

# Maisonette in the Garden

Paul Genner of the Historic Caravan Club describes a First World War period horse-drawn caravan he was shown in a Hampshire garden.

From a discussion at a Rally in 1993, the whereabouts of an early horse-drawn caravan was passed on to us. From the description given, it seemed reminiscent of the early touring caravans of Bertram Hutchings before he went over to motorised and motor-drawn types. It was not until early this year that it was possible to contact the owners and arrange to go and see it, but this was done during the Whitsun week.

The first view of the caravan did not immediately identify it as it was totally covered in wooden shingles. However, on closer examination, the characteristic front door arrangement gave the first



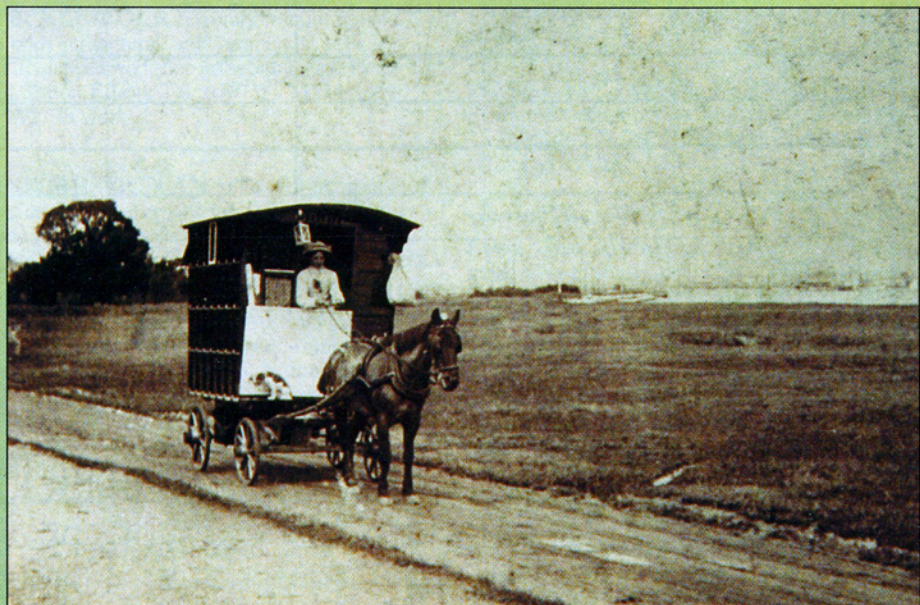
and doors. The windows were unusual on this caravan being fully leaded, which was not normal at the time. The full interior was lined with stained ply, still in good order thanks to the shingling. The external cladding was again ply but this time covered in dark green leathercloth type material with all joints sealed with half round aluminium strip. The leathercloth, however, was a little ripe where exposed. Although this finish was not normal, it was original, as it was wrapped around the bottom frame

*Left: Another view of the caravan nestling under the trees. Even the horse shafts are still stored underneath.*

*Below: The first 'Maisonette', built in 1911. It measured only 4ft x 6ft with a 6ft bunk/seat along the side and a fold down platform at the front which could be draped with canvas to form an annex. The picture is when the van was on its first outing in the New Forest in 1912 with Mrs Grace Hutchings at the reins.*

clue. Once the door was opened, the make and model was certain. The rear end kitchen arrangement was totally typical of The Hutchings' *Maisonette* models with the central enamel sink having two small drawers below and the two angled mirror-fronted cupboards above. To the left was the wardrobe with what seem to be two added drawers below. On the right was the food cupboard over the stove recess which contained a very nice solid fuel stove. The style and design of the woodwork was typical of Hutchings caravans right up to the early 1930s.

The front again was typical with two transverse bunks, the bottom one doubling in the day as a driving seat. The top could be used as a bunk or could be brought down to make a double with the lower. The typical sliding vents over the front door and at the back were still in working order as were all the windows





Left: The Hutchings caravan as first seen by Paul Genner. At a glance, a little shed in the woods.

Right: 1913 sees a 'Maisonette V' in the New Forest, with Bertram Hutchings holding the horse. The accompanying description says "This unique type of Caravan is one of the lightest and most convenient ever produced. One small horse only is necessary. The small black pony shown above is used for driving in a small gig when in camp. When on the road, the gig is tied behind the Caravan."

runners and finished between the frame and floor boards and had probably been supplied to special order.

A novel feature of this caravan was under the floor. The trap door concealed, not the expected food safe, but a feature of many Hutchings caravans - a bath.

The only structural restoration obviously needed was in the area of the fore carriage, which still had a small Hutchings nameplate fitted, wheels and driver staging. Even though the wheels were partially buried, there was a good basis for repair.

From the literature of the time, the caravan could have been built around 1914, or a little later, but a date may be found when the underworks are dismantled. The name *Maisonette* was one of the first used by Bertram Hutchings in 1912 when he started caravan building. There is a nice photograph in existence of Mr and Mrs Hutchings and Son Lionel with *Maisonette V* taken in the New Forest in 1913.

The current owners are at present looking for a good home for this caravan which is available for purchase under the right conditions to ensure this excellent example is preserved for the future. Contact can be made via *Old Glory*.

The Second Edition of the Historic Caravan Club Magazine *Historic Caravan Scene*, which contains interesting articles about the restoration of early touring caravans, including a Bertram Hutchings *Voyager* of about 1916/18, caravanning recollections, details of future events, etc. is now available to non-members.

It can be obtained

**Via website**

[www.historiccaravanclub.co.uk](http://www.historiccaravanclub.co.uk)



Above: Although mostly devoid of fittings, the rear kitchen still has its characteristic Hutchings fittings.

Left: The typical front door arrangement of 'Maisonette' and 'Concord' models is apparent in this caravan.