The Victoria Branch held its March Meeting at the new premises of Trivett Classic which is prominently situated on the ground floor of Eureka Towers.

I, like every other member admired the sleek lines of the Goodwood Phantom. A realisation came upon me that that Phantom has been in production for nearly five years and as yet, I still hadn't had a chance to properly evaluate it.

It was then that I decided to ask Dennis Meehan, the General Sales Manager of Trivett Classic’s Melbourne dealership if it would be at all possible to take the Phantom on a road test. Considering the value of the Phantom, I was expecting a polite but definite NO. That is of course, unless I had my cheque book handy and let’s face it, one would not just metaphorically hand the keys over to every individual that fancied getting behind the wheel.

Can you imagine my astonishment when I didn't receive the expected denial of my request but there were a just a few protocols that had to be satisfied before such an event could come to fruition. It was now just a matter of waiting until a car was available (The one on display was already sold).

It seemed that as soon as one reached the showroom, it was promptly sold; one Phantom was sold only two days after it reached the dealership. My prospects for a road test were somewhat delayed but this is great news for Trivett Classic, Rolls-Royce and a fabulous indicator of Australia’s current economy.

The day finally arrived on Monday August 13th, and so our team set off to meet Dennis with no preconceived ideas of what to expect. Where we actually going to drive a Phantom or were we going to be passengers? Either way, we realised that we were the privileged few.

Our purpose was simple, we wanted to compare our own impressions of the motorcar from an enthusiast’s point of view but make no mistake, the Phantom wasn't going to get a free ride either. As enthusiasts, we were there to ascertain whether this car is worthy of its name.

Our team consisted of, Mark Herbstreit (Technical), Terry Farrow (Junior Vice-President RROCA Victoria Branch), Adam Griffiths (Club Photographer) and I (Robert Wort, Technical Self-Help Group Leader and soon-to-be Editor of the Victoria Branch Newsletter), purists all.
Let us first draw our attention to the dealership. Trivett Classic is part of the Trivett group of companies and was founded by John Trivett in 1984. John started his illustrious career as an employee of Capital Motors in Lidcombe, NSW which is not too far away from Homebush, the 2004 site of the Sydney Olympics. John’s beginnings with Capital Motors was quite humble; his job was to wash cars on weekends but it was enough for John to instil a strong work ethic and principles which eventually led him into a business partnership with Greg Duncan, a friend of John’s for many years.

Over the past twenty-one years, The Trivett Group have expanded from their original dealerships for BMW and Alfa Romeo to such diverse and coveted manufacturers such as Porsche, Aston Martin, Jaguar and even Harley-Davidson Motorcycles. In fact there are over 11 dealerships covering many other quality cars and Tyres as well. Trivett Classic’s pursuit of excellence were duly recognised and rewarded with the NSW Motor Traders Association’s Best New Car Dealer award in 2005.

It comes as no surprise then that the Trivett Group were offered sole rights to the Rolls-Royce Motorcar franchise in Australia very soon after the release of the Rolls-Royce Phantom and in February of this year, they opened their Melbourne doors at No. 80 City Road in Southbank in the prestigious Eureka Towers building.

Dennis Meehan gave our little team a very warm welcome and proceeded to guide us through the showroom, in which Rolls-Royce had a very strong influence in designing. The chairs that you sit on are covered by the very same leather that goes into their motorcars. The highly polished walnut veneers that line the showroom floor and the cabinets and drawers were all manufactured by the same craftsmen from the Goodwood Factory. The décor is as tasteful and refined as any of the best foyers seen in the world’s 5 star hotels. You are left in no doubt as to the make of motorcar they are selling.

When you place an order for a Rolls-Royce, you don’t just ‘buy a car,’ you take on a special event. You have made your mark on this planet and an acquisition of a brand new Rolls-Royce is a personal reflection of its owner. The Bespoke policy of the company virtually ensures that no two motorcars will be exactly alike; there are more than 28,000 colour combinations for instance. The colour of our particular Phantom was a very subtle two-tone Flagstone over Silver, so subtle in fact that it took more than a single glance to notice it.

The veneers were not the usual walnut either but (according to my catalogue), crossbanded Elm Cluster.

But let’s have a good look at the car in question. One cannot look at the profile of this motorcar and not be reminded of the John Blatchley designed Silver Cloud Series. There are also hints of the Silver Shadow if you look at the arches above the wheel guards. The designers went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that the Phantom’s appearance is unmistakably Rolls-Royce. Some detractors have complained that recent models prior to the Phantom didn’t stand out from other cars. Those people are plebiscites of course, but there is no mistaking this one.
I would wager that everyone would be in no doubt that they would recognise this Rolls-Royce even if it is viewed from a mile away. The first thing I like about this car is its size. A Rolls-Royce should be of noticeable proportions, why else would you have one? Considering its overall dimensions, it is surprisingly light, only about two tonnes. Now you might say that two tonnes is a heavy car and indeed it would be if it was the same size as your average family sedan, but for its presence it is a light car and the secret lies in its aluminium spaceframe. Effectively the spaceframe is vastly different to your average monocoque body construction and it is more akin to the days when a car had a separate chassis but that is where the similarity ends. This ‘chassis’ envelopes the entire motorcar and is not confined to the underbody area.

It is immensely strong and it enjoys both virtues of rigidity and flexibility. The Phantom was definitely designed to last a very long time and this is quite apparent when you realise just how much pre-production testing it went through. Unlike many other new models released on the market, the Phantom never suffered any of those annoying ‘teething troubles’ that are usually expected. It has been tested in all conditions and all climates.

Now let’s see how well-mannered the car is on the road.

The key is a far cry from the ‘Yale’ version that I am used to on my Silver Spur and I am delighted to see the return of the traditional switchbox. It is in fact like a mini computer in itself so you can’t take it down to your local Mister Minute and get a spare cut. You slide this ‘key’ into a slot. As you do with a credit card and then you press the START Button (a most welcome return).
Have you heard the joke about Microsoft where you have to press the START button to stop the engine? Well you do indeed do this with this one as well. You also need to keep your foot on the brake pedal before you engage the transmission (I've always done that anyway). The transmission selector under the steering wheel is very simple; there is no P.R.N.D.I.L on the selector, you just have D.N.R. How easy is that? To select park, simply press the quadrant stick in and you have Park. The Parking brake can be engaged by pressing a button to the left of the START Button and you press it again to release it. I like that. I don't like those ones that automatically release as you drive away, it gives you no control.

There are four chromium buttons on the steering wheel (I'm glad they kept the thin steering rim), these buttons as well as voice activation control just about everything from your inbuilt Bluetooth activated telephone to the GPS and television (Which will only work when the car is stationary for obvious safety reasons). there are of course, parking sensors which make the Phantom an absolute cinch to park.

When I inserted the key, the steering wheel moved electronically into position as if it had ESP. The positioning was perfect. Everything about the car is reassuringly simple. It took no time at all to get used to, I could have been driving this car for years.

The first sensation I noticed was, 'nothing'. The car is absolutely silent. Rolls-Royce uses the term 'waftability' quite frequently and this is evidenced by the fact that you don't feel the sensation of movement when you get underway, especially if you are a passenger as I was to find out later. The steering is light and it gives you just the right amount of 'feel' and I felt comfortable with this car immediately. At no time did I get the impression that the car was ponderous and young James would be happy to know that the Phantom is agile and can take on corners with the best of them, while old Aunt Maud would also be at immediate ease at the controls should the need arise for her to potter down to the local croquet lawn.

The six speed transmission is imperceptible to the point where you are not aware that there is a transmission there at all. In city traffic, the car is docile but you know there is a sleeping, but benevolent 12 cylinder giant lurking under the bonnet at the ready to pounce and accelerate away at a rate that would equal and even outperform many a modern sports car.
Everything you need to know is all in this magic box. You need only to give the command and it is granted. All this hidden behind a seemingly unassuming clock...

You sit up high in the Phantom and this gives you a commanding view of the road ahead. I could clearly see the car, two spaces beyond the car in front of me; plenty of time to plan evasive measures should an incident occur ahead. Stepping lightly on the brake at an intersection is very much like stepping gently onto a pillow, not spongy, but not hard like lesser makes. It is both responsive and smooth.

On the Road. Terry Farrow Is Impressed By The Utter Silence (I’m Sure It’s Not My Driving)

You are aware of something as soon as you hit the road. This car has power. Six and Three Quarter Litres of Vee Twelve power. It may have the same capacity as its ancestral Vee Eights but those extra four cylinders make a difference. It will get you up to your desired speed without fuss, without discomfort and importantly, without noise.
There was something else I was aware of too. One who is familiar with the marque can conceivably be blindfolded and immediately know that they are in a Rolls-Royce. It’s not just the smell of the leather (This one has 20 hides from bulls specifically raised in cold climates for the purpose), it’s the ambience. This car has that same feel about it.

On the subject of ambience, something else becomes apparent. There is no doubt that this car is high tech. Everything is there at your fingertips, but it’s not in your face. All of the ‘gizmos’ are quietly tucked away, ready to come forward at your command. In the centre of the fascia is a clock. Nothing whizz-bang, but traditional, demure and utterly tasteful but like all of the manor houses of old, it conceals a hidden panel. The phantom then transforms itself from a stately home into a space shuttle. A succulent female voice asks for your request and she is sooooo polite.

If you haven’t spoken clearly, she asks you in that deliciously modulated tone, “I beg your pardon, can you please repeat your request?” or words to that effect. I immediately thought that my daughter should be in here with me to get free lessons in etiquette.

When you hide the high-tech wizardry back behind the clock, you return to that timeless elegance of comfort and serenity. You are reminded of times gone by with the art-deco interior lights and the drop-down and backlit vanity mirrors in the rear. The rear seat invites you to nestle into its embrace and it wraps around at the edges so that you can actually face your co-passenger when engaging in conversation, blissfully unaware of ‘Vitterman’ up front behind the wheel.

Speaking of chauffeurs, most owners drive themselves these days. Why let the staff have all the fun? There are only two reasons why I wouldn’t drive myself; if I had imbibed in too much Château Lafite Rothschild or I wished to share the joy of driving with another admirer and the Phantom is indeed, a real joy to drive and the dynamic stability control ensures safe handling even in tricky situations.

Charging Point in the boot. Could you imagine needing to use this as the Phantom has Two Batteries?

Three hundred and thirty-eight kilowatts of power (about 453 horsepower in the old vernacular), and the variable valve timing and valve lift, controlled by the Valvetronic Engine Management system will ensure that your motive power is always kept to the optimum. Your choice of either 20 inch or 21 inch wheels with run-flat tyres will keep all fours, firmly in place on the road. There are two 12 volt batteries running on a battery management system to avoid those embarrassing moments that flat batteries are infamous for. The umbrellas in each of the self-closing coach doors have become legendary so I need not make any further mention of it here.
And what about servicing?

Your Phantom tells you when a service is due. Gone are the days of scheduled service intervals. Onboard intelligence will monitor your engine and that seductive voice will tell you well in advance when you should book your car in to the service centre. Depending on driving conditions, it can vary widely between say, 10,000 kms to 40,000 kms. The car knows better than you do.

And what of the service centre? In Melbourne, you are greeted by Chris Green, the Service Manager of Trivett Classic and his facilities are more akin to a ‘clean room’ than the old grotty workshops I had to suffer in my tender years as a mechanics apprentice. Kings slept in four poster beds, and our Phantom has a four poster hoist, specifically designed for the purpose. Chris is enthusiastic about the marque and that is comforting. You just know that your motorcar is in good hands. How much does it cost to service one of these? I didn’t ask—that would be vulgar.

So there you have it. The Rolls-Royce Phantom. This car is absolutely sensational. Which begs the question. Is the Rolls-Royce Phantom *The Best Car In The World?* Quite a claim when you consider the high standard of modern cars these days, but in my mind, there is no doubt about it.
The Royal Botanic Gardens and The Shrine of Remembrance

Eureka Tower, the Melbourne location of Trivett Classic’s showroom soars majestically skyward in the distance.

Mark takes to the freeway and the Westgate Bridge. Just as a few droplets of rain appeared, the wipers went into action. Mark’s close eye for detail noticed that the wipers rotate in the opposite direction to that which he is used to. There was very little effort on his part to reach the freeway speed limit and Mark was very impressed that there was still an enormous amount of power left in reserve as was brought to his attention by the Power Reserve Gauge.
You won’t get a great deal of change out of One Million Dollars when you place an order for one of these, but the Phantom is a masterpiece, and all masterpieces are priceless. But who cares anyway? It’s only money…

The Rolls-Royce Phantom enjoys state of the art functionality while still embodying a timeless grace about it. It has some little idiosyncrasies. The windscreen wipers wipe from right to left instead of left to right and there are no individual arrows for the direction indicators on the fascia but so what? Vive la difference!

All good things must come to an end.. And so, with reluctance, it’s back to the showroom.

Trivett Classic’s Melbourne Service Manager, Chris Green Loves His Job and His Enthusiasm Shows...
So, is there a downside to the Rolls-Royce Phantom?

Well, yes there is...

They won't let me keep it....

**A final note:**

Mark, Terry, Adam and I would like to thank Dennis Meehan, Chris Green and Trivett Classic for their generosity and support in entrusting us with this magnificent motorcar. Something that is not taken for granted.

Now that you have your chequebooks ready, you can contact Dennis on (03) 8866 3188 and I am certain that he will be more than happy to take your orders.

*Robert Wort*

Photographs by Adam Griffiths and Mark Herbstreit.