

Bygones

HISTORY OF THE HILLMAN MINX



The Beatles leave the Birmingham Hippodrome on November 10, 1963, in a Hillman Super Minx as fans are held back by police

THE Hillman Minx was a mid-sized family car that British car maker Hillman produced from 1931 to 1970.

There were many versions of the Minx over that period, as well as badge-engineered variants sold by Humber, Singer and Sunbeam.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the Minx and its derivatives were the greatest-volume sellers of the "Audax" family of cars from Rootes, which also included the Singer Gazelle and Sunbeam Rapier.

The final version of the Minx was the "New Minx" launched in 1967, which was essentially a basic version of the Hillman Hunter.

Generally, the Minx was available in four-door saloon and estate forms, with a 1496cc engine.

The Hillman Super Minx was a slightly larger model offered during

the Audax era. Throughout the life of the Minx, there was usually an estate version - and, from 1954 to 1965, a short-wheelbase estate, the Hillman Husky, and a van derivative known as the Commer Cob.

The Minx model name was revived briefly - along with the "Rapier" name, as applied to the Sunbeam Rapier version of the Audax family - as a special edition late in the life of the Talbot Alpine / Talbot Solara cars, produced by Chrysler Europe after its takeover of the Rootes Group.

The original Minx was announced on October 1, 1931. It was straightforward and conventional with a pressed-

steel body on separate chassis and 30bhp 1185cc engine producing cushioned power.

The Minx sold between 1945 and 1947 had the same 1185cc side-valve engine, the same wheelbase and virtually the same shape as the prewar Minx. This postwar Minx became known as the Minx Mark I.

The car was to go through a series of modifications and improvements up to Mark VIII.

In 1956-1957 the Audax style body of the Minx, seen in the main image top left, was designed by the

Rootes Group. Announced in

May 1956 the car went through a succession of annual facelifts, each given a series number, replacing the mark number used on the previous Minxes.

The Series I, introduced in 1956, was followed by the

Series II in 1957, the

Series III in 1958, the Series

IIIA in 1959, the Series IIIB in 1960, the Series IIIC in 1961, the Series V in 1963 and the Series VI in 1965.

There was no Series IV. Over the years the engine was increased in capacity from 1390cc (in the Series I and II) to 1725cc in the Series VI.

Late 1961 saw the launch of the Hillman Super Minx. It was intended at one stage to replace the Minx Series III. In the event the Series III would be replaced in 1963 by the Series V, while the Super Minx was launched as a separate, albeit closely related, model.

A replacement Minx (sometimes identified, retrospectively, as the New Minx) took over from the Series VI in 1967. It was a reduced specification version of the Hillman Hunter. Saloon and estate versions were produced, initially equipped with a 54bhp 1496cc 4 cylinder engine. A 61 bhp 1725cc engine became available in 1968.

The final Minx was replaced by a Hillman Hunter De Luxe model in 1970.

was left untouched to retain character and history.

The car has received a full two-tone paint job, blending new paint with older elements as well as the interior being completely re-done.

"The car really is a family member," said David.

"If treated right, it'll outlast them all. Then hopefully the grandchildren will pass it onto their grandchildren."

Autorara is just two years old, but has expanded rapidly growing from a 3,000 square-foot

single garage, to soon operating in a 30,000 square-foot facility in Raynesway, Derby - a tenfold growth.

The company typically has around 60 cars on-site at any time, with a waiting list of about ten more cars.

Its restorations range from high-end classic cars like a rare Lamborghini 400 GT (valued around £500,000) - which the company has been invited to show at the London Concours - to passion projects like a Subaru P1, where restorations are often done in stages to help customers manage costs.

To attract customers beyond the Midlands (especially from the south of England), Autorara offers free off-

site storage for vehicles and app use to keep customers closely involved throughout their car's restoration journey.

The Hillman Minx is now nearing the end of its full restoration, with just a few final parts left to fit before the car is ready to be returned to Paul, and eventually passed onto his family.

"We're in the heat of the moment right now because we want to get over the finish line and we're tantalisingly close," said David.

"Our final work is two days, fitting the final pieces and we're done."

For the team at Autorara, restoring the Hillman has been a labour of love.

Now, with the finish line in sight, Paul's Minx is ready to create new memories for generations to come.

"There's a lot of attachment there for Paul," said David.

"You've got this 90-year-old guy who still misses his dad and that's what's shone through the car."

"Paul has committed so much to this project that it makes him a step out... it's the love of a child."

"It's an amazing privilege and I'm sure we'll all have a tear when that car goes. It's been special."

You've got this 90-year-old guy who still misses his dad and that's what's shone through the car.

David Stubbs

Advert for a Hillman Minx

