



## Imperial War Museum, Duxford (206)

Wed, 22nd Jun 2022

**Estimate:** £40000 - £50000 + Fees

### 1931 Alvis 12/60 TK Beetleback Tourer Coachwork by Carbodies

**Registration No:** VC 8422

**Chassis No:** 13721

**MOT:** Exempt

- 1 of just 43 known survivors
- Among the most desirable four-cylinder, pre-WW2 Alvis models
- The subject of an extensive ten-year restoration completed in 1990
- Much recent work over the past decade or so by Jonathan Wood and Classic Performance Engineering of Bicester
- Part of a private collection since December 2016 during which time it has been driven to Dorset and Norfolk on numerous occasions
- Sympathetically upgraded with a full-flow oil filter, hydraulic brake conversion, Kenlowe fan and right-hand side throttle pedal

For many Alvis enthusiasts there are two four-cylinder pre-WW2 models which really stand out, the 12/50 SD 'Ducksback' and the 12/60 TK 'Beetleback'. So-called because of the shape of its distinctively tapered rear, the latter was the sportiest iteration of the 12/60 TK and TL line of which 229 examples were made during 1931-1932 (the majority being saloons or four-seater tourers). Famously robust, the 12/60 TK was based around a ladder frame chassis equipped with all-round semi-elliptic leaf-sprung suspension and four-wheel drum brakes. Powered by a twin carburettor-fed 1645cc OHV engine allied to four-speed manual transmission, it was reputedly capable of 75mph and 30mpg. Genuinely fun to drive and more agile than many period rivals, the forty-three Beetlebacks known to have survived are rightly prized by collectors.

According to its accompanying copy build record, car number 13721 was fitted with 'Beetleback' Sports Tourer coachwork by Carbodies and despatched from the factory on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1931. Although initially Coventry-registered as 'VC 8422', the 12/60's first owner is noted as Mr James Wallace MacFarlane of Glasgow who is thought to have been awarded the Military Cross and two Bars whilst serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps during World War One. Still resident in Scotland when purchased by Mr E. McCosh of Culter Allers Biggar in April 1953, the Alvis is understood to have been treated to a thorough bodywork renovation and to have seen occasional competition usage (albeit the McCosh family were better known for campaigning Bentleys). To this end, he apparently entrusted the 'Beetleback' to renowned Glasgow engineer Herbert Niven for a hydraulic brake conversion as well as having the throttle pedal repositioned (from centre to right). Laid-up following a heavy frontal impact during the mid-1960s, the 12/60 was inspected by fellow Alvis Owners' Club member and Lanarkshire resident Mr Frank Wetherell in 1969 but deemed to be beyond economic repair. Learning from Niven that 'VC 8422' had been mechanically sorted save for the need for a new radiator, Wetherell became its new custodian during May 1972.

Not happy with the car's mechanical and cosmetic condition, he embarked upon a decade long refurbishment which was completed in 1990. As part of the works, the 20-inch wire wheels were converted to 'jelly mould' hubs and the correct-type replacement engine uprated with an alternator and full-flow oil filter. More comfortable seats were fitted up front and the single dickey seat to the rear re-upholstered to match. Sold to Mr Roger Cowell not long after completion, the 'Beetleback' subsequent passed to Mr M. Baker who entrusted it to Jonathan Wood Vintage & Thoroughbred Restorations Ltd for almost £9,000 worth of fettling during 2009-2010 with attention being paid to the windscreen, radiator, steering, wiring, carburettors and hydraulic brakes. An invoice on file from MWS for £2,191.12 indicates that the wire wheels were refurbished too. Forming part of a private collection since 2016, 'VC 8422' has enjoyed numerous runs to Dorset and Norfolk from its Hertfordshire base. Fitted with a Kenlowe electric fan so as to better cope with heavy traffic, the Alvis started readily and ran well during our recent photography session. The chassis number quoted on the copy build record is still visible to a front dumb iron and the original Alvis ID plate and Carbodies plate are affixed to the bulkhead. Predominantly looked after by Classic Performance Engineering of Bicester over the past six years, this delightful Post Vintage Thoroughbred is offered for sale with history file.