

# The Magic of a Name

THE ROLLS-ROYCE STORY

Part Three: A Family of Engines



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# INTRODUCTION

As I said in the Introduction to the first two parts of this history, many books have been written about Rolls-Royce. Most of them are either biographies of the leading personalities, or works that tackle specific aspects of the cars or aero-engines.

The last publication to attempt a truly comprehensive history of Rolls-Royce was Harold Nockolds's *The Magic of a Name*, published by Foulis in 1938 and reprinted several times until a third edition was finally printed in 1972. These three books are the first attempt since then to cover comprehensively the story of Rolls-Royce from its earliest days until the present. The Rolls-Royce name *is* magic, made so by the calibre of its people and its products, and the title *The Magic of a Name* is singularly appropriate. Foulis, now owned by Haynes Publishing, has kindly allowed us to use the title again.

The first part of this trilogy took the story from 1904 to 1945 with all the excitement of the meeting of the great engineer, Henry Royce, and the aristocratic motor-car enthusiast and salesman, the Hon. C.S. Rolls, through the early pioneering days with the best car in the world, the Silver Ghost, on to the design by Royce and production by Rolls-Royce of the leading aero-engine of the First World War, the Eagle. We moved on to Royce's design of an aero-engine which enabled Britain to retain the Schneider Trophy. This association with the aircraft designer R.J. Mitchell led on to the Spitfire and Rolls-Royce's Merlin engines. As we saw, without the Spitfire and the

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Hurricane, and the Merlins that powered them, the Battle of Britain would have been lost. Finally, we saw how Ernest (later Lord) Hives realised the significance of the jet engine and how he backed Sir Frank Whittle to the hilt.

Part Two was the story of Rolls-Royce's realisation that it must tackle the US civil-airliner market if it was to remain a world player in the aero-engine business. The British civil-aircraft industry faded away in the 1960s after the success of the Vickers Viscount and the initial triumphs of the de Havilland Comet before its tragic accidents.

The USA was where Rolls-Royce had to be and, to their credit, Sir Denning Pearson and Sir David Huddie knew it and went for it. Unfortunately, Rolls-Royce did not have the resources to withstand the inevitable development setbacks entailed in bringing the revolutionary three-shaft RB 211 to market, and the company was forced into receivership in February 1971.

Nevertheless, the vision was right, and the RB 211 won further orders as the company recovered in its Government-ownership days in the 1970s and 1980s.

Meanwhile, the Motor Car Division was floated as a separate company and continued to develop the Rolls-Royce and Bentley brands, first on its own and then in conjunction with Vickers. In this period also, Rolls-Royce broadened its activity to provide gas-turbine power to the Royal Navy and other navies, and also to the oil and gas industries.

By the mid-1980s, Rolls-Royce was sufficiently robust to be returned to the private sector, and that's where Part Two ended.

This book starts with Rolls-Royce coping with the competitive world without Government protection. As always, the competition from its two arch-rivals, General Electric and Pratt & Whitney, was as fierce as ever, and Rolls-Royce had to decide whether it wanted to compete with them across a range of engines or only in certain sizes. We saw in Part Two how it flirted with the idea of leaving the big-engine field to General Electric. This was the plan of Chairman Bill Duncan, but when he died his successor, Lord Tombs, and the Managing Director, Sir Ralph Robins, would have none of it. Rolls-Royce would compete across the range.

This book is the story of how Rolls-Royce moved from a company with a small number of engines supplying an equally small number of airlines to a company with a complete 'family' of engines supplying nearly all the world's major airlines and most of the smaller ones too. Thanks to strategic partnerships and acquisitions, it has also become a truly global operation in both civil and military aerospace, in the commercial and naval marine industry and in the energy markets of the world. This volume covers a period that matches the achievements of Rolls-Royce at any other point in its history.

Peter Pugh  
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