

By Bob Walls



PART ONE

The Origin of the Jeep

In the late 1930's the US Army realized that future land wars would require mechanized units and these units would need light reconnaissance vehicles capable of good speed and off-road capabilities. The two prime solutions were motorcycles and small 4-wheel cars. Civilian versions of each were tested and a British designed car made by American Bantam Car company was offered for evaluations. The army liked the Bantam car and requested Bantam and other motor car companies to submit samples of military vehicles which would meet the battlefield requirements of the impending war in Europe. These requirements were for a 1,200-pound gross weight, a 75in wheelbase, 4-wheel drive, a mount for a machine gun and other military grade improvements over civilian cars. Bantam and Willys produced prototypes for testing. After much thought, discussion, and apparent "lobbying", it was decided to build a Bantam based vehicle with improvements from the Willys version such as the more Willys powerful 4-cylinder engine. Both companies were given test production contracts and went into production. The first one to enter service was the Bantam 40 BRC with under 2,000 40 BRC's built. Due to concerns that Bantam could not tool up to meet the vast number of anticipated vehicles the army needed, Ford was asked to join the effort. Based on bids from these three companies, Bantam was the highest and the Army contracted with Ford and Willys to joint produce the vehicle in mass quantities. Ford and Willys were not a unanimous decision but in the end it turned out very well. The following quote is a Motortrend's description of the process from their "Retro Review" of the Jeep:

"While partisans argue for either the BRC 40 (1940 model year) or the Ford GP (G for government contract, P meant 80-inch wheelbase), the Mark II model, as the "true" first Universal Jeep, was really an amalgam of all three. Bantam could claim credit for the basic roadster body. Ford contributed the flat hood and nine-slat grille. Willys had the right engine."

There is no certain explanation for the name we know this vehicle was called: Jeep. Officially the new light recon/utility vehicle was known as the ¼ Ton truck- 4x4 GPW or MB (Wyllis MB and the Ford GPW). The name Jeep and Peep seems to have been used for various new vehicles in the early 1930 and 1940's, as it meant new or small. Army Cavalry units called the new vehicles the "Bantam" throughout the war as those units were first given Bantams. Manuals during the war addressed the Jeep as GP and pronouncing GP as "Jeep" is as likely a reason as any for the name that stuck. It is noteworthy that Willys did copywrite the name Jeep before the war ended. The name still being used today for off road vehicles.

Jeep production during WWII totaled 640,000 vehicles of all types from all manufactures and they were used by every Allied army. To demonstrate the absolute superiority of USA industry during WWII compare production numbers. The

German counter part of the Jeep was the Kublewagen, of which a little over 10,000 were produced for the German military. That is a 640 to 1 advantage for the little Bantam, ah, Jeep.

Jeeps were modified to perform additional functions besides recon and “4 Star General Delivery”. Many were used as machine gun platforms for raiding, stretcher carriers, communication, and even railroad switch engines.

Note: Per the original founder of Willys, the family pronounced their Sir name and the company name “Willis”, not “Willies”. Also, in these articles I will refer to all versions as “Jeep” as that is what we now call them. All kit reviews are of kits I have either build or are in the process of building.

Kit 1: The First Jeep- American Bantam Car Company



MiniArt is the only company releasing kits of the Bantam 40 BRC with four releases dating from the first release in 2008 through the latest rebox in 2020. The basic Jeep is the same in each box. The kits have different crew figures consist of two Russian versions, a British version, and a US version.

The MiniArt 355324 kit represents two North African British Jeeps. The box contains three gray colored sprues two for the jeep and one for the crew of three plus one clear sprue for the head lights and windscreen. The molding of the kits is well detailed, but my kit had severe flash. It was so severe I picked up a second kit to avoid the issue. There are twenty-two assemble steps and about 75 parts for just the jeep. Instructions are rather straight forth, but the location of some parts is not clear. Test fitting is a must for that reason and there are NO part numbers on the sprues only on the instruction sheet's sprue layout. Since some of the parts look the same, it is easy to mistake one set of parts for another, The leaf springs and shock absorbers are prime examples. Part fit is good with no putty needed.

Advantages: Detail and appearance is very good. Main parts fit well. The chassis can be built plumb and in alignment with only normal effort. Crew members are a bonus not seen in many new kit offerings and these are normal MiniArt quality. The kit includes a full engine which replicates the Bantam engine to a “T”.

Disadvantages: My second kit also had a little flash, but nowhere as bad as the first kit. These molds may have started showing their age and QC does not look to be Minimart's strength. The detail of the kit comes at a cost of many small parts. As an example, the Tamiya Jeep (mechanically very similar to the Bantam) has 7 parts making up the frame, suspension, and engine while the MiniArt has 36. This does not include the wheels and tires.

Major Issue: The British 1st Armoured Jeep pictured on the box and in the color guide has a totally incorrect color scheme. The MiniArt graphic is exceedingly attractive while totally wrong. Use a brown or green splotch disruptive camouflage instead.

Overall: The only kit of this early version of the Jeep and builds up nicely. Well worth the effort to build

MiniArt

SCALE 1:35 UNASSEMBLED PLASTIC MODEL KIT
 МОДИЛЬНИЙ НАБОР ПЛАСТИКОВОЙ МОДЕЛИ
BRITISH STAFF CAR w/CREW
БРИТАНСКИЙ ШТАБНОГО АВТОМОБИЛЬ
 с ЭКИПАЖЕМ
 35050

A **B** **C** **D**

MINIART LTD
 P. Box 1432, Smerchivka, 95000 Ukraine
 art@miniart-models.com
 www.miniart-models.com

Printed in Ukraine

ATTENTION
 The model is not a toy. It is not intended for children. It is intended for collectors and modelers. It is not intended for use as a toy. It is not intended for use as a toy. It is not intended for use as a toy.

ВНИМАНИЕ
 Эта модель не является игрушкой. Она предназначена для коллекционеров и модельеров. Она не предназначена для использования в качестве игрушки. Она не предназначена для использования в качестве игрушки.

CAUTION
 Please do not use glue on the model. Use only the glue provided with the kit. Do not use other types of glue. Do not use other types of glue.

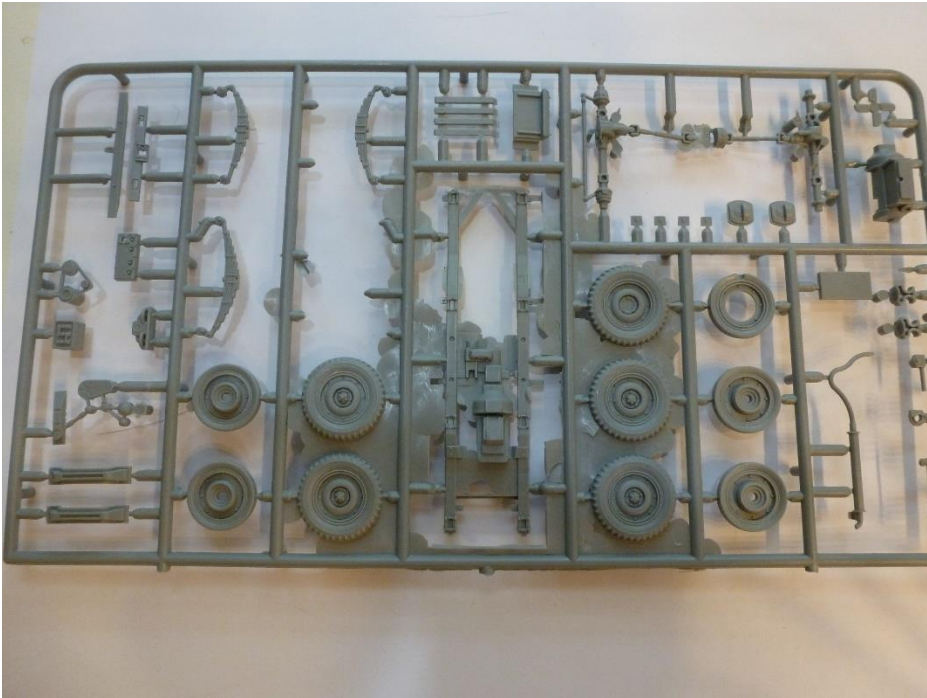
ВНИМАНИЕ
 Не используйте клей для модели. Используйте только клей, предоставленный с набором. Не используйте другие виды клея. Не используйте другие виды клея.

1st Armoured Division, HQ Unit, North Africa, 1942
 1-ая Бронетанковая дивизия, Северная Африка, 1942

№3 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force, Libya, 1941
 №3 Squadron Королевских Австралийских Воздушных сил, Ливия, 1941

Paint number ■ Номер краски Number of decals ● Номер наклейки Variant of paint ● Вариант окраски

№ детали	НАЗВАНИЕ	Материал изготовления	№ детали	№ детали	№ детали	№ детали	№ детали	№ детали	№ детали
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110
111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130
131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160
161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170
171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190
191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200



My Bantam work in progress.



This picture from the American Bantam Car Company website shows the simplicity of the Bantam 40 BRC's dashboard and crew area.

Sources (internet links in blue)

JEEPS 1941-45 by Steve Zaloga Osprey Publishing

American Bantam Car Company website [American Bantam Car Company in World War Two / WWII \(usautoindustryworldwartwo.com\)](http://usautoindustryworldwartwo.com)

Willys MB- Wikipedia

Motortrend's "road test of the 1944 jeep" [1944 Willys MB Jeep Retro Review: The Jeep Is America's Real Sports Car \(motortrend.com\)](http://motortrend.com)

Additional installments of reviews of more Jeep model kits will follow over the next few months.

History of WW II Jeeps and 1/35 Kits reviews Part II

By Bob Walls



Part Two

The Willys and Ford Jeeps

The US Army contracts issued to Willys and Ford were based on the Willys chassis, body and engine with only minor changes made by Ford to aid in their assembly line manufacture. All parts had to be interchangeable to allow for a simplified spare parts supply chain. Because of this, after the first few months of production the two vehicles are almost identical. It has been noted by people restoring Jeeps that it is very common to find WW II jeeps with mixed parts either due to field repairs during the war or Jeep enthusiasts restoring them with whatever parts they could find. On a real-life Jeep, the easiest way to tell the difference is to look for a cursive "F" on all the Ford bolt heads and Ford stopped doing this later in the war. Admittedly that is not any use for a 1/35 scale model! The other more noticeable differences are still minor when looking at a model kit. The frame differed slightly but again that will not be seen or noticed in a model. Instead of listing them all now, I will mention which version the kit manufacture seems to have copied based on these minor differences. For the average modeler, trying to recreate these differences is overkill as they are not readily seen by someone looking at the kit.

Finally, while researching images of Jeeps during WW II it is almost impossible to tell which is Ford and which is Willys. In many pictures you see various crew attached stowage which will cover up some of these minor differences in these vehicles or they are taken at a distance too far to see these or covered up with mud! My advice is to call you kit pretty much what you want unless you correct items which will then make it one version or the other.

The kits listed below vary in age from 1973 issue to recent releases. The more recent releases can be purchased from your favorite model supply shops (online in particular) while older out of production ones will require looking at EBAY or model show vendors selling older kits.

Tamiya Jeep Willys MB 1972 Release



This is the standard older Tamiya release which I don't own. The following SAS Jeep is based on the kit so I can comment that it is normal Tamiya quality and can be built up to represent a good model of the Jeep. If you have it in your stash, it is worth building. It comes with a trailer (see Italeri review below). Honestly, I would not buy this kit unless you find it at a good price or would like to use the trailer. Tamiya did cease to continue making this kit when they released a new tooled version in 1997 which I will review in the next installment. The newer Tamiya release kit does not include the trailer. See the comments on the Special Air Service Jeep which follows as they apply to this kit.

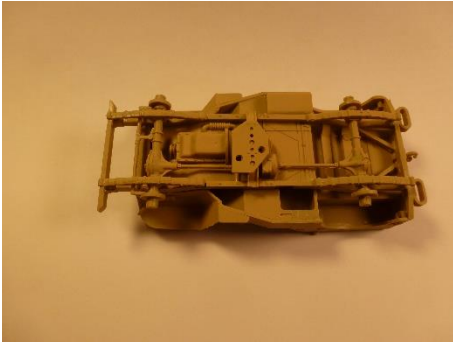
Tamiya British Special Air Service Jeep 1974 Release



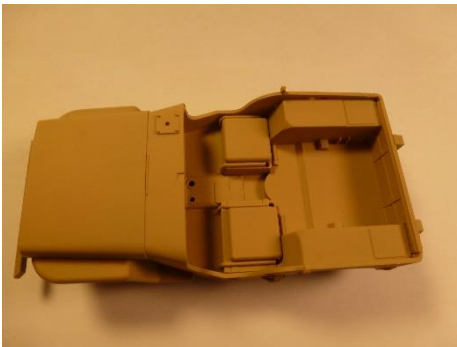
This kit is a re-box of the 1972 kit with certain parts added or changed to allow the building of a SAS gun jeep. The kit itself builds up very easily with only a few dozen vehicle parts with most of the kit parts being the two SAS figures and various SAS weapons and stowage. The kit is a Willys jeep based on the toolbox door which is smooth. It is located on the rear wheel cover next to the rear bench seat. The front bumper needs a small hole drilled in it just left of the center of the bumper which would allow a crank to be attached to start a dead jeep. This is hardly visible, but a difference with Willys Jeeps over Ford ones. At this stage of the war these SAS Jeeps probably are Willys, so the kit fits the subject.

This Jeep kit is no longer produced by Tamiya and runs about \$20-\$35 with shipping on EBAY and generally is only available from international sellers.

The frame is modeled in one piece and contains 7 parts including the springs and axles, compared to the 37 parts of the MiniArt Jeep. If you want an easy build, this may be your kit.



The rest of the body is only four parts.



The location of the Willys crank hole is just left of center on the front bumper. An additional two extra holes where the chassis connects the bumper are on Ford jeeps. This detail is missing from the Tamiya kit so you might want to drill the crank hole in the front bumper.



Italeri Willys Jeep 1977 Release

The Italeri version was released after the first Tamiya one and the kit looks like an upgraded Tamiya Willys kit. It has about the same chassis/frame parts layout and also comes with a trailer but has a few more parts and with a little more detail. You get 3 figures. I rate this kit as a little better than the early Tamiya Jeep kits. It is a must have if you want Jeep a trailer as the Italeri kit is still in stock at most hobby sellers. Availability and trailer are the real benefit of this Italeri kit.



The Italeri kit was re-boxed under the Revell and Testors brand. Italeri also reboxed it with new parts. For the aircraft guys, there is the “Follow Me” Air Force version released in 2014 but is out of production. Check eBay.



Bantam Jeep Trailer

Partly to offset awarding the Jeep contract to Ford and Willys, Bantam was given a contract to build Jeep trailers. The first thing you will notice is that these trailers did not have a drop gate. The reason was they needed to be water tight so they could float. Either by being pulled by the Amphibious Seep, or own their own.





Modern attempt to show that rifles make good paddles.

The following Willys/Ford jeeps will be reviewed in the next series of articles.

Tamiya Willys Jeep released 1997 New tool.

Italeri Willys Jeep Willys Ambulance Jeep released 1980

Italeri Comando Car (Jeep) released 1980

Dragon SAS "Patrol Car" (Jeep) One of the many reboxed Dragon versions of the Jeep. First released in 2011

Taykom Armored ¼ ton Truck (Jeep) released 2020

Ford GPA Seep Amphibious Jeep released in 1974 and re-released as late as 2014 with new figures