

## Building something 'Special'. Ned Buck



I have always liked 20's and 30's vintage cars, even from an early age, but as I am not in the league of Bugatti's, Bentley's, ERA's and the like I thought an Austin 7 special would be more within my budget, especially after I saw an A7 special on a US auction site (left). This was sold in the USA in about 2019. In my view this is one of the prettiest specials I have seen.

So I decided I would try and replicate it, including making my own bodywork. I now know this will be a challenge. Fortunately, there are a lot of photographs on the web site of the car.



I do, of course, like the standard Austin 7's, and love the commercial versions, but I have always wanted to build a car from scratch, and having completed two modern-ish cars, (Nissan 200sx S14 and MGA) I wanted to have a go at something much older.

I bought a chassis and engine off a local trader in A7's – a 1933 PD tourer – which had lost its body! It came with a V5 identifying it as an Austin Special, which was rather handy.

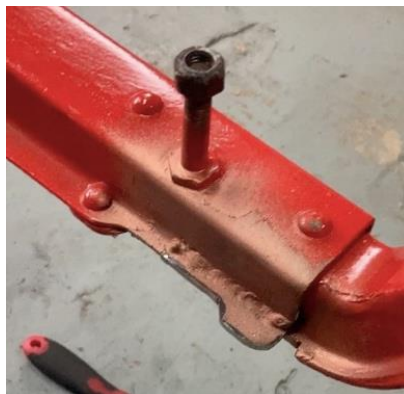
The chassis appeared sound, but a bit rusty. It had semi-Girling brakes, a steering wheel, column and box, plus 4 very rusty wheels. It came with a four-speed box and engine (the latter is thought to be the original, although there was no proof of this). Both the box and the engine were in a sorry state, with the engine having been tweaked at some point evidenced by the 29mm inlet valves and a rather sorry set of nuts, bolts, stripped threads and other items.





I also managed to purchase a pair of axles (front one dropped) with hydraulic brakes already fitted. More of this later, as I don't think it was the bargain it first seemed to be.

The first thing I did was to take the chassis to be sandblasted, then I painted it with a red epoxy undercoat, and a top coat of red Hammerite. Not the usual chassis colour perhaps! During this time I noticed some bits missing from the chassis, so these were made up and welded on.







The suspension on the car I wanted to copy had a different set up, with stainless steel arms and two mounting points.

This required new pieces to be made, and as the front axle is dropped, I also needed to adjust the position of the radius arm, so suitable brackets were made up with one of them locking the end of the spring. I had read that the spring can easily move from side to side under cornering, and I wanted to fix the position to avoid this happening.

I had the suspension arms made up by a firm in Cornwall who will manufacture anything if you send them a decent drawing. I had already made a drawing at 1:50 of the proposed car to help with the build, especially the positioning of the steering and the seating. I can also enlarge any area to full size, if needed.

Using the newly purchased front axle, I managed to get the whole front-end rebuilt quite quickly. However when I fitted the temporary wheels, I noticed the “camber” (lean outwards) of the driver’s side wheel was not at all correct. It turned out that the king pin hole in the axle was stretched slightly, but also the stub axles which appear (now I know what to look for) to have been ground down and I am not sure what car they are from. But they have camber built into them, and are not quite right. I have since removed the entire set up, leaving only the spring attached to the chassis, and sent off the axle to be ‘shrunk’! Fortunately, I still have the original axle and hubs etc, so have started refurbishing them, as they seem much sturdier, having come off the semi-Girling axle.

To be continued.....