

1934 Hillman Minx 2-Seater Sport (Beetleback)

By Jon Mitchell, Owner

A real mouth full for a car model! This article is a combination of an article I was requested to write for the Hillman Owners Club in the United Kingdom and The Classic Car & Sports Car Magazine's "Lost and Found" column.

I found the car in Macon, Georgia, USA, on the side of a garage, while looking for other British car parts. Though, I have had numerous British cars over the years, I did not know what the car was at the time, as the data plate and radiator mascot were missing. The owner at the time had never been able to find the chassis number, which I was able to assist in finding guessing that it might be located on the left leaf spring shackle like pre-war MGs.

Through information from the owner and my own research, I learned that the car was a rare Beetleback model, which Hillman had the body built by coach builder Carbodies. Carbodies built prewar bodies for MG, Alvis, Rolls Royce, Rover, and Invicta to name a few. To this date, I have been only able to find two Carbodies factory photos of this body style and they are of a 1932 Olympia Show Car. The 1932 Show Car is different from my 1934 model, in that radiator grille is flat and there were no running boards. I know of only five 1934 models in existence worldwide, including mine, and believe only 3 are running.

The car was in rough shape, missing a lot of parts, and probably not worth restoring except for its rarity. Parts have been difficult to locate and have been purchased from England, Ireland, Wales, Australia, and New Zealand. I have had to fabricate many parts based on photographs, measurements, and assistance from a kind elderly gentleman in England who has a 1934 Hillman Drop Head Coup and a lot of knowledge on prewar Hillman's.

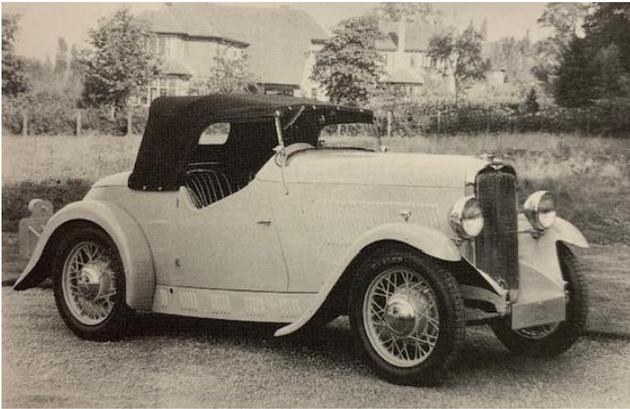
Some of the missing parts that had to be fabricated included the bucket seats, running boards, wood dash, metal cubby holes (glove boxes), battery box, spare tire holder, distributor base and drive, convertible top frame and header, and many brackets. The chassis has been sandblasted, repaired with a new cross member fabricated, new running board brackets fabricated, and new leaf spring bushings fabricated.

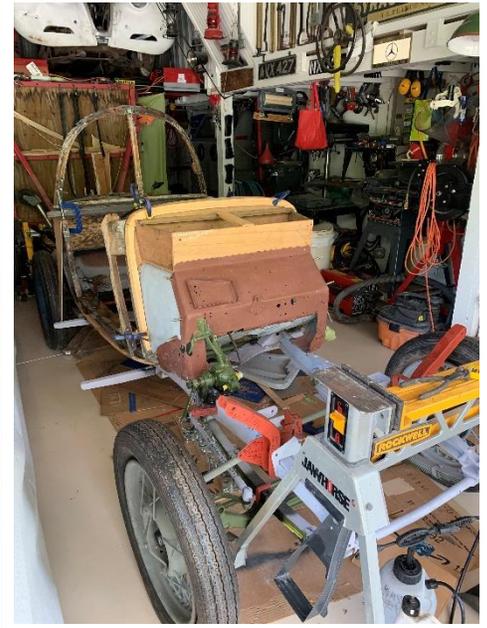
The ash wood body frame has been restored. I tried to save as much of the original wood as possible and only cutting out bad parts and replacing with new ash. Most of the wood toolbox under the bonnet was missing, but I was able to recreate it using the correct materials and design. The car came with an incorrect 1953 Hillman engine, but I have been able to obtain the correct round intake/exhaust port engine that was used from 1932 to 1935. The engine has been completely rebuilt with new bearings, pistons, cylinder sleeves, and valve components.

The gear box, rear differential, and brakes have all been rebuilt. All the sheet metal repair panels have been fabricated and welded in. The body sheet metal is now mostly intact requiring some hammer and dolly work and leading some seams. My desire is to restore the car back to the way it left the factory in 1934.

The car was originally painted cream, with cream wire wheels, red leather interior, and a fawn-colored hood (convertible top). Fortunately, the original license plate from 1934 was with the car and I was able to learn that the car was first registered on March 16, 1934, to a Reverend Joseph Benjamin Edwards, The Vicarage, Walton-on-the-Naze in England. I learned that he was there from 1931 to 1943. I know that the car was brought to the USA sometime after the war by John L Fitzmorris. I do not believe the car has been on the road since the 1950's.

A semi-secret compartment was found in the boot (trunk) during restoration. I have often wondered what was stored there possibly during the war... a rare and mysterious vehicle!





THE TIME IS NOW FOR SUPER-RARE HILLMAN

Jon Mitchell of Florida recently joined the Hillman Owners' Club to learn more about a 1934 Hillman Minx Sport Beetleback two-seater he bought in bits in 2015. It was thought to have been bodied by Arrow coachworks, but it is almost certainly the work of Carbodies.

Mitchell had owned a number of British cars, but when he saw the Hillman beside Frank Zampa's garage in Macon, Georgia, he took pity on it – partly because neither of them then knew what it was.

AVX 427 was first registered in Essex to the Rev Joseph Edwards of Walton-on-the-Naze, who sold it to US serviceman John Leonard Fitzmorris. He took the car home to Louisiana when he left England and in 1983, James Sillars of Georgia bought the Minx from Fitzmorris' grandson. Some time before 2005 Norm Cantrell purchased the car, believing it to be an Aero Minx. By then it had a 1953 Hillman engine,



Mitchell is unravelling the secrets of this two-seater Minx, one of only five survivors

and a 1939 engine also came with it. Zampa acquired it in 2005.

"It was in very poor condition, with many missing pieces," says Mitchell. "Were it not so rare and nice looking, it might not have been worth restoring." It's thought the Minx was last on the road in the '50s, and is one of five survivors.



Minx's rarity has given it a second chance