that he exploited in his advertisements. He was presented with the cup at his New Malden works by the Prince of Wales.




Author's collection; also side view in *The Motor* 25 Jan. 1922 p. 1179


Rapson's genius for publicity led to this post-1919 Armstrong Siddeley being used for tire deliveries from 1922. It was actually an armored car look-alike to highlight that Rapson tires were used by the Army. The special disc wheels were probably also Rapson designed.


An expensive advertisement and the tires "guaranteed against everything." This was achieved with an inner deflector. Sadly, it did not stop some highly publicized failures. Silver Ghost 58UG is on the left.

BY APPOINTMENT TO

  
 H.M. THE KING.

**RAPSON'S FOR RELIABILITY!**  
 WRITTEN IN THE SANDS OF THE DESERT


  
 H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.




H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES  
AND  
THE CROWN PRINCE OF RUMANIA'S  
MAGNIFICENT ROLLS-ROYCE CARS


FITTED WITH BARKER BODIES,  
RAPSON 10,000-MILE TYRES,  
RAPSON JACKS,  
AND  
RAPSON ANTI-DAZZLE DIPPING HEADLIGHTS


THE COMBINATION REPRESENTING  
**THE LAST WORD IN RELIABILITY!**

  
 RAPSON

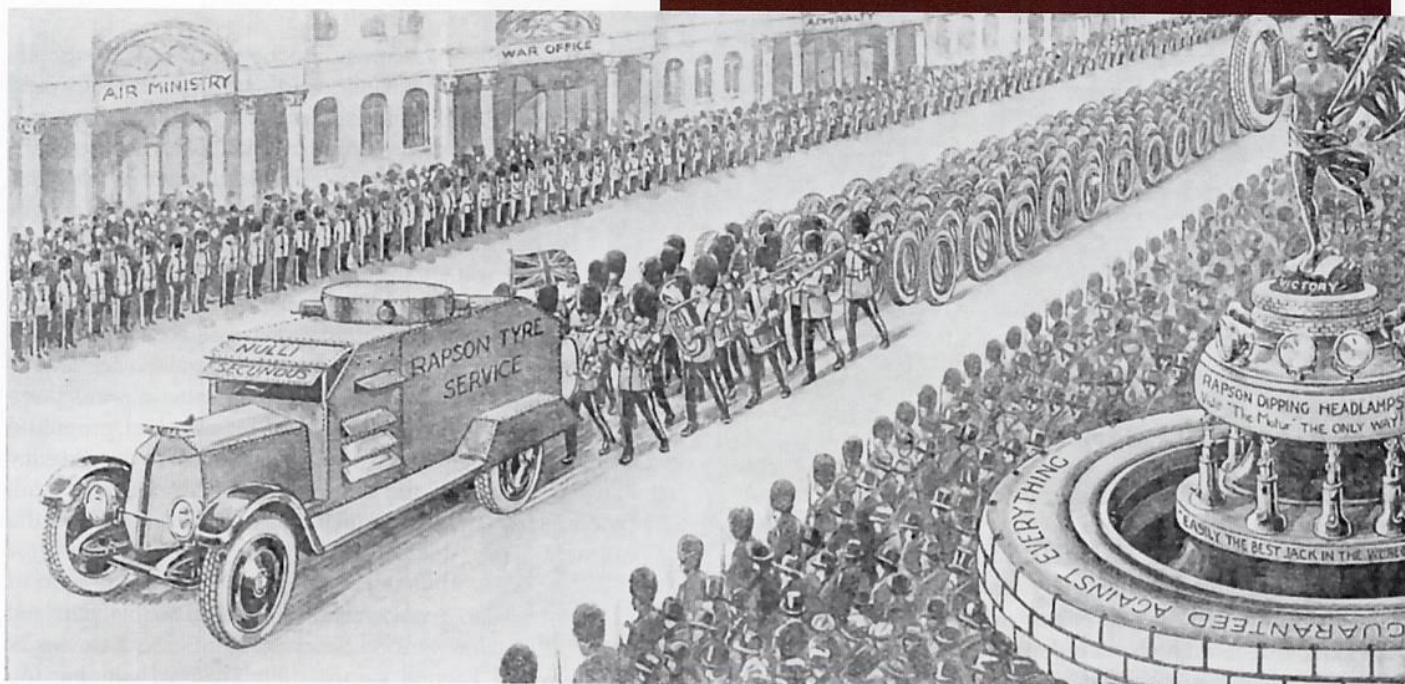
**RAPSON**  
 NEW MALDEN, SURREY.  
 TYRE & JACK CO. LTD. TELEGRAMS: RAPSON NEW MALDEN

  
 RAPSON

  
 DIPPING HEADLIGHTS

  
 SUPER JACK





## In Lanchester's Orbit

In early 1924 as Rapson's tire testing became more rigorous, and in an attempt to regain the initiative after bad publicity with the unpuncturable tires, he decided to order a Lanchester 40 hp racing chassis for long distance tests of his double-tread straight-sided tires. Rapson had already owned two earlier Lanchesters and currently owned a 1922 40 hp landaulette (in Clark p. 177) and a 40 hp 2-seater PC6107 (*The Motor* 29 Aug. 1922 p. 195). The completed racer, prepared by Arthur Bird, closely followed the appearance of the Lanchester company's own racer. At this stage Rapson entered into a business relationship with racing driver J.G. Parry Thomas (1884–1927) who drove the Rapson car in Brooklands events with considerable success. Its abilities were such that the decision was taken to attempt some world distance records at Brooklands, on Rapson tires naturally. The attempt on September 2, 1924 was undertaken with Thomas, Rapson, and George Duller sharing the driving. There were early defective tire problems but better tires luckily were on hand. Rapson's nephew Mr. Gardner assisted the Rapson team. Thirty world records were taken that day. The car was used for racing until late 1926, and then stored at Ottershaw Park.

More intriguingly, *The Guardian* newspaper for March 4, 1927 announced that Parry Thomas and Rapson had been intending to produce the Rapson-Thomas aero engine. This was to be a two-stroke sleeve-valve with manufacture entrusted to Rapson but just a day earlier, on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Parry Thomas had been killed in his "Babs" land speed record car at Pendine Sands. The engine design was jointly patented in February 1928 nevertheless but it is inconceivable that Rapson could have pressed ahead alone with such an expensive project.

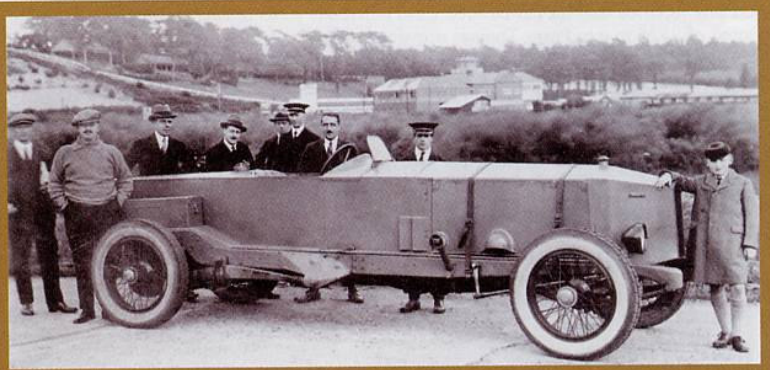
Part of an extraordinary Rapson advertisement from *Car & Golf* Aug. 1922 p. 46. Only Rapson could have brought together so many self-congratulatory themes: his "armored car" delivery van *Nulli Secundus* (Second to None, with the biplane mascot seen on the Prince of Wales's Rolls-Royce), leading the Grenadier Guards and his massed tires past the three branches of the armed forces who used his tires, all overlooked by a Rapsonian monument made up of his tires supported by his jacks, and lamps surmounted by the winged Victory. Only a confident patriot like "Bulldog" Rapson could have emblazoned the monument with "Easily the best..." and "The only way".



In a rare honor, Rapson received the RAC's Dewar Trophy from H.R.H. The Prince of Wales at the Rapson factory on November 15, 1923. It was probably at this occasion that the Prince presented Rapson with a diamond tie pin still in family hands.

Courtesy of Rodney Boszley





Rapson's racing Lanchester at Brooklands. Rapson is second from the left, his son Freddie far right. It was later used with rear wheel disc covers. The car was scrapped during the Second World War.

## Last Business Years

Bad publicity about beaded edge tires coming off the rims of racing cars led Rapson to create a further safety system for keeping tires attached after deflation. (Malcolm Campbell's Sunbeam had lost a beaded edge tire at high speed in Denmark, sadly killing a spectator as the tire rolled into a crowd, but the make was not revealed. Dario Resta was killed in his Sunbeam at Brooklands in September 1924, his car fitted with Rapsons.) Rapson's solution was complex and unlikely to appeal to a wider market. His comments in the press favored only the straight-sided tire for racing. But by now he was battling other concerns.

A combination of ill health and poor trading conditions led Rapson to announce in December 1925 that the North British Rubber Co. Ltd. at Castle Mills, Edinburgh, would now manufacture his tires. Royalties were to be paid to Miss Schintz who, as the main debenture holder in Rapson's company, would receive up to £10,000 per annum (but in the event this quickly declined to nothing). Rapson withdrew from business life to undergo unspecified medical treatment and in late 1927, after two years in limbo, was known to be living at his London home rather than Ottershaw. That same year, in an attempt to stem flagging sales, he was able to get North British to publish the lavish 12-page *Achievement* brochure on the tires that bore their names jointly.

The turnover for Rapson's company shows that it was losing money almost from the outset and it is not hard to see that this might have contributed to Rapson's poor health by 1925:

Period	Turnover	Profit/loss
To June 1923	£109,990	+£4,000
To Dec. 1923	£102,251	-£1,471
1924	£176,914	-£21,609
1925	£128,366	-£9,196

In June 1923 a new company, the Rapson Tire Co. (Europe) Ltd., had been floated so that the original company could be bought out for £300,000 in shares and cash, and to permit expansion. This would have solved much of Miss Schintz's exposure to the Rapson business but this attempt to bring in new capital failed at the outset. Rapson valued his inventions accruing to the company at £110,000.

Beazley, meanwhile, was working frantically during 1925-26 to ensure that North British would remain viable makers themselves, the plan ultimately being a merger of North British and Rapson. He then returned to save Rapson's factory as well but it was not to be and the New Malden works closed. In June 1928 the factory was sold cheaply to Noel Pemberton-Billing's Duophone Unbreakable Record Company. By now Rapson had introduced balloon tires but also still offered armored car tires and his oversize types. It must have been galling for him to see low-pressure balloon tires gaining market share

for his competitors when it had been he who had promoted lower-pressure straight-sided tires many years earlier. Beazley left Rapson to work for the new British Goodrich at Leyland, Lancashire, which became British Tire & Rubber and later the BTR Group.

Rapson retained his royal warrants, granted in his personal capacity. In the same period he saw coachbuilders Salmons & Sons of Newport Pagnell launch their Tickford winding top system, more sophisticated than Rapson's earlier system, which became a huge commercial success. *The Motor* for January 12, 1926 noted that "possibly the ideal arrangement is that produced a few years ago by Mr. Lionel Rapson, and now made by Salmons and Son." C'est la vie perhaps.

The last new Rolls-Royce to come to Ottershaw Park in Rapson's name was in August 1926. This was Phantom I 7TC with Windovers ¾ coupe coachwork registered YP4286. The Windovers connection is interesting given that Rapson's last invention was a flexible body mounting system co-patented with W. Lionel S. Windover. Moreover, when Rapson's company was wound up it was found that £5,250 was owed to Windovers for a ten-year rental on unspecified premises.

In September 1926 Rapson was able to announce that the McKone Tire & Rubber Co. of America had acquired the US rights to make Rapson tires, and the Tasmanian government in Australia had guaranteed the 8% dividends of the new



The Rapson factory in Tasmania, a doomed venture with which Rapson himself was possibly not closely associated.



Rapson Tire & Rubber Co. (Australasia) Ltd. The new factory at Launceston, Tasmania, was opened in August 1928 and Rapson visited briefly, merely lending his name to the new firm and drawing an income from the patent rights. Sir Henry Jones was chairman, Herbert Butler (formerly at Rapson's English factory) and W.D. Bauld (Rapson's previous Australian agent) were directors. A promotional brochure entitled *Progress* was issued but the factory was a forlorn attempt at government job creation. The works were abandoned in mid 1930 and the company dissolved in December. It is doubtful that all the £300,000 capital was ever raised. It was initially intended to open in Victoria on the mainland and the choice of Tasmania off the mainland never overcame the extra costs of shipping finished tires to the main market.

There was better news in *The Motor* for January 10, 1928 when a detachable tire tread design by Rapson's son Freddie was revealed. It lacked nothing in complexity, even running to a twin-tube type to assist returning home if one side punctured. From February 23<sup>rd</sup>, meanwhile, Rapson (and his son Freddie) were attempting to return to the limelight. His new balloon tire made by North British was being tested on a Marmon 8-cylinder in a 50,000 mile test. The car was provided by the agents Pass & Joyce. The test took place at the Miramas track, near Marseille in France, and was run by five drivers, including both Rapsons. A crash after 11,000 miles in which the car overturned

did not cause any delay although Rapson ceased driving at 20,000 miles because of a damaged back. Finally, on April 28, 50,000 miles had been run in nine weeks to set new world records. Pass & Joyce were grateful for the publicity and presented Rapson with an engraved silver cigarette case.

In the period 1928–32 Rapson, by now back in harness after ill health, operated in central London as F. Lionel Rapson Ltd., first from 77 Tottenham Court Road and later also from nos. 187 and 204. This was another company backed with Miss Schintz's money and it sought to recover the distribution of Rapson tires from North British (the number 77 and 187

addresses above also being theirs). This was accomplished in November 1930. There was a host of reasons why this also ultimately failed, partly the withdrawal of Miss Schintz's support when her own finances began to collapse from July 1929, and partly external factors caused by the Depression that were scarcely Rapson's fault. North British very quickly resumed limited distribution and the original Rapson tire company went into receivership in May 1931 owing £267,174.

During the winding up it was commented that the failure stemmed from an extravagant factory and advertising, the conversion from canvas to cord tires, inexperience, and changed market conditions. Rapson himself could provoke strong feelings, from W.H. Berry's fawning appreciation in *Country Life* December 23, 1921 to a damaging assessment by "Mercator" (probably his former colleague Duffield of *AutoMotor Journal*) published in *AutoMotor Journal* January 14, 1926.

Miss Schintz had mortgaged her property many times, mainly to keep the flow of funds needed by Rapson even though it was later revealed that the annual income from her trust was a staggering £26,000. Approximately £250,000 (about £8 million today) went into Rapson's company. She was obliged to move from Ottershaw, filing for bankruptcy in April 1930 and was declared bankrupt in July.

When the contents of Ottershaw Park were auctioned in October 1930 for Messrs Enticknap, solicitors who had advanced Miss Schintz £6,000, four cars were listed: "an old Benz motor car" (sold for £4 as aluminum scrap to a Mr. Pucci), a 1926 Austin 7 (£19.10.0), the 1922 Lanchester saloon PD6682 (£82), and a Napier farm truck MD9090 (£10.10.0). Miss Schintz was permitted to use a Rolls-Royce cabriolet registered LE4107 (thought to be chassis 70JG), and the valuable Phantom I 7TC coupe (YP4286), though still held as security by Enticknap against other money owed.

Rapson also had to move and he took his family and the children's nanny to be near Rose Rapson's sister Winifred Brown (née Playle) in Eastbourne, Sussex. Rapson now described himself as a consulting engineer and still had a business address in London.

By 1931 Miss Schintz had moved to the St. John's Private Hotel, 7 Selwyn



Rapson around 1928.

Courtesy of John Day



Rapson and his son Freddie with the Marmon at the Miramas track in France after the successful conclusion of the 50,000-mile test of his balloon tires.

The Motor 3 Apr. 1928 p. 434



Road in Eastbourne, presumably to be closer to the Rapsons whom she regarded as her only friends. She was bedridden throughout most of 1930–32, suffering from what would appear to be depression and unable to attend court proceedings in a case begun in October 1931 by her trustee in bankruptcy. This attempted to declare void the huge mortgages obtained for her by her then legal adviser Mr. Wyatt. *The Times* for December 9, 1932 gave a rather lurid account of the case in which her counsel painted Rapson as having undue influence over her; but to the end she maintained that Rapson had not contributed to her misfortunes or taken any of her money. The case was settled out of court on December 9<sup>th</sup> with Miss Schintz only gaining a £3,000 repayment and the return of her now worthless debentures in Rapson's tire company.

As if money troubles were not enough, her doctor in Eastbourne was the notorious Dr. John Bodkin Adams, who allegedly killed 160 of his patients in order to benefit from their wills. He faced a murder charge in 1957 but was acquitted. Whether Miss Schintz was in his sights as a potential victim we can only speculate.

Rapson's name had been dragged through all the national newspapers as the Schintz litigation continued and it must have been devastating for him to see his reputation impugned. On September 6, 1933, after a lengthy illness, he died of epilepsy aged just 45, leaving his widow and two sons. Public reports noted a stroke as cause of death and wrongly referred to his "only son" Freddie who now acted as Miss Schintz's driver and

secretary. His death actually occurred at "Aymond Grange" on 8 Dittons Road, Eastbourne, which Miss Schintz occupied in 1933–34. On the 11<sup>th</sup> his body was taken by train via London to the Brookwood Necropolis Company's eponymous station in Surrey and thence to Woking crematorium nearby. Rapson's widow soon moved elsewhere in Eastbourne with her eldest son and his wife until the war. Rapson had retained the Lanchester racing car but on the outbreak of war this was sent by Rose Rapson to Ripley's scrapyard near Eastbourne.

During 1935–37 Miss Schintz lived with her maid Ellen Wilson in an attic apartment, no. 7 "Bolsover Court" in Bolsover Road, Eastbourne. From January 1934 she began a final legal case to obtain a discharge from bankruptcy and to clear Rapson's name. Miss Schintz is then believed to have moved to Switzerland where she probably stayed until after World War II. In 1946 she was living near Lake Lucerne, later returning to England to live. By 1952 she was a resident at Broome Park, a country hotel in Barham, Kent. She died in the Kent and Canterbury Hospital on June 12, 1954, leaving little more than £2,000 to be divided amongst several former employees, including some of her earlier staff from Ottershaw Park.

Today it is hard to imagine the meteoric rise, and then almost total oblivion, of someone such as Rapson. To have overcome his disadvantaged childhood to learn so many skills, inventing complex devices and mastering tire technology, and all in such a short period whilst garnering royal support in the process, shows phenomenal aptitude and dedication.

In the end it wasn't enough.

#### Sources and Acknowledgements:

The Rapson family for much period material; <http://www.johnnathersuch.com> for pages on Ottershaw Park; Rodney Thomas Beazley for memories of his father; Robin Barraclough for assistance with old journals; Ian Dean for Rapson family links. In addition to sources noted in the article, *Car Illustrated* 23 Dec. 1921 for "Lionel Rapson, Inventor" by W.H. Berry; *AutoMotor Journal* 14 Jan. 1926 p. 43; "Mercator" on Rapson, *Motor* 12 Sept. 1933 p. 283; Rapson's obituary, *Motor Sport* Jan. 1970 p. 12, 20 & Feb 1970 p. 116–8; William Boddy article on Rapson's tires, *Rolls-Royce Owner* Aug. 1963 p. 4–9; "Luxury Travel 1919" by Jeremy Bacon; Chris Clark *The Lanchester Legacy 1895–1931* (1995) vol. 3 p. 211–6; *Hugh Tours Parry-Thomas: Designer Driver* (Batsford, 1959).



*The Autocar* 28 May 1921 p. 990

With his 1921 Napier PB8232, Rapson in happier days at Ottershaw Park in a location largely unchanged today. He claimed in *The Autocar* that Napier was now the best car in the world although he recanted a little later!