Vol. XIX No. 11. 50,000 MILES IN A FIAT 500 November, 1943.

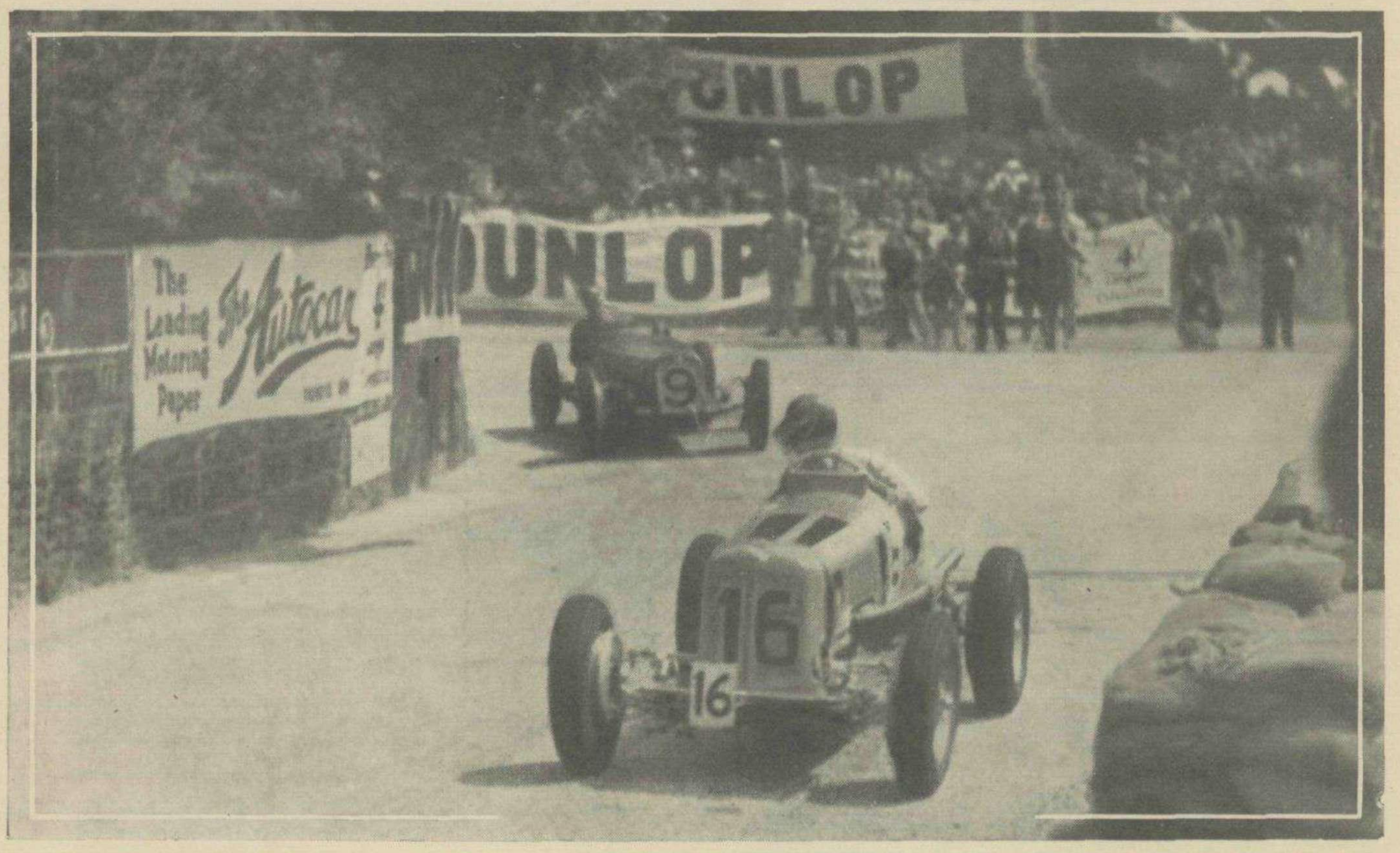
MOTOR SPORT

INCORPORATING

Speed

ONE SHILLING MONTHLY

Norman Pirbright



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Daimler Armoured Cars with their famous Fluid Flywheel Transmission served in North Africa and Sicily with distinction. Such is the testing of the peacetime Daimler to come.

Daimler
goes to war

VOL. XIX. No. 11 NOVEMBER, 1943 PRICE ONE SHILLING

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MOTOR SPORT

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH RACING DRIVERS' CLUB

INCORPORATING **SPEED** AND THE BROOKLANDS GAZETTE

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ENGLAND AND INDIA

Lieut. B. Gordon Graham, R.I.N.V.R., recalls the cars he used before the war in Ceylon, and on home leave in England.

I REGRET that I cannot lay claim to having begun my motoring career at some phenomenally early age, although the interest and keenness has always been there. Nor can I claim to having owned any very extraordinary motor-cars—except my own home-built "special"! So this is just the chronicle of an everyday enthusiast who has, at various times, owned and driven some two dozen different makes of motor-cycles and cars since 1919. I graduated to the usual Morris—my first car—in the usual way, *i.e.*, from two wheels, a belt-driven 2½-h.p. F.N. being the first of several motor-cycles of mediocre performance. However, the F.N. and its successor, a 2½-h.p. Crescent-Villiers, taught me what could and could not be done on a clutchless, single-geared bicycle. I must have used several gallons of petrol in innumerable attempts to climb Gambles Lane and Bushcombe hills near Cheltenham, and actually got to within eight yards of the top of "Gambles" on one never-to-be forgotten Sunday afternoon. My next machine was a 2¾-h.p. New Imperial-Jap with 3-speed box and a huge copper exhaust—which got me into frequent trouble with neighbours. This was a grand little machine and served me well for 18 months, until I took up a tea appointment in Ceylon.

A flat twin Harley-Davidson next took my fancy and proved a complete failure. I sold it as soon as I could. Then came perhaps the most fascinating machine of all, in the form of a 3½ twin Zenith-Gradua-Jap. The engine readily responded to some mild tuning, and both in road-holding and general performance she could beat up machines of twice her capacity, helped, of course, by that fascinating infinitely-variable gear. The one snag was rain, for nothing I could do, or improvise, really overcame the appalling belt-slip which immediately set in during wet weather.

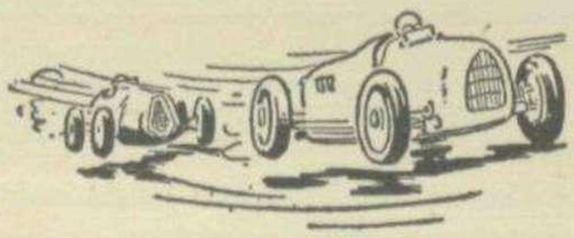
Largely for the sake of change I next tried a succession of makes, including Indian "Scout," Francis-Barnett and 16H Norton—the latter specially tuned and shipped out to me by Leslie Paynter, of Cheltenham. The Norton proved to be "tops" in every way, and crowned a successful career by breaking the (unofficial) record from Colombo to Kitulgala, previously held by a Scott "Flying Squirrel." She covered some 12,000 miles in my hands, and at the end of it would still reach her 73–75 m.p.h. against the watch. Surely one of the best machines ever turned out by Norton's, apart from the later "T.T. Replicas" and "Internationals." Early in 1928 came my first home leave, and, arriving in England early in May, what more natural than "Shelsley" becoming the first appointment of major importance? In between my arrival and the last Saturday in May I bought the Morris—a 1925 4-seater tourer of perfectly standard specification. I am afraid that car was unmercifully caned, and, until the Shelsley pilgrimage, she took it with a smile. Her maximum was about 50, and as the Cotswold roads—apart from the "trials country"—provided my usual stamping-ground, this was her usual gait when going places. She gave up the unequal struggle on the way to Shelsley and developed some horribly expensive noises when running down through Cranham Woods just outside the town. A hasty examination confirmed our fears—"Three big-ends gone, sir"; but to Shelsley we went, nevertheless, and, what's more, she brought us back again the same evening! I shall never forget the look of horror on the face of the garage mechanic when I told him I was going to carry on and would bring the car in the following morning!

While the Morris was undergoing her operation I did a round of the Cheltenham showrooms, and in Ebdon's Garage found an extremely smart and well-conditioned Talbot-Darracq sports 3-seater for £135. It was a case of love at first sight, and, saying good-bye to the Morris (*and* paying the bill, which shook me considerably!) the Talbot became mine within the week. As far as I remember she was the "12/40" model built in France, and she carried a very pretty clover-leaf body with long, pointed steel wings. The body was finished in racing green, the wings in grey and the wheels in black, and, although rather high by modern standards, she was very definitely a good-looker. Her manners were perfect, and the seating position, behind the well-raked Vee screen, just what it should be, with all controls comfortably to hand and a large rev.-counter in front of the wheel. The dashboard carried, in addition, a speedometer, clock, oil pressure and temperature gauges, thermometer, petrol gauge and ammeter, as well as an impressive array of lights and switches. On the steering column was a lever for the exhaust cut-out, and with this open she had the burble of a 3-litre Bentley at low speed. Gear-change (3-speed close-ratio box), headlamp dipping levers and hand-brake were all on the right, and it took a little practice to seize the correct one at the right moment! I ran this car for the remainder of my leave and in several thousand miles she never once let me down, giving battle to all and sundry on the slightest provocation—not always with success, I must admit, for a genuine 75 m.p.h. was the most I ever coaxed out of her. During this time I met only one

similar model and that was rather late one evening when returning from Brooklands. The other car appeared to be identical to mine in every way, except that the driver was a remarkably pretty girl. I have since wondered whether Cupid muttered a soft "damn" when neither of us stopped.

All good things end some time, and home leave is no exception. I had hoped to take the car back to Ceylon with me, but an examination of my finances soon knocked that idea on the head and, to cut a long and sorrowful story short, I finally hawked her round Great Portland Street to obtain a miserable £65 from an unwilling salesman. I have often wondered what became of her afterwards. Unfortunately, I cannot remember her registration number off hand. Back in Ceylon, and almost "broke," I perforce had to return to two wheels, this time to a very hot 3½ Douglas, which I stripped and tuned until she blew up. However, prior to this sad climax she served me well and covered most of the island, including several jungle trips over "Scott Scramble" type of country. Rigorous economy had its reward, and in due course I again became the owner of a car, this time a Fiat Nine 2-seater. This was only a stop-gap, for once having owned a sports car nothing in the way of ordinary transport would satisfy. This little Fiat was a gentlemanly machine, but far too low-geared and too prone to ignition failure—notably when I was on my honeymoon on a little-used jungle road at night! She had her good points, all the same, particularly the steering, which was well-nigh perfect, and a lovely gear-change. I believe this model was known as the "509" and became quite popular in England, where her incredibly low bottom gear should have been useful for trials work.

We hung on to the Fiat until our next home leave in 1933. Previous to sailing from Ceylon I had booked a "little-used (*sic*!) demonstration model" McEvoy-Special Morris Minor from a Derby firm. A record of this car's condition is, or was, on the A.A.'s files, so I will say no more except that I had to spend a small fortune to make the car into what I had expected to obtain. The moral for overseas buyers is obvious! In the end we had a very satisfactory and smart little motor, which took us all over England and over many of the West Country trials routes. With standard "boots" we made clean climbs of "Fingle" (in a snow storm), "The Roost," "Blue Hills," "Bushcombe," "Gambles," "Ferris Court" and other well-known hills, but met our Waterloo on "Iles Lane," possibly because, by then, our rear tyres were nearly bald. She had a maximum —with aluminium head, double valve springs, and polished ports—of about 63, but would cruise all day at 50, and the remote-control gear-change was perfect, although it did "come away in me 'and" once, in the middle of Bath traffic. We shipped the little car back to Ceylon when we returned, but soon after she developed the most chronic thirst for oil and petrol, so, after a conference, and on being offered considerably more than we had paid for her, we took delivery, in part exchange, of a really grand little motor —an Austin "65."



By this time the Ceylon Motor Sports Club was really on its feet, and as secretary, with my wife a most enthusiastic assistant and competitor, we got down to serious tuning and preparation, at the same time using the car for everyday work and play. To begin with, we ran her in with the utmost care, using colloidal graphite throughout. I took $\frac{1}{16}$ in. off the head, polished the ports and everything else that I could get at with my limited outfit of tools and equipment, did some drilling and lightening wherever possible, and, after balancing the wheels and checking over the brakes for freedom, and other routine jobs, very carefully reassembled her. While this was being done I had the windscreen altered to fold flat on the scuttle and had the position of the spare wheel changed so that it stood vertically behind the seats, thus making sufficient space for an "occasional" seat in the dickey, or for extra luggage.

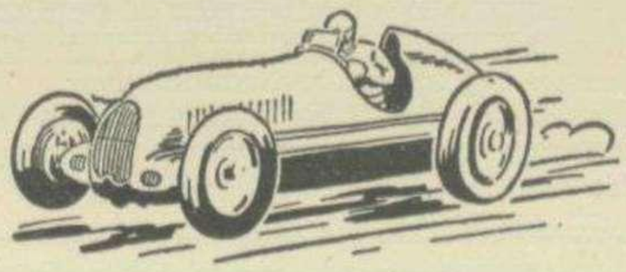
We entered for the next hill climb and as far as I can remember—my records being in Ceylon and myself in India at time of writing—came away with third fastest time of the day, a second, and a win in the ladies' class. Each successive hill climb the competition became keener, as more sports cars found their way to Ceylon. They were grand fun, those hill climbs, and we kept the Austin flag nobly flying with a place or two each time, and "ladies' records" for the two hills we used, "Mahagastotte" and "Leangawella." I had to sell the little car when an additional member joined the family, for nursing home charges are high, and the Austin was somewhat cramped when the whole "team" was aboard at the same time. I last saw her going well in Colombo some two years ago. May she still be in good hands!

Now followed a period of acute "impecuniosity," when our sole means of transport was a succession of ancient and ill-treated Austin Sevens, a terrible old Lea-Francis which my wife found so tiring to drive that we sold it within a month, and a wreck of a Morris Minor which had been "over the Khud" umpteen times, to judge by its appearance! No amount of loving care or expenditure could have done much for these motors, and we certainly could not afford the latter!

The year 1937 brought a brain-wave. Why not build our own car from the wreckage of one "written off" by an insurance company? Not exactly a "special," and yet capable of being entered for the C.M.S.C. hill climbs and of being used for daily work on the estate. Grand idea! All began well, a wrecked Ford Eight saloon being bought for a song and stripped down to the bare frame. From this we gradually worked up, lowering the chassis three inches and welding in another cross-member amidships. Ford Ten wheels, an Austin Seven fan assembly, a Chevrolet radiator, Morris Eight seats and cut-down folding screen, transversely-mounted Hartford "shockers" all round, an outside straight-through exhaust and a body made up of aluminium panels bent to shape, and the result was definitely not so bad, for did not "Bira" himself remark, when I met him in Colombo, "I say, that looks hot." Very gratifying! I tuned the engine to the best of my ability, again limited by tools and equipment, of course, and as the all-in weight was only 9 cwt., the performance was, up to her limit of 70 m.p.h., quite startling. We had her cellulosed black with red wings and wheels, and, somewhat naturally, she became known as "Rouge et Noir" (with apologies to Raymond May's famous car of that name).

She soon made her mark, largely due to her excellent acceleration, and although we collected no firsts we gave some of the other entrants a fright, and put a few seconds and thirds into the bag, while my wife succeeded in lowering her own records for both hills, and collected the M.G.C.C. Members' Cup at the Mahagastotte event.

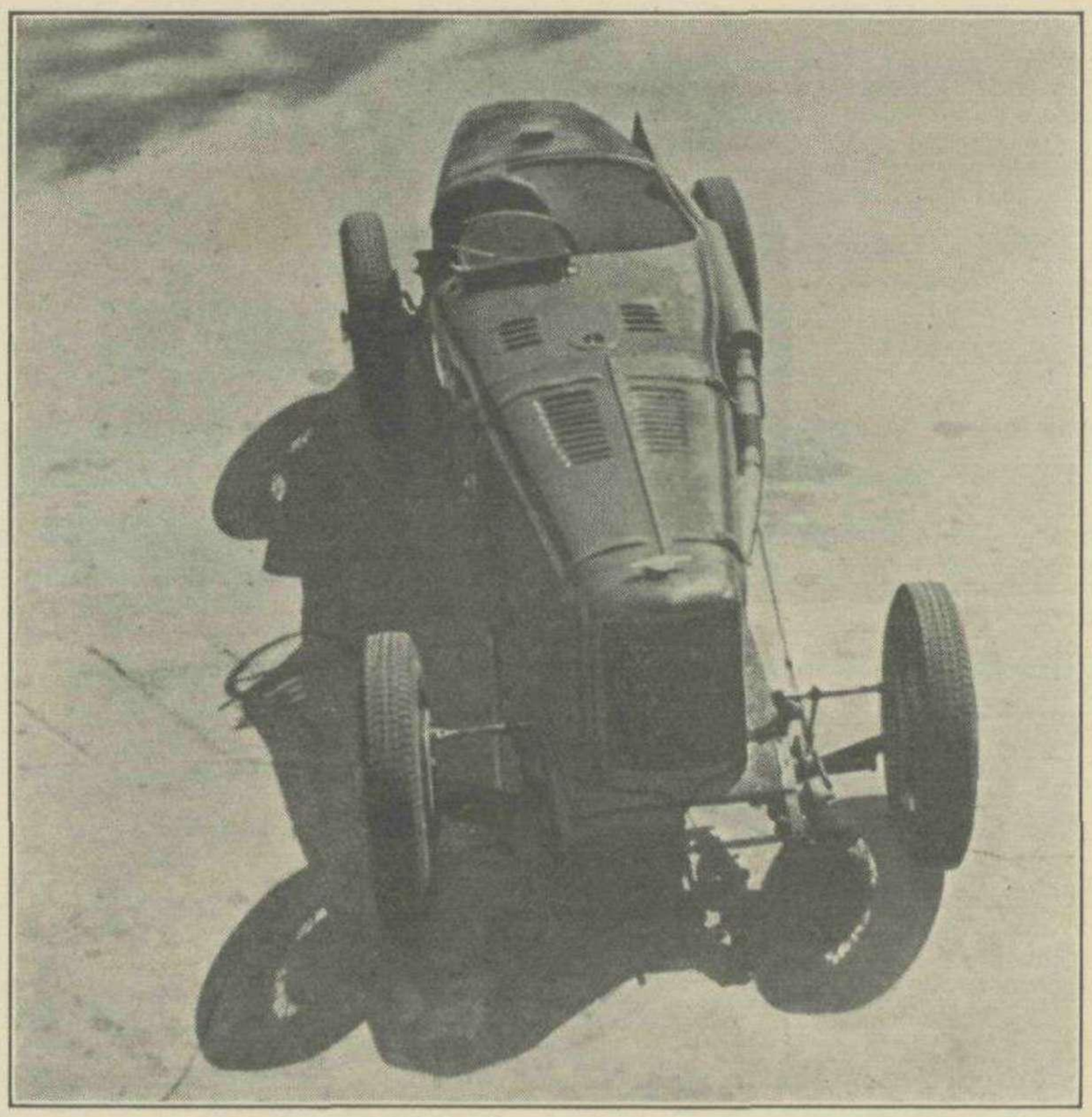
When our time for home leave again came round we gave "Rouge et Noir" into a friend's keeping, and ordered a 1937 open Ford Ten tourer from V. W. Derrington, who was asked to tune and fit her out according to our own ideas, having her ready for collection when we landed. Right well did he carry out our wishes, and I take this opportunity of thanking him for having "done us proud." This car was used throughout the winter of 1938–9 both in England and Ireland, covering over 9,000 miles in six months of particularly severe weather. She collected a second-class award for me in the 1939 J.C.C. Rally at Brooklands, went through a half-day trial in Hampshire, climbed most of the West Country trials hills at one time or another, including a fast, clean ascent of "Nailsworth Ladder" (*en route* to the May "Shelsley") and, later, back in Ceylon, won her class and a second in the last pre-war hill climb. With over 40,000 miles to her credit, I said "good-bye" only when my chance came to go overseas, and I can but hope that she has found a good home. I take my hat off to Henry Ford and Derrington for having given me much pleasant motoring. And now I come to my last and most perfect car of all, one that I am thankful to say is still "sleeping peacefully," as Davies puts it, alongside his ex-Dobbs Riley in Colombo, awaiting the return of happier days—my Type 328 B.M.W. Left to me by a very great friend and sportsman, who has since been killed while serving with the R.A.F., it is my most treasured possession, and is a type too well known to all enthusiasts to need any eulogy or description from me. Suffice it to say that those more qualified than I place it amongst the twelve best sports cars in the world. Hurry on the day when we can renew our companionship, and the freedom of the roads is ours again!



★ VETERAN TYPES XXVI

A 1924 GRAND PRIX SUNBEAM

By Anthony S. Heal
the present owner



AFTER their historic victory in the 1923 Grand Prix at Tours the Sunbeam Company were not content to rest on their laurels but made a determined effort to produce another world-beating design for the following year's race. The *piece de resistance* of the event at Tours had undoubtedly been the employment of forced induction on the 8-cylinder Fiats. Although they were easily the fastest cars in the race the teething troubles, which so often beset new mechanical devices when first subjected to the acid test of Grand Prix racing, eliminated the entire Fiat team before the end of the course. But Louis Coatalen and Bertarione clearly saw that the supercharger had come to stay and they set-to to make their successful 2-litre 6-cylinder engine give 35 per cent. more power without sacrificing its reliability. Mercédès and Fiat, the only European firms to have employed blowers on their racing cars up to this time, both used their *kompressors* to drive air through the carburetter only when the throttle was fully open. The 1924 Sunbeam broke fresh ground, and incidentally set an example which has since become almost normal practice, by having its Roots-type blower, which was driven direct off the end of the crankshaft, aspirating through the carburetter and delivering the mixture under pressure to the induction ports.

Apart from the addition of the supercharger, the rest of the engine was hardly modified. The six steel cylinders (67 × 94 mm.) had welded-on water jackets. The twin overhead camshafts, which were gear-driven from the rear of the engine, operated two large valves per cylinder through pivoted steel fingers. The valves were inclined at 90 degrees. The unusual split race main and big-end roller bearings (a vestige of Bertarione's earlier association with Fiat's) were again used. The advantage of this form of construction was that it enabled a one-piece crankshaft to be employed. The engine developed 145 b.h.p. at 5,000 r.p.m., which should be compared with the 107 b.h.p. given by the same motor in unsupercharged form in 1923. The clutch and 4-speed gearbox were built in one unit with the engine, while a large-diameter torque tube located the rear axle and took care of driving and braking stresses. The braking was assisted by a mechanical servo-motor driven by skew gears from behind the gearbox. On account of the extra length of the power unit (due to the addition of the supercharger) the wheelbase was 4 in. longer than the 1923 cars, but the chassis frame was 2½ in. lower.

The story of Sunbeam's misfortunes at Lyon during the 1924 Grand Prix is now ancient history, and probably everyone knows that although they were the fastest cars entered they lost all chance of winning through having been persuaded, on the eve of the race, by the representative of Robert Bosch A.G., to fit a new type of magneto. The result was that both Segrave and Resta suffered intermittent misfiring throughout the race. Segrave led for the first three laps but fell back to 14th due to magneto trouble. He demonstrated the Sunbeam's potential form, however, by gaining six places in five laps, eventually finishing fifth after putting up the fastest lap of the race at 76 m.p.h. K. Lee Guinness lay second to Ascari's Alfa-Romeo for ten laps, and when the Italian car stopped to refuel on the 16th lap K.L.G. actually led the race. Unfortunately he had to retire on his 21st lap with bearing trouble.

Although it failed to achieve a win in the 1924 Grand Prix de l'A.C.F. the 2-litre Sunbeam has to its credit a very long line of successes in all kinds of events, including Grands Prix, world's and class records, hill climbs and Brooklands races. Here is a list of some of the more important achievements. A full list would occupy far too much space.

ROAD RACES.

1924. *Grand Prix de l'A.C.F.:* 5th, H. O. D. Segrave (and lap record).
Spanish Grand Prix: 1st, H. O. D. Segrave—64.09 m.p.h.

1925. *Grand Prix de l'Europe:* 3rd, Count Masetti.

1933. *Co. Down Trophy Handicap:* 1st, T. McCalla (scratch)—67.94 m.p.h.

RECORDS.

1924. Dario Resta. Class E: 1 mile—119 m.p.h.; 1 km.—121 m.p.h.

1925. H. O. D. Segrave. World's Records: 3 hrs. and 500 km.—102 m.p.h.

1928. K. Don. 7 Class E Records up to 200 miles (1 hour—116 m.p.h.).

1929. K. Don. 2 World's Records: 200 km. and 200 miles—115 m.p.h.
K. Don. 3 Class E Records: 5 km.—126.1; 5 miles—125.8; 10 km.—125.7.

BROOKLANDS RACES.

1927. *Brooklands Gold Star:* 1st, K. Don—118.58 m.p.h.

1928. *Lightning Long Handicap:* 1st, K. Don (from "owe 7 sec.")—118.46 m.p.h.

1930. 500-*Mile Race:* 3rd, Purdy and Cushman—104.74 m.p.h.

HILL CLIMBS

1924. Aston Clinton: Dario Resta. Fastest time and new record.
South Harting: Dario Resta. Fastest time.

HILL CLIMBS—*continued*

1925. Kop Hill: H. O. D. Segrave. Fastest time.
Shelsley Walsh: H. O. D. Segrave. Fastest time.
Klausen Pass: Count Masetti. Fastest time and new record.

From the foregoing brief outline of the 2-litre Sunbeam's performance and achievements it may well be imagined that it was with a good deal of pleasurable anticipation that a group of "vintagents" forgathered in Birmingham during the "phoney" stage of the war for the purpose of making a trial run on one of these famous Grand Prix cars. The machine which was to be sampled was No. 3 of the team (DA8667), which was driven by Kenelm Lee Guinness in the 1924 race at Lyon and by Count Conelli in the 1925 Grand Prix de l'Europe at Montlhèry. Subsequently it was used by Count Masetti to put up a new record at the Klausen Pass in Switzerland and by H. O. D. Segrave to secure fastest time of the day at Kop Hill and Shelsley Walsh. From 1927 the same car became well known at Brooklands as "The Cub," achieving numerous successes and taking many world's and class records.

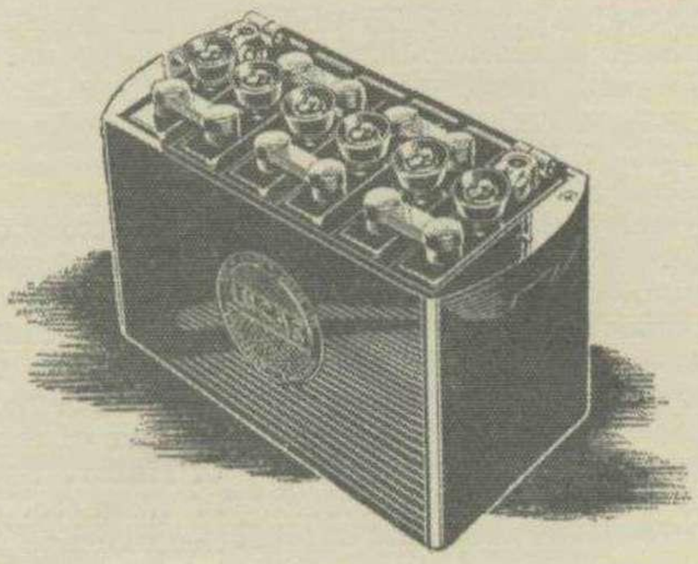
On arrival at our rendezvous we found the Sunbeam had already been pushed out of its garage. Although fitted with large helmet-type wings and an additional silencer, the low battleship-grey car still bore the purposeful look that distinguishes the veritable *voiture de course*. After a short tow we gained the open road, clear of the city's traffic. The engine was then started, and after running rather hesitatingly at first it was soon firing evenly and was allowed to warm up gently at about 1,500 to 2,000 r.p.m.

Sitting in the driving seat, the spring-spoked steering wheel with its leather-covered rim seemed to be in exactly the right place to suit the writer. The centrally-situated gear lever was short and rigid and it was only necessary to move the left hand a very short distance from the wheel to reach the lever, which moved in a pleasingly positive manner. The gate is so arranged that to change to third one pulls the lever towards one. The outside handbrake was within comfortable reach of the right hand and a 6-in. lever, moving on a quadrant mounted in the centre of the dashboard, controlled the advance of the two magnetos, whose distributors projected into the cockpit. The Jaeger revolution counter was mounted on a series of radially disposed spiral springs to insulate it from vibration. A thermometer, and air, oil, and blower-pressure gauges were the only other instruments provided. The small, rather closely-spaced pedals called for narrow shoes if the driver was to be sure of hitting the right note at the right time.

The first thing that occurred to the writer as he moved off was the extraordinary lightness of the clutch compared with other cars of contemporary vintage. Due to the light flywheel, the engine accelerated and slowed down with a rapidity which was rather disconcerting to a "vintagent" brought up on "30/98" Vauxhalls and Bentleys. The timing of the gear change was, however, soon mastered and, with second gear engaged, engine speed quickly mounted to 4,000 r.p.m., when a change was made to third. Becoming a little emboldened the throttle was opened a bit wider, the blower gauge (which hitherto had registered zero) mounted to "3 hectogrammes," and with the whine of the timing wheels and gearbox plus the skirl of the blower the Sunbeam was very quickly travelling at what many people would feel was *une allure exageree*. Over one hundred and fifty horse-power can produce quite a startling effect with a motor-car weighing only 16 cwt.! Possibly the most shattering sensation is to sit in the mechanic's seat while the driver accelerates really rapidly, using the gearbox in the manner the makers intended. The writer, who is rather *blase* where acceleration is concerned, certainly felt that he had never experienced anything like it.

After a short run the machine was stopped to allow the tender car with the other members of the party to catch up. Everybody, naturally, wanted to try the Sunbeam, and a suitable stretch of road was selected to enable them to do so. Once warmed up, starting could be effected by one brisk half-turn of the handle, which was just as well, as it is all too easy to stall the engine when getting away on the high bottom gear with a motor which produces very little torque

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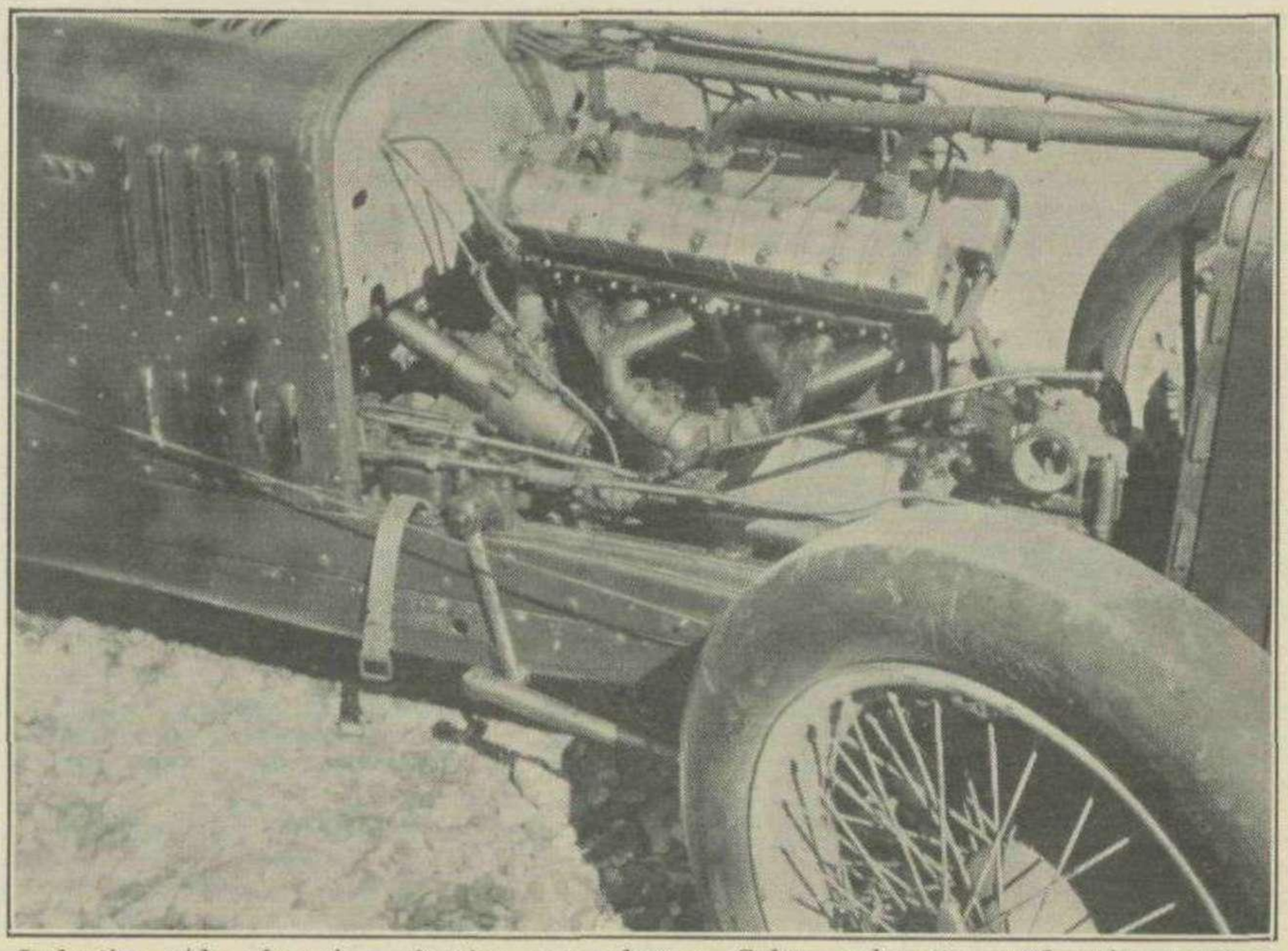
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below 2,500 r.p.m. The get-away from a standstill was found to require a little practice, but once mastered it was possible to make a pretty rapid start.

Our short trial run soon had to be terminated, but it so happened that we were able to renew our acquaintance with the Sunbeam not very long afterwards. The new owner decided to bring the car by road from Birmingham to his home not far from London. As this involved a journey of just over 90 miles the same party forgathered again a fortnight later and the writer had an opportunity of driving the Sunbeam for a large part of the journey. Coming out of Birmingham, the servo-operated brakes seemed quite inadequate, but this was due to the comparatively low road speed being insufficient to bring the servo mechanism into full operation. As the speed was increased so the potency of the braking improved until out on the open road the retardation was better than that of many modern cars. The higher the speed rose the better the braking became. There was no difficulty in driving amongst the normal main road traffic provided intelligent use was made of the gearbox and the ignition lever. Incidentally, hardly any pinking occurred despite the fact that "Pool" petrol, with an admixture of oil, was being used. In this connection it is interesting to recall that it was usual for "The Cub" to be driven from the works at Wolverhampton to Brooklands on ordinary No. 1 spirit, although petrol-benzole mixture was used for racing.

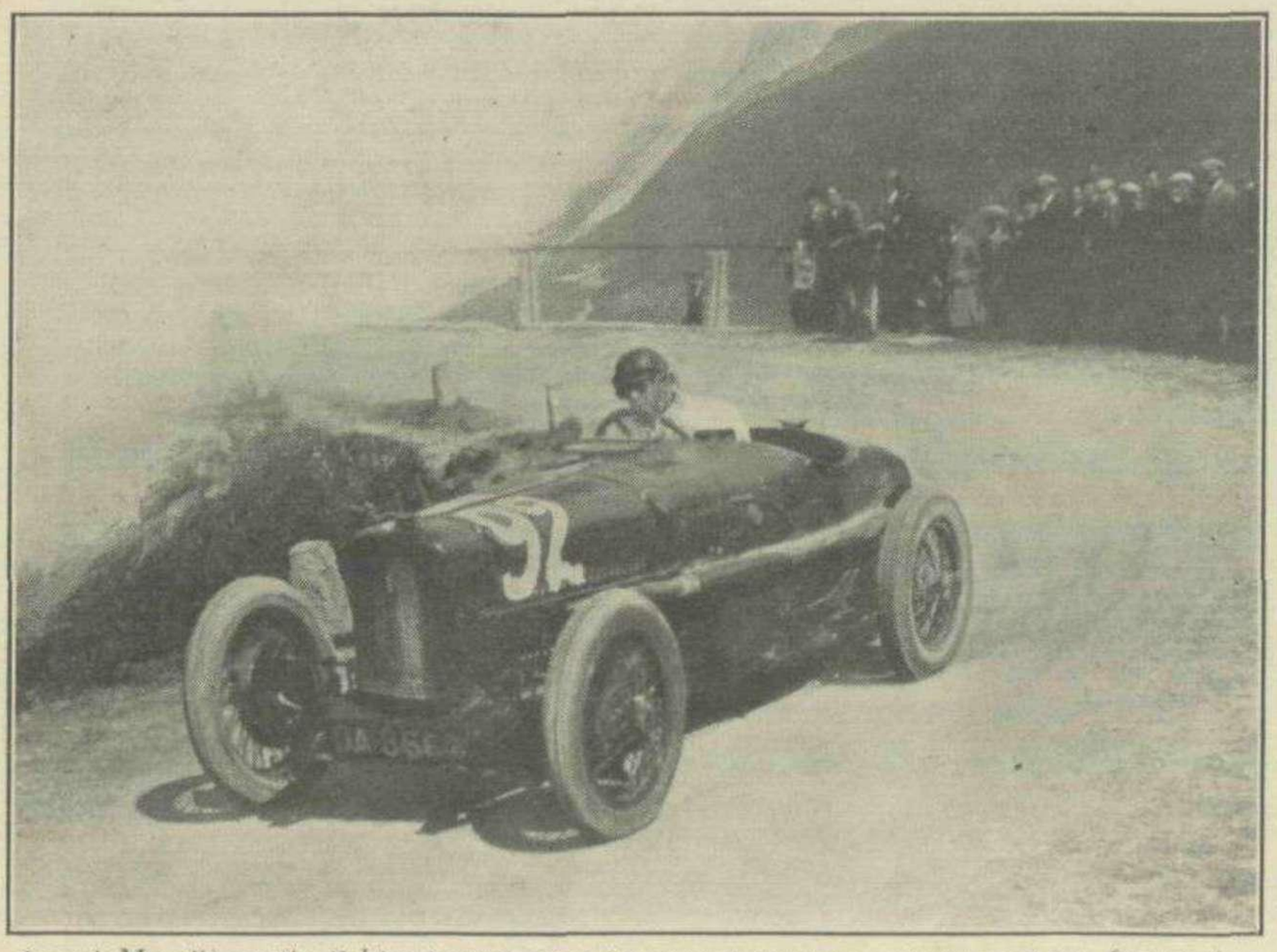
On this occasion no attempt was made to drive very fast as the motor-car was too valuable to be endangered on its first outing in the hands of its new owner. Nevertheless, we proceeded at a pace which meant that our modern saloon, which acted as a tender car, had its work cut out to keep the Sunbeam in sight.



Induction side of engine, showing supercharger, Solex carburetter, and twin overhead camshafts driven by gears from rear of the crankshaft.

Travelling at about 60 m.p.h. with the throttle barely open, the blower gauge scarcely registered at all. A long, inviting straight stretch of road tempted the writer to press gently on the loud pedal. About half throttle was all that was necessary to achieve the century. Round corners the car seemed glued to the road (as they say in all the best road-test reports) although indiscreet use of the throttle would result in the tail sliding outwards slightly. This power-slide of the rear wheels always appeared to be perfectly controllable, and with a little practice the technique might be usefully developed. Passing through a county town the racer was driven almost like an American saloon in order to avoid arousing the ire of the local Gestapo. The volume of sound produced by the mechanism when revved up on the lower gears is very pleasant to the enthusiast, but there are some Philistines who are so devoid of good taste as to be unable to appreciate it! In consequence of our appeasement policy it was not unnatural that a plug should oil up, and once clear of the town a stop was made to change it, and to take some photographs. A change of drivers was also made and the writer then wrestled with the tin buzz-box in a vain attempt to keep the Sunbeam in view. That his efforts were unavailing is not surprising, as it was afterwards learnt that the racer had held 100 m.p.h. up one of those deceptive main road gradients that take the stuffing out of all but the most potent touring machines. Incidentally, at this speed the only sounds the driver is conscious of are the slight whine of the blower and the rushing of the wind.

The popular idea of the old-fashioned racing car is a rather fierce machine with very hard springing and steering that calls for a good deal of exertion on the part of the driver. The Sunbeam is the very antithesis of such a car. Its steering is very light and the suspension gives a much more comfortable ride, even at touring speeds, than most vintage sports cars. An outstanding feature of the whole design is the light touch required with each control. It is, in fact, not unlike an organ, no more pedal pressure being required to bring forth the full diapason of 150 b.h.p. than to produce the shrill tremolo of the four tyres under the heaviest braking. The Sunbeam is a machine which needs to be driven with all the finesse and sympathy of which the driver is capable. Once the velvet-glove technique is acquired the car can be made to perform in the most soul-satisfying manner.



Count Masetti on the 2-litre Grand Prix Sunbeam, DA8661, putting up the fastest time and setting a new record for the course in the Klausen Pass Hill Climb, August, 1925. His time, 17 min. 28.88 sec., beat Divo's 12-cylinder 10-litre Delage by 16½ sec. Average speed 46 m.p.h. Previous record held by Otto Merz (2-litre Mercedes), 18 min. 48.6 sec.

A Major Describes His Cars

THE first car I ever handled was an uncle's 1925 Lancia "Dilambda," which struck me at the early age of 14 as easy to steer and possessed of a wonderful lock. I was then permitted by my mother to learn the art of driving on her 1930 14-h.p. Voisin which, after the Lancia, I remember finding almost impossible to steer. However, I managed to pass out to my parent's satisfaction without doing major damage to the machinery or myself. This particular car had a 3-speed gearbox with additional low top, 2nd and 1st, operated electrically from a lever on the dash, I remember.

For my birthday in 1933 I was presented, out of my savings from benevolent relations, with a brand new "J2" M.G. This was the joy of my life until my grandfather died, when I sought pastures new and saw faults in my M.G. to which I had been previously blind. Its 2-bearing crankshaft vibrated and whipped at any appreciable speed, its acceleration was mediocre and the gearbox, with its wide ratios, became, as time went on and I learnt more, a nightmare. I must in fairness say it never once let me down and steered and stopped as a motor should. The road-holding for its size and year of manufacture was first class.

My next car was a 1935 again—new Aston-Martin, Mark II, a truly remarkable car at the time and in retrospect. Snags, I remember, were the time taken to strike a happy medium between road-holding and comfort with the double Hartfords fitted. This, I remember, exercised most of my spare time until I got things to my satisfaction with the aid of a spring balance. It was, in my opinion, about 2 cwt. too heavy. To show the stuff these cars were made of I used to tour the Lake District and Scotland in my leave periods from Sandhurst, where I was at the time. In my ignorance I used to keep the rev.-counter needle on 4,000 for mile after mile up the Great North Road and back again, with not a single complaint. This car (BGF557) after I parted with it was, I believe, fitted with a 2-litre engine and used at Brooklands.

I was next persuaded by a friend that a super Marendaz had come on the market in the form of the 2-litre or "15/90." One of these I purchased new in the summer of 1936. It was carefully run in, as were all my cars, and for the first 5,000 miles gave me great pleasure. It steered well, held the road better than my Aston, due in part to the rear cantilever springs, and had better acceleration and a higher cruising speed on the 4-to-1 rear axle ratio. Again I went over the passes in Westmorland and West Scotland and returned home full of praise for the car which, incidentally, gave off an honest 88 m.p.h. without the help of gravity. From 5,000 to 9,000 miles, when I sold it for a song, it rapidly got tired of motoring; the gearbox gave incessant trouble, half shafts managed to disengage at the most embarrassing moments, and the front wings preferred trailing along the ground to remaining an integral part of the body. The steering could be wound and unwound without any appreciable effect on the front wheels; the power unit was, however, game to the last.

I then got a 1937 S.S. "100"—I think the best car I have ever owned. I wish I still had it! It had no snags and gave no trouble. It finished second of the cars from John o' Groats in the Monte Carlo Rally, and 31st on general classification. The acceleration was colossal, the braking and steering beyond criticism, the road-holding, after fitting Hartfords at the rear in place of the standard hydraulics, was again all that could be desired for normal purposes, and the engine was as good the day I sold it as when new.

I exchanged this S.S. for a 1931 4½-litre blower Bentley, which, I am afraid to admit, I did not like. Brakes were poor, steering was like an Army lorry, apart from front end dither at 55–60 m.p.h., and, of course, the engine was rough in comparison with the S.S. No, I am afraid I must be the wrong type and not good to know, for I have never yet driven a vintage Bentley that I was madly keen to own.

[Modernists cannot say that we refrain from publishing both aspects of an argument!—ED.]

A friend, failing to realise what a radiator was for, blew up the Bentley and so I bought a 1932 sloping-radiator 2-litre Lagonda. This had the finest steering of any car I have ever driven and a perfect engine, which always started, summer and winter, first push of the button. If only the chassis had been eight cwt. lighter, what a car that would have proved!

A woman then persuaded me that open motoring was a bad thing as far as her hair was concerned, so I bought a 1937 Talbot "110" saloon, with body by Young of Bromley. This machine had steering like a lorry (due to worn king pins, I think) but, this apart, it went like a bomb and was very pleasant. The sunshine roof was lethal and had a habit of parting company with the car when passing cyclists. However, a garage fixed this for me and saved other users of the road considerable panic and myself not a little embarrassment. This car I sold at 50,000 miles, as it needed a re-bore and other such things. Incidentally, it had a "crash" box and not the Wilson which is usual, I believe, for this model.

I now bought a 12-h.p. Atalanta and a 16-h.p. B.M.W., both secondhand, the first in 1939 and the other in 1940. The former I still have stored away. It was one of the works team cars that won the team prize in the R.A.C. Rally, I think in 1938. Apart from the engine noise due to fair wear and tear this machine was ideal. The suspension, independent on all four wheels by coil springs, could not be bettered, to my mind. The steering was practically as good as the Lagonda, and the power-to-weight ratio for a 1½-litre was well above average. On the 4-to-1 axle ratio we could cruise all day at 75 m.p.h. The braking was first-class and the cornering unrivalled; altogether the best value I have so far encountered. The B.M.W. was an awful motor-car. I will say no more except that I must have been unlucky. It was a Type 329, and progressed like a mountain goat, cornered like a Yank, and braked like an Austin Seven; its acceleration was good.

I now have a 1938 3½-litre Jensen drophead, to which I have fitted, to save gas, a H.V. Delco-Remy coil, and Cox Atmos economisers to the two down-draught S.U.s. This motor I prefer to any so far, chiefly for its 2.9-to-1 overdrive, giving 60 m.p.h. at 2,000 r.p.m., and noiseless and vibrationless travel up to 90 m.p.h.; the braking and road-holding are excellent and the acceleration as good as most.

In June this car was laid up and I shudder to think I shall become a cyclist-cum-pedestrian until present urgent matters are finally settled, when I will, with luck, afford a family saloon of vintage aspect.

If You are Interested in any particular car that has been road-tested by MOTOR SPORT turn to the back page where our list of reports has been brought up to date by the inclusion of all tests conducted by us during the last five years.

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TERMITE INDEED!

Harold Biggs discusses a satisfactory 50,000 miles in a Fiat 500.

AS if to celebrate the return to sanity of its country of origin, when passing over Highgate Archway on the morning of September 8th, 1943, my standard 1936-series Fiat 500 clocked its 50,000th mile. I was, at the time of the original test reports on the new Fiat 500, only interested from an academic point of view, and it was not until early 1938 that I actually drove one of these incomparable little cars. In May I was approached by one of my customers, of the so-called gentler sex, with the request to take her Riley "Gamecock" in part exchange for one. Having contacted my friend Owen Finch, then controlling West Weybridge Motors, one was located, the property of the late Eric Fernihough, of immortal fame as a world's record holder with his Brough Superior. Finch brought this car up for a demonstration, and I was at once impressed by the road-holding, braking and general performance. The deal being completed, I collected the car from Weybridge and, of course, dropped in at the track for a few laps, and was surprised at being able to hold a speedometer 62 (actual about 58) all round the Byfleet.

The new owner ran the car throughout 1938, but, in the winter, began to be dissatisfied with its cold starting, being one of those people who pull out the rich mixture control, then the starter button, until something happens—in this case the battery running down. All this culminated in her leaving the car out one sub-zero night, which brought an agonised call that the cooling water had disappeared from its rightful home and reappeared in the sump. I consulted Fiats as to the likelihood of a cracked block, and they reassured me by saying that it was in all probability the core plugs behind the valve stems which had pushed out, thus saving the block. This was indeed true, but I shall never forget being towed up from Guildford in thick slush which obscured the windscreen, by one of my mechanics who believed in "safety fast."

The freezing occurrence so frightened the owner of the car that in the spring of 1939 I took the car back in part-exchange for an Austin Ten saloon, and FPE176 became my property. At first I used the Fiat for London work when spares were needed in a hurry, the ability of the little car to slip through traffic gaps being a great asset. I am sure that no faster car through pre-war London traffic exists; its acceleration away from traffic lights used to infuriate chauffeurs of lordly limousines, and some amusing incidents were experienced by their efforts to leave the aggravating "Topolino" behind. I was unconvinced that, on a long run, any respectable average speed could be maintained, until June, 1939, when I had occasion to go down to Bristol for Macdermid's wedding. Early in June I had been down to Mac's to see his rear-engined trials-special nearing completion, and had taken the late John Cumming with me in his light Railton, which was in the process of being run in. It was then decided to baptise the "special" at the wedding reception. Came the day before the event and I found that my Riley was in dock, the Railton was on the continent, my trials Austin was being rebuilt, and the only available car was FPE176. I doubted the ability of the little engine to stand being flogged for 120-odd miles, and it was with some trepidation that my wife and I left Putney on the morning of June 17th, at 10.27. Having discovered the technique for passing other cars of approximately the same speed (that is, continuing flat out to within six feet, to obtain the benefit of the slip stream, then whipping out and past) to my absolute amazement we averaged 37.2 m.p.h. for the whole journey! The convoy down to the church was of intense interest, led by the groom and best man in a Fiat 500. My own Fiat followed, and behind this came the "Three Musketeers," Bastock, Langley and Green in the M.G. trials car, Ken Crawford bringing up the rear in an S.S.100. The sight of so many top hats in sports cars had probably never been seen before, nor will again. I will not describe the ceremony or christening of the "special." Suffice it to say that our return journey to London was done at about the same average speed, the consumption working out at 45 m.p.g.

This run completely changed my opinion of Fiats, so much so that we decided to use the car for our customary holiday in North Cornwall. Loaded with suitcases and surfboards, in appalling weather, thunder, cloudbursts and the like, we put 100 miles into three hours, and 264 miles into eight hours on that occasion. Returning, in better weather, long upgrades were climbed in third at a steady 40, and only two cars passed and got away, a Ford V8 coupé which, I observed, carried a B.A.R.C. badge, and a "Paris-Nice" Hotchkiss.

So it was that when war was declared I knew that the most suitable car in the circumstances would be the Fiat. My partner, who held a commission in the Territorials, took my Riley, and the business was closed down for duration. That Christmas (1939) I had proof of the robustness of Fiat construction. Travelling in fog over icy surfaces in the Epping area I had to pull out to avoid a car which had stopped, and the Fiat went into a broadside. I was just congratulating myself on getting the car past whilst in a slide, when I found myself on one side in the offside ditch. A car had been using me as a pilot through the fog, the driver had been rash enough to use his brakes hard on the ice, and he had rammed the Fiat's rear. When put on its wheels once more I could proceed after a little panel-beating to the off-side rear wing, which was then inside the wheel instead of outside. Upon further examination, the body was found to be absolutely untouched; even the doors hung perfectly.

About this time, I see from my diary, another epic run was recorded—on the North Circular Road the car covered 21 miles in a standing half-hour. This I consider exceptional for a standard job with passenger.

I did not use the Fiat a great deal during my time with the L.C.C. but, as I had to examine and pass the work of the majority of the best-known London firms in the Trade, I was in an excellent position to find out where the good fitters were employed. I decided that the most satisfactory jobs were done by the smaller firms, and I was fortunate enough to find one that was interested in Fiats and had a mechanic who was an expert craftsman—Butcher's Garage, of Queen's Gate Place Mews, and the mechanic, Bill Tilee, to whom can be given all the credit of the Fiat's subsequent performance.

In April, 1940, to celebrate the arrival of a son and heir, the Fiat was re-cellulosed a real Tazio-scarlet by Whittingham and Mitchell. It was amusing to note their foreman painter's absolute refusal to paint the wheels red; he was convinced that black would be more suitable, so black they were. I hadn't a say in the matter!

In the winter of 1940 I effectively cured for good and all the cold starting difficulties, by fitting a full-size 12-volt battery. Incidentally, I was amused by another "500" which was garaged in Queen's Gate Place Mews and was the property of one, Cholmondeley, whom readers of MOTOR SPORT will remember as owning the special 4-seater 8-litre Bentley built by McKenzie. He had transferred the battery from the 8-litre to the Fiat, and it was so large that it stood on the rear seat and only just fitted between the wheel arches. Looking inside the car it would appear to be an electric brougham. I often wondered how far the starter would have driven the car.

In January, 1941, at 27,284 miles, the car was re-bored, the crankshaft re-ground, rods and mains re-metalled and fitted by the excellent Bill; two universals, a routine replacement, were also fitted. The starter was overhauled and the ball-pins packed to cut out the colossal wheel flap from which all Fiats suffer at some time or another. A reconditioned carburetter was also fitted, this restoring lost m.p.g. At this time Butcher was fitting a Siata overhead-valve conversion to his personal green "500"; and I had the good fortune of trying this interesting little car. It had a maximum slightly higher than the side-valve version, and the exhaust note was definitely harder and more impressive, but I still think that with the attention to detail one would give in the search for performance the side-valve engine could be made to develop sufficient power to equal that of the Siata engine.

During 1941 I did not use the Fiat much, but the "basic" fuel ration permitted the car to be used for attending the monthly meetings of the 750 Club, and I remember pulling out on to the Great West Road ahead of Secretary Capon in his Riley and keeping ahead down to the Osterley. Bunny Tubbs, of the *Motor*, who was with Capon, was convinced that I had a Siata head until the bonnet was opened. The end of 1941 saw me sufficiently recovered from illness to take over a position with Adlards Motors, and in January, 1942, I had the only crash

experienced which damaged the car. Early one morning, inside the black-out period, I left home intending to get to my destination a little earlier than usual. The first bend seemed a trifle slippery, but, as this is always so, I thought nothing of it. The second, a left-hand semi-circle, saw me travelling quite quickly, and the car went straight on, then spun round—black ice! The rapidly approaching headlights of a lorry made me consider my past life, when suddenly the car dived to the near side and rammed the kerb really hard. I got out and felt very weak; the lorry had actually removed my off-side wing mirror! The road was so completely iced that it wasn't until a policeman pointed it out at the "Elephant" that the near side wheel was shaped like an eight that I noticed it. Very fortunately for me there had been a "500" under our Putney branch when the flats there were blitzed. I was able to collect a wheel and take the car over to Butcher's, where the front end was straightened and the opportunity was taken of fitting new king pins and bushes, also a steering box bush, so banishing the wheel wobble bogey for good. I also borrowed a wheel from Butcher's black fixed-head "500," whilst another slightly-buckled one was being trued. An amusing tale attaches to this black car. When bought it had a perpetual miss on one cylinder and a complete lack of compression or resistance on the same cylinder. When the head was removed it was found that one piston and rod were absent. Its previous owner said that a noise developed at one time and, on taking it to a garage in the Hatfield neighbourhood, she was told to leave it with them for a time. When the owner returned, the noise had disappeared but, she said, it had always seemed to run very roughly since. It says a lot for the sturdy little Fiat crank that it stood up to this abuse. Needless to say, it was with difficulty that Butcher obtained a con.-rod to complete the engine rebuild, as Fiat spares at that time were difficult to obtain.

In May of this year the car suddenly started to boil and water appeared in the sump. I at once assumed that the core plugs were leaking and, as I had to go away on the Saturday, drained the sump, put two cans of "Neverleak" in the radiator and completed the journey, taking care to drain the radiator when standing. On my return I was disappointed to find that at Butcher's Garage they were too busy to look at the car and I had to take it to another firm able, I had hoped, to do the job. Owing to my core-plug suggestion they took the unit out, only to find that the head had perforated over No. 2 bore. A new head was obtained from Fiats and the engine decarbonised. The car was, at this time, doing a 38-mile journey each day and having to give the service one expects from any public transport vehicle, so the absolute minimum of time could be spent on maintenance.

One weak point about these early "500s" was the electrical equipment, and I was fortunate enough to have a service generator and starter so that I could change over these components whilst the defective one was being skimmed, undercut and re-brushed. The consumption of generator brushes seemed inordinately high. Hereabouts I had oversize pins made for the rear shock absorber mountings, as they had become noisy. At 41,000 miles new front hub taper-bearings became necessary, the wear being apparent on fast S bends and at 42,000 miles the clutch appeared to be going to cause trouble as it became very fierce. Again I was forced to take the car to another garage, who dismantled the clutch and said that it was all right. but that the gear lever turret was cracked, This being of alloy I had it changed for the later pattern malleable turret. The clutch continued to give trouble, finally going up solid in Queen's Gate Place Mews outside Butcher's Garage. In one working day they had the unit out, replaced the clutch toggle fulcrum pins (one of which had broken) with the later 8 mm. type, and the car was on the road again.

Later on I had, during a decoke, the 12 mm. plug holes tapped out to take 14 mm. plugs, so that I could have a range of plugs available if the compression ratio was ever raised. At the 46,000th mile a tinkling noise from the front end demanded investigation. This turned out to be all the front spring leaves broken save the master, which stood between myself and disaster. Here again the job was done in the day, this being of ultimate importance as, owing to my health, it was inadvisable to travel long distances by train. At 48,000 miles the starter outrigger bearing collapsed, letting the armature make contact with the pole pieces, with a resultant dead-short, much smoke, and smell. This was overcome, the car having to be started with the special long handle I made for it, the standard handle-cum-wheelbrace being useless.

For a good many thousand miles I had been listening to the back axle with growing apprehension and so, when I went away for the short summer holiday this year, I left the car with Butcher. Bill found that the differential case races had practically disappeared and that the pinion race was not feeling too good. These parts were replaced, and I trust I have avoided a major hold up, as axle parts are practically unobtainable. This axle overhaul marked the 49,000th mile, and we are nearing the end of the tale. No other trouble manifested itself except that on the night we invaded Sicily the car played the despicable trick of burning out its indicator light and letting its cut-out stick in, at one and the same time. This resulted in the battery running itself flat overnight. Fortunately, I managed to get a tow sufficiently fast to provide sparks from the coil, and thereafter drove up to town with the hand throttle well open and picked up a charged battery from Butcher's, my reaction being immediately to fit a battery master switch, which is religiously used at all long stops.

That, then, is my 50,000 miles in the Fiat. I daresay that I have experienced all the troubles that they are heir to and which have been exorcised from the later, half-elliptic-rear-suspended series. I have, by the way, had some further trouble since the 50,000th mile, with the brake master cylinder losing fluid. With glee I removed the master cylinder from Reg. Canham's ex-George Symond's 1939 "500" to fit whilst my cylinder was overhauled, only to find that the late "500s" had a 1-in. master cylinder against the 1936 series ¾-in.; new cups and pistons for the small pattern are absolutely unobtainable, but with his usual resource Butcher located a cylinder assembly at a breaker's, and I am now having mine ground out to ⅞-in. to take the smallest English-made piston.

Brakes I have not mentioned, but I have had mine relined every 10,000 miles, and no doubt the larger pattern fitted to the 1938 Fiat would last longer. I am making no claims for mileage per gallon, but will just say that it is very, very good considering all my journeys are inside the London area. The speed is still satisfactory, and whatever happens the car owes me nothing at all. All I could wish for is one of the later series, which gives better riding and has the starter, clutch, oil pump and brakes modified to cope with the defects of the 1936 series. A worth-while fitting to all Fiats is an S.U. pump, as this cures the starvation caused by the gravity feed when running with a low head of fuel and the annoying hold-ups caused by dirt in the reserve-tap position. All Butcher's Fiats have had pump feed, and I have a pump in my garage awaiting fitting, but the 50,000 miles have been covered as standard, ex-Turin.

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CARS I HAVE OWNED

—continued from page 230

the boiler to the makers. I have often toyed with the idea of getting just that little bit extra in performance which would enable me to pass stock models of the same class with greater safety and have considered fitting either an Arnott supercharger or a 10-h.p. Morris engine. Can any reader give me the pros and cons of these alternatives, though please note that I do not wish to sacrifice reliability in any way and that broken half-shafts and thrown connecting rods are distinctly taboo.

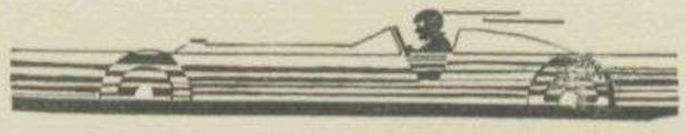
Lest it may be thought by now that I am not an enthusiast at all, let me add that I am going south next month and hope to send back a "Blue Label" Bentley which I have known all its life, and which has been languishing in a farm shed for some years. It used to do a very nice 75 m.p.h. with tall Weymann saloon body, so I am hoping that with an open body and moderate tuning I may be able to get a reliable 80 m.p.h. for holiday times, etc. Any advice on tuning would be gladly received.

Other cars with which I have had considerable dealings are: a 20-h.p. 6-cylinder Star saloon, which had the nasty habit of reversing its rear shackles on a hump-back bridge, necessitating vigorous work with jack and tyre levers; a 1937 12/48-h.p. Wolseley Special coupé, a beautiful car, but with rather limited rear seating; and a 1939 Morris 12-h.p. saloon, which appears to be a very good car. All these were my father's.

In conclusion, let me congratulate Mr. Boddy and the band of enthusiasts who are so successfully keeping MOTOR SPORT up to a very high standard, and add, in the words of Kay Cavendish, "It's not what you do, but the way that you do it"—an excellent maxim for motorists.

CARS I HAVE OWNED

G. F. Lomas, of Dundee, who has written for us before, tells of some rather rare makes and others not so rare.—Ed.



MANY of the articles in this series have been both interesting and entertaining, and not a few informative. The only claim that might be made for my list of cars is that some of the types have received very little mention in these pages, although the seven Straker-Squires were dealt with in an article in November, 1940.

Let me state right away that I have never knowingly exceeded 90 m.p.h. (except in a train), have never entered a speed trial, and have never built a "special." My claim to be an enthusiast lies in the fact that I like motoring for motoring's sake and not for just getting from A to B, that I greatly prefer an open car to a closed one, and that any vehicle I drive must have good brakes and steering and be in first-class mechanical condition. Perhaps this last proviso, which certainly does not appear to apply to all enthusiasts, is due to the fact that I am an engineer by trade and profession.

My introduction to internal-combustion locomotion was in 1910, when my father bought a 2¾-h.p. Douglas motor-cycle with direct belt drive (no clutch or gears), automatic inlet valves, and pedals. I covered a good many uncomfortable miles on the carrier of this, and also on a 1912 650-c.c. Excelsior big single which followed it. This Excelsior had a Villiers' hub clutch, no gears, and a wicker sidecar. The greatest bugbear with these two machines was punctures, due to flint-made roads.

In 1923 my father practically made me a present of a new 700-c.c. flat-twin Raleigh. This was a beautiful machine, with cantilever rear springing, Brampton forks, footboards, leg-shields, chain-cases, and quickly detachable wheels. In fact, it provided armchair comfort on two wheels up to 65 m.p.h. and did 70 m.p.g. Its faults were overheating of exhaust valves, causing cracked seatings and dished valves, and a proneness to lie down on greasy roads. Its longest day's run was Sheffield—London—Leicester.

The other and last bike I had was a 550-c.c. Triumph of about 1920, probably the last direct-belt-drive machine they made, and which was, I believe, originally the property of Norman Black. It was a remarkable machine, would do 60 m.p.h. (with vibration) and 100 m.p.g., weighed less than 180 lb., had no silencer, and yet was reasonably quiet, would climb any road hill in spite of having no gears or clutch, and would pull at 4 m.p.h., with aid of decompressor, on the level. The riding position was most comfortable and, best of all, it would not readily skid. It was a nuisance, however, in very wet weather, as the belt would slip and bring one to a standstill on even a moderate hill. I regret to state that when moving house I left it for the dustman to collect. These bicycles did not altogether precede the cars, but I thought it better to dispose of them first.

My advent to motoring was in 1924, when two of us who were in "digs" together bought a 1910 Straker-Squire grey 2-seater for £10, and learnt to drive on it, much to the detriment of grass margins and the nerves of the instructor. We had not had it long when we received an advantageous offer for it, and to deliver it had to drive from Leicester to Burton-on-Trent after work one dark, wet evening before the licence expired. This drive was an epic. The acetylene headlamp gave out at once and left us with oil sides and rear. The driver (to flatter him) just sat and steered and saw nothing, the man who knew the road stood up in the middle looking over the screen and shouted "'ware right," "'ware left," etc., and I sat on the left keeping up pressure in tank by hand pump, ceaselessly commenting, often forcibly, on our distance from the verge.

However, we got there, collected cash, and soon got another Straker, this time a 1912 tourer which had been a doctor's car. This was a good car, and the chap who had bought the grey one was so taken with it that he bought this one as well.

The next venture was a 15.9-h.p. 1914 Argyll with f.w.b. The steering, springing, and gear changing were about the best I have sampled, but it would not pull the proverbial skin off a rice pudding and it was annoying to be passing a lorry, come to a hill and have to drop behind again. Also one would put in enough oil to oil up the plugs and in about 60 miles seize through lack of it. Another annoying habit was to fade out, defying any attempt to restart for about a quarter of an hour, and then start up and run like a Rolls again for no apparent reason at all. I have taken 15 scouts and their kit to camp in this car on one journey.

Whilst still owning the Argyll we bought a 1915 Straker-Squire tourer at a fairly high price. This car was in very good condition and we had plenty of use out of it. After a time we decided to decarbonise and take up the bearings, which feat was accomplished in the open, in mid-winter, with the aid of flashlamps. We needed to take it in turn lying underneath, fitting the bearings, for about ten minutes at a time, by which time our hands and feet would be frozen, then spend our ten minutes' respite exercising to regain circulation. Two mishaps occurred with this car, the crown wheel shedding five teeth outside Sheffield, necessitating a £16 repair bill, and one night, coming back from Shrewsbury, the celluloid accumulator cases burnt down to acid level and left me in total darkness. To help pay the running of this car we used to teach people to drive, and on several occasions hired it to a Rolls chauffeur for his holidays.

Other cars owned during this period were a 13-h.p. bull-nosed Fiat coupé, which was inclined to wander all over the road, and a 1913 Straker-Squire 2-seater fitted with Michelin disc wheels and huge balloon tyres, and a very high axle ratio. A very enjoyable holiday we had (in Wales) in this car.

Then, in 1927, my partner got married and went out of town, so, looking around, after selling the Straker, I traded my Raleigh and cash for a car which I am sure would delight most enthusiasts even to-day. This was a 12-h.p. w.c. flat-twin Douglas o.h.v. ex-racing car of about 1922, which had originally been the property of Roy Winn, of Leicester, but had since had a very poor time in the hands of a college student. From the radiator cowl to tail it measured nearly 16 feet, and it was only 2 ft. 6 in. wide, the passenger's very narrow seat being staggered. Light wings and a lighting set had been added, but no hood or doors. The engine was of push-rod type with high compression and a big overlap and the large hollow-stemmed tulip valves had 150 lb. springs on them. Lubrication was by dry sump and had an oil radiator in circuit, and there was a supply tank under the scuttle. Castrol R was used. Ignition was by 6v coil, and woe betide anyone attempting to start it with spark advanced. Carburation was by a single Claudel-Hobson, but there was a spare for fitting two, though I understand that so fitted it had a penchant for catching fire. There was a 2¾ in. copper exhaust pipe about 11 ft. long along each side of the car and a small expansion chamber and large fishtail at the end of each. It was impossible to keep steel wool, turnings, or baffles in this chamber as they were quickly blown out. Steering was a sheer delight and the car could be placed to an inch. Brakes, rear wheels only, were totally inefficient, and as the acceleration kept time with the movement of the pedal, and the brake pedal and accelerator were very close together, interesting situations sometimes arose. Once, instead of pulling up behind a tram loading passengers, I had to do a quick shoot across to the far right of the road in front of an oncoming tram and pass that on the wrong side at about 50. I bought it with a broken mainshaft in gearbox, and having renewed this, suffered from a seized ball race, also in gearbox. Fortunately a good friend was passing in his Bentley at the time and was back with a rope before I had disconnected the universal. Altogether it was for me a most unfortunate car. Having repaired the gearbox, I left the car outside and it got caught by a late frost in April, which cracked both cylinder water jackets and one head, and I did not find this out until the big-ends ran! However, I set about the engine and gave it a minor overhaul. An excellent job was made of welding the cracks, no distortion of bore being apparent, and the big-ends we re-metalled (direct on rod). Unfortunately I replaced the oil supply pipe in the crankcase at the wrong angle and away went the big-ends once more, just north of Derby. As the main bearings were roller, the white metal big-ends were only scoop fed, a weak point. The Allestree Garage Co. took the job in hand and repaired the damage, and I then looked forward to getting some running out of the car, but was offered an advantageous commercial post for which this type of car was useless. This I took, sold the Douglas and bought a 1914 Straker 2-seater for use in connection with the job. The Douglas had a reputed speed of 95

m.p.h. on Brooklands, and with its long internally strutted aluminium body and half elliptics, looked very different from the rather squat coiled-sprung Douglas usually depicted in illustrations. Can any reader shed further light on these models ?

The 1914 Straker had a plated show chassis and gave me a couple of years' yeoman service. Once the contact breaker fibre block broke up, but a hardwood substitute was cut from the nearby hedge and lasted the rest of the day until a replacement could be obtained. Another time the leather cone clutch refused to take us out of Sheffield, but judiciously inserted bits of hacksaw blade did the trick and the clutch gave no more trouble. One alarming incident was when the handbrake ratchet slipped whilst the car was standing on the hill leading to Precipice Walk, Barmouth. Fortunately, I was out of the car opening a gate into the field where we were camping, as the car ran backwards and put one rear wheel over a low stone retaining wall with a 20 ft. drop below, and was held, apparently, on the tank and running board. She had to stay thus all night, but in the morning, after a gap in the wall had been made, a set of blocks with about 20 boys on the rope soon had her on the road again, and as the filler was a sensible one of about 4 in. diameter, the tank was soon beaten out straight again.

I was eventually transferred to the London office and sold the Straker to my successor in the Midlands, but before long I bought a 1924 21-h.p. Straker tourer for private use. This was a very comfortable, good-looking car, and I had plenty of good running out of her, including a holiday in Scotland, during which I stopped and restarted on the steepest portion of Amulree. A mysterious trouble, when I first had her, proved to be a partially flooded Autovac float, and a snag was that the crankshaft was slightly bent at the first journal. Once when passing through Rickmansworth, the fibre element of the Simms vernier coupling disintegrated, but on going into a garage about 20 yards away I found they had a spare the same size and a mechanic who had worked on the car for the previous owner—the gods do smile occasionally. An amusing incident was when taking the car for winter storage into the heart of Sussex, I backed over a small green to get a signpost in the headlamps and promptly put a back wheel into a 2 ft. drain. A Bentley and a Chevrolet would make no impression on a tow rope, which was unfortunate, as I had a damsel with me whom I didn't know too well, and there we were stranded in the wilds of Sussex. However, on returning with spades, etc., next morning we found the owner of the Chevrolet had very kindly had the car lifted high and dry on the road for us. Incidentally, a man in Tooting, who didn't know me from Adam, lent me a pair of unlimited trade plates to do this trip. I spent quite a lot of time and money in perfecting this car in every detail, and then, as appears usual, came across one I liked better—a 23.8-h.p. 6-cylinder Straker-Squire 2-seater (MB829).

As far as I am concerned, this was *the* car, but as it has received previous mention in MOTOR SPORT I will not go into details. Suffice to say that after an £80 overhaul it proved to be even better than expected and was always a real joy to drive. If one came up against a car which approached the same maximum, *i.e.* 85 m.p.h., all one had to do was to tail him until a hill was reached and then test his eyesight on a receding number plate ! This procedure never failed and nearly always discouraged the "come again" merchants. There was one point on which I never made up my mind ; at a little over 80 every vibration died away and left the engine uncannily smooth and silent ; was that a sign that the engine was at that period in perfect balance, or was it approaching violent disintegration ? Once when motoring between Nottingham and Mansfield in pouring rain at about 60 m.p.h. I saw on a straight stretch of road a large closed car of Minerva type approaching, with a dark object alongside it, but it was not until I was much too close to do much about it that I realised it was one of his wheels running alongside him. How I managed to nip in between him and the wheel I do not know, but being hit by a heavy wheel at an aggregate 100 m.p.h. would, I imagine, be anything but pleasant. I parted with this car when I got married, as I felt that I wanted something lighter and better braked for my wife to drive, but I have regretted since that I did not keep it as a second car for high days and holidays.

Shortly after overhauling the Straker I was sent to Scotland, the whole of which I represented for my firm, and after using the Straker for a time was supplied with a new 1934 Morris 10-h.p. saloon. In this I did 62,000 miles in 20 months, all without a rebore. This car did 34 m.p.g. overall, and would touch 60 m.p.h. On the only two occasions that I grossly exceeded this figure on downhill stretches, the big-ends went, but in each case were replaced by the nearest Morris agent inside three hours. Probably due to weak mixture and persistent flogging, exhaust valves burnt out every 7,000 miles. My good fairy came to my rescue again with this car. When still new to me I was passing a lorry on a lonely stretch of road on the way to Peebles when the engine died and I had to stop. The lorry also stopped, and finding plenty of petrol in the tank and none in carburetter, the lorry driver removed the top of the vertical electric pump, jiggled the float up and down and, hey presto, off we went again. This trouble never recurred, and as I had previously only been accustomed to Autovacs, it might have taken me quite a lot of time and trouble before solving the problem.

This car was followed by a 1936 edition of the same job, but with "a streamlined" body, a nice car with the same performance as the previous one, but I could never get it to exceed 30 m.p.g., and often got less. All the time I drove these saloons I had, of course, my Straker, as I never dreamt of using them for real pleasure, excellent conveyances though they were.

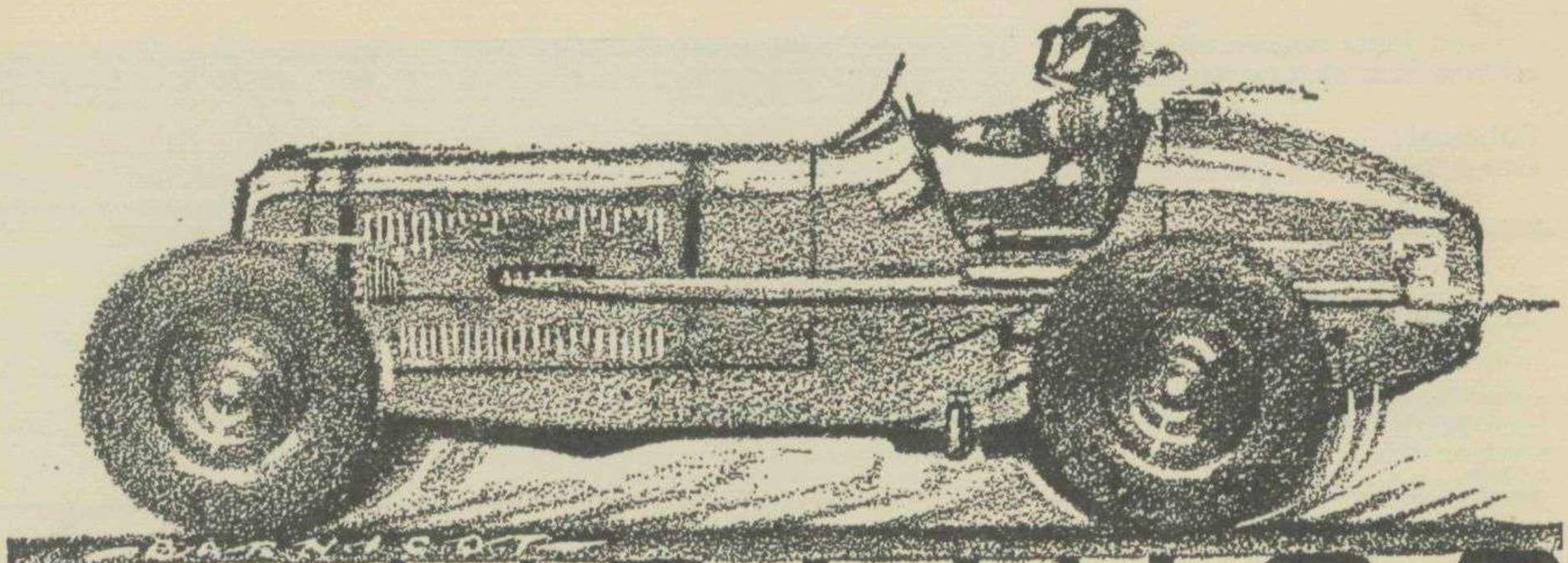
However, as already mentioned, the Straker went and I took delivery of a new 8-h.p. 2-seater 1936 Morris. These popular little cars need no description here ; suffice to say that this one did 61 m.p.h. and an overall 42 m.p.g. Valve bounce acted as a safety valve against downhill speeding. At 900 miles the car suddenly pulled up dead from 40 m.p.h. with a noise like an aeroplane crash, but as no evidence could be seen of external damage, the engine was tried, upon which it started up and never gave any more trouble. A temporary seizure, I suppose.

This car was followed by a 1937 one, which also did 61 m.p.h., but which would never better 40 m.p.g., and often did less. We did Dundee to Hampstead (478 miles), in 11¾ hours in this, and arrived fresh. On this run we had a long argument with a 16-h.p. Austin saloon. He was slightly faster uphill and we had it downhill, and eventually we lost him on some long stretches of the Great North Road, but, of course, on pulling up for juice, away he went miles in front. We christened him "Stagshorns," as there was a large bundle of that commodity strapped on his carrier, and at Doncaster we managed to catch him again by slipping past on the inside of a huge queue caused by the excavation of tramlines. At the south end of Doncaster the traffic lights were against me with two cars waiting abreast. He chose, quite rightly, to park behind the left one and I risked the right. On the "green" the man in front of me fortunately went straight on, but the fool in front of "Stagshorns" wanted to turn right ! With the amount of traffic both behind and oncoming I imagine the delay was considerable, and poor old "Stagshorn's" frantic hootings are still audible when I think about it !

I kept this car two years and then changed it for my present car, a new 1939 Morris 8-h.p. tourer. This is a big improvement on the previous ones, being faster, more economical, and much more roomy. It will do 65 m.p.h. on the flat and 42–52 m.p.g. according to speed. Modifications I have carried out are the fitting of running boards, full tonneau cover, electric clock, central mirror on dash, high voltage coil, stiff support for starting handle on bumper, dual screen wiper, and spare wheel cover. I also took some trouble in altering the driver's seating, raising the whole 1 in. by hardwood strips under runners, putting a greater angle of slope on the seat cushion, giving better support for thighs, and re-upholstering the squab to give more upright position. A Yale padlock is fitted through the brake ratchet release and a secret fuse in ignition circuit also. Although off the road now, we have been very pleased with this car and regard it as our magic carpet. It will take the three of us in comfort to anywhere in the kingdom at a moment's notice at an average of 40 m.p.h. without the slightest dubiety about getting there. It will climb Amulree and Sutton Bank without trouble. A Morris Eight can be driven hard all the time and even so do 20,000 miles without need for decarbonising or new tyres ; with the uncertainty of the general financial position after the war I am sticking to this type for general use and have my name down for another when available again.

Earlier in the war an attempt was made to convert this last car to steam, and a Bolsover flash boiler and an automatic hopper were fitted in the back seating space. I was, however, unable to obtain delivery of an engine, so I returned

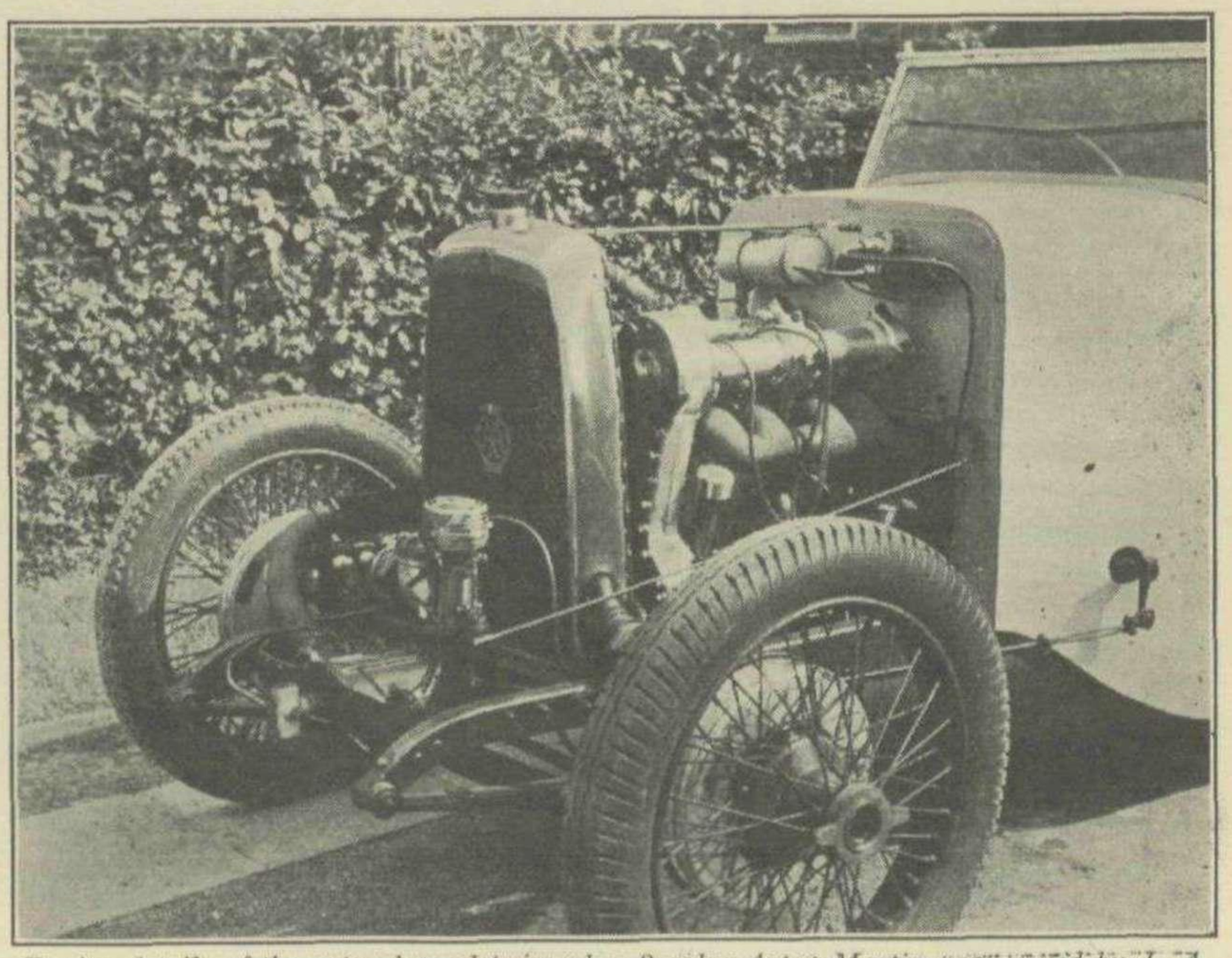
Continued on page 228



RUMBLINGS

Bravo, Ettore !

Those beautiful products of Le Patron of Molsheim are generally conceded to be without equal in everything except reliability. So that it only remains to prove the Bugatti reliable to establish it as, perhaps, the greatest of all sporting cars. Very well, listen to this. At a farm near Scarborough a Type 40 Bugatti not only acts as the hack car, but gives yeoman service carrying stock and farm produce. Mr. E. E. Wilkinson, of the Prospect Engineering Co., of Newby, in answer to a request to tell us more of this Bugatti lorry, explains to us that the farm has been owned for the past four years by Miss Turner, who used to race a Brescia Bugatti in sprint events in the dim ages—we seem to recall one of the old pear-shaped-radiator cars with very flaired wings. She tried numerous British and American cars and a light lorry as her farm hack, but the half-mile of private road leading to the farm caused incessant repairing, patching-up and replacing of the road springs of these cars. Mr. Wilkinson describes the road as little more than a cart-track, patched with stones and broken brick, and remarks that "the only way to get any idea of what it is like is to drive over it!" After it had broken the normal sort of car, Miss Turner persuaded Mr. Wilkinson, who services all her cars, to let her try a Type 40 Bugatti, and his life, he says, has been a lot easier ever since. The car has now served for a year, averaging 300 miles a month, for all manner of jobs on the farm, including transporting up to three calves at a time to and from the station and carrying fertilizers, grain and general produce about the farm and the roads. It has given no trouble of any sort, although as Miss Turner is an expert mechanic, the machinery naturally receives decent care and attention. Mr. Wilkinson says that this Type 40 offers positive proof that a Bugatti, if treated right in essential respects, will stand up to virtually anything. Incidentally, Miss Turner also runs a 3-litre Bugatti, on which no track was kept of the mileage after the 250,000 mark, up to when no major repairs had been necessary. Her mother owns a 5-litre Bugatti saloon which has earned their complete respect, and which, we believe, still goes out on A.R.P. duties. It will be remembered that in the article in the September issue of MOTOR SPORT, "Brescia *versus* Type 40," Fawcett stressed the economy of upkeep of the Bugatti and its remarkably low fuel consumption. It really does seem as if we shall have to stop calling the Bugatti an unreliable car.



Engine details of the supercharged twin o.h.c. 8-valve Aston-Martin now owned by J. A. Andrews (see "Letters from Readers"). Photo by permission of "The Light Car."

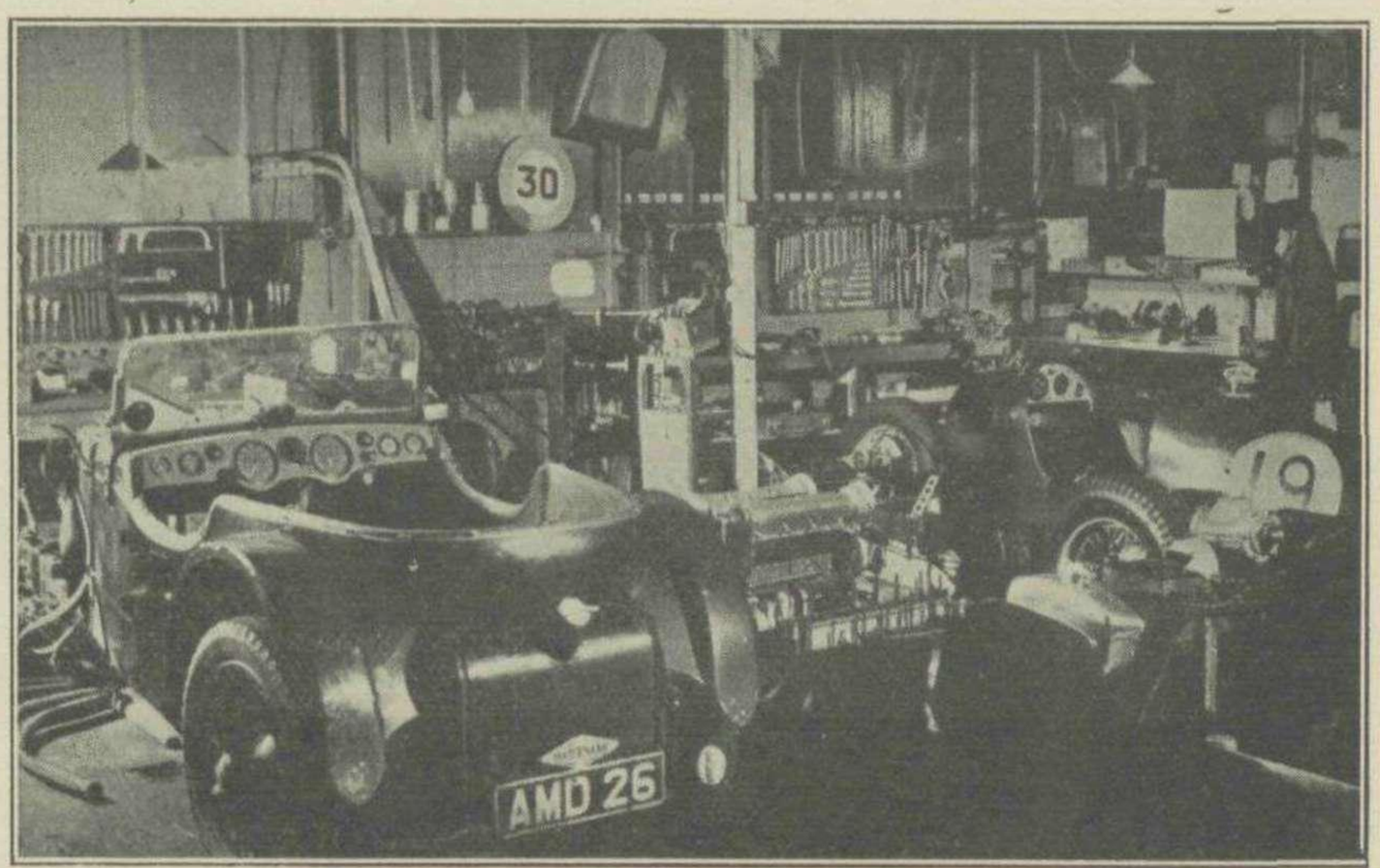
Political Good Sense

From Press matter which we receive we note that cyclists have had the good sense to form for themselves a sound representative body, namely, the National Committee on Cycling. The constituent bodies are given as the British Cycle Manufacturers' Union, the C.T.C., the National Association of Cycle Traders, the National Clarion Cycling Club and the National Cyclists' Union. The president is Sir Harold Bowden, Bart., G.B.E. *Motorists, please copy.*

* * *

Another Rare Bird

Some while ago we were able to describe a Secqueville-Hoyau from first-hand inspection of the marque, and more recently we have been able to hurriedly inspect another rare bird, in the form of a 14.6-h.p. Sizaire-Frères, stored in a garage near London and seemingly in good order. Of 1929 vintage, this car has full independent suspension front and back by means of transverse leaf springs, a suspension that apparently made its debut at the Paris Salon of 1923. The car we saw has a 4-seater decked torpedo body with sloping V screen and pointed tail, and disc wheels carrying Michelin 145 × 775 balloon tyres. The engine is a compact 16-valve unit with a Zenith carburetter on the near side and a ribbed exhaust manifold with front off-take on the off side. The o.h. camshaft appears to be driven by a train of gears and the exposed flywheel has starter teeth inset round its forward edge. Ignition is by twin coils and distributors, feeding eight plugs. The radiator is an exact replica of that on a Rolls-Royce, and we have heard that Sizaire registered it and then made Rolls-Royce, Ltd., pay royalties to them—which may or may not be true! The clutch action is heavy, the gear-lever central and the facia carries clock and 120 m.p.h. Jaeger speedometer. Fuel feed is by autovac. The car carries three-letter number-plates and looks perfectly sound, and we would be glad to know more of the type.



A peace-time Frazer-Nash stable, that of H. Whitfield-Semmence, whose Semmence-Special with A.C. Six engine ran so well at Lewes.

* * *

Coincidence

By a coincidence, an advertisement for a Frazer-Nash and a Bugatti was inserted in a motoring weekly by Mr. J. Marshall about the same time as the condemnation in these columns of "dirty" dealings in sports cars. We would point out that no particular person was implicated—our comments were just a warning to MOTOR SPORT readers to beware of unscrupulous dealers who might attempt to prey on their enthusiasm.

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BACK NUMBERS

We have a few copies left of some early issues.

Please write to:—

The Editor: Motor Sport
21, City Road, E.C.1

Club News

WE HEAR . . .

Lieut. B. Gordon Graham, R.I.N.V.R., who used to compete in British trials and rallies, etc., when home on leave from Ceylon before the war, contributes an interesting article to this issue. He says that MOTOR SPORT "keeps up our morale," and adds that he has recently met Tong, who ran M.G. cars at Southport and Brooklands; Verner-Jeffries, who ran in M.C.C. trials with an ex-Graham Walker Rudge "T.T. Replica" and a Frazer-Nash; and Gordon Wood, who drove a Bentley at Brooklands some years ago. G. Loeff, a Dutch reader, is now a lieutenant concerned with the R.A.F. in this country. In spite of ill-health, the irrepressible Biggs expects to develop into a push-cyclist. Beasley-Robinson, of Eton, who had two "30/98" Vauxhall cars before the war, tells us that he let one go for scrap when there was a call for aluminium at the outbreak of hostilities, so that he regards his other as more valuable than ever. He has just had the bearings overhauled, ready for The Day, and he retains many spares from the other car. A 1926 "Red Label" open Bentley for £100 was seen in an Ipswich garage last month, while Roland Motors, of Byfleet, had in stock a Type 37A G.P. Bugatti. A lady M.T. driver at a northern airfield arrives daily in a late-model "Red Label" Bentley, and at the same place Rivers Oldmeadow is chief ground instructor, and Sgt. Hull, who has an Anzani Frazer-Nash, is an instructor. D. Baddeley, of Tadworth, has recently purchased a 1926 Modified-Brescia Bugatti, and seeks gearbox spares. Donald H. James has kindly sent in 1½-litre S.S. "Jaguar" and 15-h.p. Morris Oxford Six instruction books for the MOTOR SPORT Library. C. T. Black, 100, Duchy Road, Harrogate, seeks March models of Alfa, "3.3" or "2.3" Bugatti. At Bradford a very early Mercédès with i.o.e. engine, a pre-1914 Type B.T. de Dion chassis, a Hampton chassis, less radiator, a 2-litre Lagonda engine, and a Riley Six engine lie in a breaker's yard, and there is a twin o.h.c. Salmson chassis for £6 in Leeds—these are reported by D. B. Roberts, an E.R.A. Club member. Then we have found a 1911 Sunbeam tourer in a field at Ascot, in considerable disrepair, but savable, for £5, and there is a Bugatti saloon, apparently derelict, near Winchester. Incidentally, Roberts remarks that his Triumph "Tiger 80" is on H.G. duties and is highly satisfactory, doing a speedometer 74 m.p.h., accelerating away from V8 Fords and T-M.G.s, while it is not too heavy, starts easily, is docile and handles well. In the same H.G. division is a 2-litre Sunbeam. Just before he moved back to the Metropolis from Farnborough, Boddy was able to tow Tom Rolt's 1903 Humber to a place of safety from the open yard to which it had been relegated in Tim Carson's absence overseas. Norman Routledge, who wrote the "Cars I Have Owned" article in the last issue, has, since August, been using a most ambitious "Special." It comprises a 1931 Morris Minor with hotted-up engine, 4-speed gearbox, and most ingenious i.f.s., composed of a sawn-in-half, jointed axle and transverse ¼-elliptic springs, mounted on a new transverse channel chassis member. The radiator was inclined and lowered 4 inches and a 16½-gallon tank from a 2-litre Ballot fitted at the rear, feed being by S.U. pump. Routledge plans to install an A.C. Six engine in a shortened Alvis chassis, with this form of i.f.s., after the war. There was much competition over the Alvis John Cooper offered for sale, which eventually went to K. W. Smith, of Barking. H. J. Jansen, a Dutchman serving with the Dutch Forces in this country, has sent us some excellent racing photographs, taken by himself in happier days, some of which we hope to reproduce from time to time. Peter Clark has bought Heal's solo B.M.W.; at his wife's birthday party Heal, Mrs. Heal, Tubbs, Cresswell, Rivers-Fletcher and Julian Fall were present.

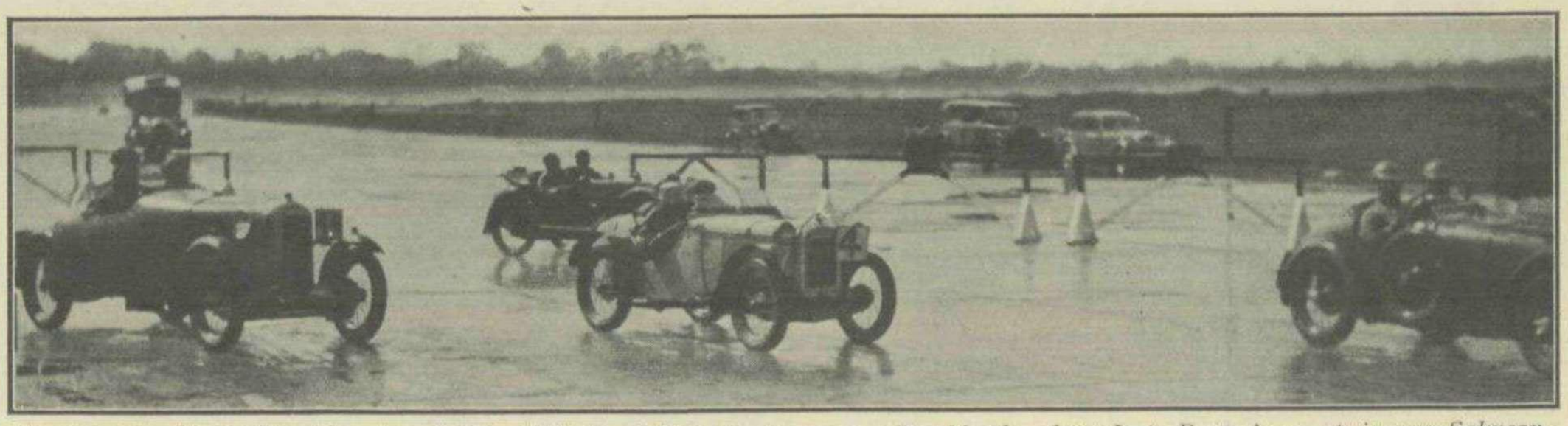
A reader in Scotland has come upon a "Red Label" 3-litre Bentley fabric saloon for about £35, with a clutch that needs attention, and he is likely to buy it, and, if it is not sold, there was a 1934-5 open Lagonda "Rapier" for £45, in Surrey. A reader has kindly sent in some wiring diagrams for the Library, covering Alvis "Firebird," "Silver Eagle," "Crested Eagle," and "Speed 20," M.G. "P" and "N," and 24-h.p. Talbot cars.

Sqdn. Ldr. Stephens has, for domestic reasons, to dispose of his T.T. Replica 4-cylinder Frazer-Nash, and would accept £250, or would consider exchanging it for a drophead S.S. coupé. J. Lowrey now rides a transverse twin Douglas "Endeavour" motor-cycle.

★

A SURREY HOME GUARD AND CIVIL DEFENCE TRAINING TRIAL

The Syx Don R Club held an ambitious Home Guard and Civil Defence training trial in Surrey last month. Army instructors took the 126 riders in a series of lectures at each hazard in the morning, a splendid method of imparting valuable knowledge, for the introduction of which we believe that Arthur Bourne, of the *Motor Cycle*, was responsible. Sgt. Paddy Johnston, the T.T. rider, struck us as a particularly able lecturer and demonstrator. The trial embraced a real bomb-crater, a steep stepped hill, a sandy stretch, a difficult descent, and a deep and lengthy water splash, all in a course of 2.7 miles. The spectators seemed to be quite aware that these military-style events are essential to present-day conditions, but one elderly H.G. official remarked that, "Of course we couldn't allow the common to be cut-up like this in peace-time"—apparently we still have some way to go! Some interesting bicycles broke the monotony of Army-type machines, including an O.E.C. "Special," a Levis, several Velocettes and Nortons and an Excelsior. In the trial L. Sheaf walked his two-stroke S.O.S. through the splash to humour his low-set carburetter, so there must have been at least one loop-



The "happy thirties"! Here is a J.C.C. High Speed Trial in progress at Brooklands—from L. to R. we have a twin-cam Salmson, an "Ulster" Austin, Chaplin's T.T. Austin, and a 4-cylinder Amilcar.

hole in the regulations! The whole event was excellently conducted, and best performance of the day to Pte. T. J. Richball (350 Triumph), best H.G. performance to Lieut. D. G. Flather (350 Triumph), and best C.D. performance to L. Sheaf (S.O.S.) were announced in the provisional results.

★

AN "OPEN-TO-SERVICES" MOTOR-CYCLE TRIAL

On Sunday, September 26th, an "Open to all Services" trial was held, and a good entry of 130 riders was received. Competitors were sent away at half-minute intervals to the first three sections, which were on the nearby heathland. The majority of entrants appeared to be Home Guard, with Army entries a close second; the rest were a mixture of Special Police and N.F.S. Most riders were mounted on W.D. machines, either Ariels or Matchless, but many riders had their own machines, some very much "built-for-business" trials bikes.

Owing to lack of suitable transport we were unable to observe all the sections, but it was reported that the early ones consisted of a mud plug and a fairly deep water splash, neither of which caused a great deal of trouble. The first two sections we were able to watch were a straight run of about 200 yards through loose sand and an ascent of a hillside, very similar to "Red Roads" hill on Bagshot Heath, the secret of success being speed on the lower slopes. On the whole, riding wasn't terribly good and pre-Services trials riders were very noticeable among the many flounderings. A break from motor-cycles on the hillside ascent was given by a Jeep, Peep, or what-have-you, doing a climb with which we were not very impressed. We then moved to two of the later sections. There were ten in all, the first being a very tricky ride of some 50 yards through a taped-off course in a wood. On this section riding skill was at a distinct premium, and again the experts stood out noticeably. Then followed an ascent of Boulder Alley, on which many crank-cases received hearty clouts; here some riders got up by sheer brute force and no discretion, a very few got up by good riding and a large number failed. The final section was a steep descent which caused many to drop their models, but apart from mudguards and exhaust systems falling off, not a great deal of damage was done and many lessons were learnt by both riders and spectators.

Some brief notes of the more trials type motor-cycles present might be of interest. Sgt. G. M. Berry was riding a 350 o.h.c. Triumph Twin W.D. model which looked very efficient and appeared to go well. A Home Guard from Gloucester was riding a nice line in 250 Levis trials models, as was Biggs, who hailed from Guildford, and used to race a 175-c.c. Blackburne in local scrambles. R. L. Hankin, another pre-Service dicer, was riding a very special 16H Norton, built with a view to trials work, and it handled very nicely. Of particular interest to the writer was a 350 MAC Velocette, "trial-sized," which made some sections look very easy. It had an MAC engine, frame and gearbox, a KSS 3.00″ × 21″ front wheel, a 4.00″ × 19″ rear boot, modified braking system and riding position, and a very neat chain lubrication arrangement for both chains, all this with a 7″ ground clearance made a good trials motor-cycle.

Another bike of interest was a "Tiger 100" Triumph fitted with Teledraulic forks which, though it got up the hills all right, did it mostly by brute force, though the rider reported the forks to be an immense help on the rough stuff.

RESULTS.—*P.A.:* Cpl. Burns (Triumph), 5 marks lost. *Best Army Rider:* Sgt. D. Murray. *Team Award:* Military Police (Sgts. J. Day, D. Murdoch and D. Murray), 58 marks lost. *First-Class Awards:* A. J. Hunt (19), Cadet Parker (19), Sgt. S. M. Berry (21), Major Drummond (22), Sgt. D. Murdoch (21), Cpl. Mace (21), Sgt. J. Day (22), Sgt. J. Riley (22), Sgt. Hall (21).

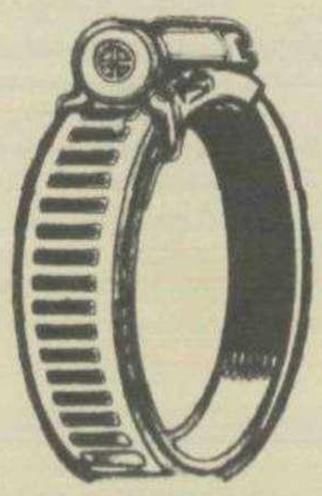
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COVER PICTURE

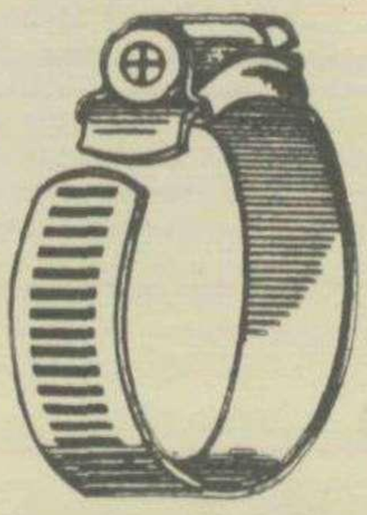
The picture on the front cover this month shows Richard Seaman's famous 1½-litre Delage chasing Lord Howe's E.R.A. round St. Ninian's Corner in the 1936 Isle of Man race. Seaman drove a faultless race in this 10-year-old car, finishing 1st at 69.76 m.p.h. from "Bira's" E.R.A. and Cyril Paul's E.R.A. He also made fastest lap, at 72 m.p.h. The Delage passed the E.R.A. just before the latter was slowed by excessive fuel pressure, and finally retired with a burst fuel tank. Readers will note that we have made no attempt to blank out the free advertisement for one of our contemporaries, which appears in the foreground, in spite of the reluctance of the weekly motoring Press to recognise the war-time existence of MOTOR SPORT!

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PLEASE MENTION "MOTOR SPORT" WHEN CORRESPONDING WITH ADVERTISERS

A Letter from Matthew Understeeple

A knowledgeable party gives some practical advice to his friend on the relative merits of various makes of car. His views are, of course, entirely his own, but most readers will find something of interest in his counsel.

DEAR JOHN,

So you have decided that a vintage sports car is the right hobby for a post-war bachelor, and that on this you will spend your war bonus. I expect the 3-litre Bentley will come to mind first, but whether it will meet your requirements or not depends, largely, on what you are prepared to spend. You see, wonderful as these old cars are, they usually need an overhaul after purchase (not surprising, as we are considering a car somewhere about 20 years old) and as reasonable "Red Labels" fetch around £150 it may not leave you much in hand. Remember, too, that a car is not fast just because it is a Bentley! I believe the original "Speed Model" "Red Labels" were guaranteed to do about 82 m.p.h., and two decades can easily have knocked off 10 m.p.h., while "Blue Labels" were only about 70 m.p.h. motors when new. Then the coveted type gearbox is hard to find and expensive to buy if you can get one, and that applies to most Bentley bits and pieces. But I grant that if you get a sound Bentley you will have a decently tractable, reasonably braked, everyday motor-car which behaves most satisfyingly and is essentially reliable. Of course, if you want to go really quickly you will have to install a 4½-litre engine into a 3-litre, or buy a standard 4½-litre, although the 14–17 m.p.g. of the latter may cripple you if we get the loudly-demanded petrol tax. Anyway, do not touch the blower 4½-litre, which is not so hot unless you get a team car—and you can bet your 12-in. fantail you will not find one of these.

A "30/98" Vauxhall is very attractive to think about, but it is surprising where they have all gone. You may be lucky and find one converted to render it possible under modern traffic conditions, but a really sound one will, perhaps, involve you in several hundred pounds. There is a bit of a cult just now to acquire examples of the E-type s.v. cars, but, grand as these are, I doubt whether you would really like it for fast touring. It would want a good deal of rebuilding, and Sam Clutton has told us how they hop about at over 60–65 m.p.h. The O.E.-type, then, is your cue, and do not be depressed if folk tell you what widely-spaced cogs you will get, for the top-ratio performance is excellent, and by not stirring the pudding too often you will get 20 m.p.g., if you are lucky. But if you decide on one of these cars, either get one with somebody else's front axle, or put on a decently-braked axle yourself. Otherwise the rear anchors, light weight and high build will land you in trouble; if there are any plate-glass windows near by when the first shower falls, you can be certain you and your Vauxhall car will sail through one of them.

The real fascination of this car is surely that it represents about the only sober-design car which really performs. Here you have a simple push-rod engine with immense tappet clearances, breathing from one water-heated gas-work, yet they used to guarantee you 85 m.p.h. equipped and 100 m.p.h. stripped, way back in 1923, when the thing was new. Any "30/98" should give you 75 m.p.h. and decent acceleration, but if you feel unhappy in a car which has not some pretence to "mod. cons." you may not think it fun.

The twin o.h.c. 3-litre Sunbeam looks like having a fresh vogue after the war, and it is an intriguing combination of racing-type engine and touring chassis. But its engine is not the sort of thing you can work on by candlelight in a shed in the back garden, nor is it likely, at this stage of its existence, to give you some five years of very full motoring without needing to come down, as a "30/98" can well do.

The Lancia "Lambda" has been much discussed lately and maybe you are contemplating one of these. As a car which is of sufficiently unusual conception to make ownership of it a very pleasing business, while possessing such excellent road-holding, steering and braking as to make driving it a constant source of enjoyment, the "Lambda" is tops. However, you will need to find a seventh or eighth series car, otherwise you will get the small brakes, and only the eighth series really likes going at Bentley-like speeds—I imagine you have grown out of cars in which you change up from 3rd gear at 40 m.p.h.? The engine is most dependable if carefully used, but if the head has warped or the liners worked loose I would not be in your shoes for worlds, and after a score of seasons the chassis-cum-body and the suspension units are often in need of skilled rejuvenation.

Somehow I always think of the "14/40" Delage and the 2-litre Ballot after I have dwelt on the Lancia, but the snag is both are now hard to find, while the Delage is liable to have funny electrics and only go really briskly if it is the correct model for so doing, while the Ballot has a dummy radiator shell, which rather puts you off, and a "slow" gearbox. Of course, both are admirably braked and cling to the highway, and if you just wanted something inexpensive to go places without landing you in trouble, I would recommend a search for one.

The "12/50" Alvis would probably suit you very well, if you are prepared to adjust your brakes frequently and to ignore frivolous comments about "light lorries." These cars go very well indeed and deserve complete marks for never boiling over or breaking down, but unfortunately great big gaps exist between the various gear-ratios, and the magic L201 engines with big-port heads are all too hard to come upon. As a tender to something faster a small-port "12/50" seems immensely attractive, and I would very much like to do up and re-spray one of the dear old small-radiator tourers and run it about to show synchromesh mashers how sound were the 1925 touring cars. But it's not exactly a sports car, is it?

The "12/50" Lea-Francis is much more civilised than the Alvis, the 1928, or thereabouts, "Hyper" especially so, but it is also more delicate, and I would advise you to inspect the condition of the rear hubs from time to time if you buy one of these.

A Frazer-Nash is both immense and in a class all its own. But if, as I suspect, your pocket limits you to a really early one, get the dog-clutches in the transmission to mesh decently, otherwise you will have only one hand with which to steer most of the time, for you will be holding in the ratio-swopping handle with the other. The early s.v. Anzani cars were wonderfully reliable in their day, but can be expected to be only moderately quick and to drink oil alarmingly, now, while the substitution of a Meadows engine is only a solution if it is the right sort of Meadows, with twin port, deflector head and steel rods, etc.

Without a doubt your thoughts, by now, have turned to a Bugatti, but Type 44s and those almost-too-perfect-to-be-true (I am not being disparaging) 1½-litre G.P.s are now as rare as gas-masks. A Type 40 is a charming way of going motoring, but only if you feel like taking the engine all to pieces, cleaning the interior, and re-assembling it with extra oil filters and air cleaners and things not encompassed by Ettore. For if an engine of this type fouls its oil you have had it. But if you make no attempt to "hot-up" and if you drive with circumspection, there is no reason why this particular Bugatti should not be reliable. On the other hand, it will not exceed 65–75 m.p.h., and unless you crave a Bugatti because it *is* a Bugatti, it is debatable whether the care needed, before you motor it and while you are motoring it, to retain it in one piece is justified in terms of measurable performance.

The Brescia Bugatti, they do say, has a more durable engine, lending itself in no mean manner to experimentation, but the chassis is primitive in comparison, and these cars are just not about when you want to buy them. The blown "2.3" Type 43 has been described to me by an enthusiastic owner as quite *the* nicest and most reliable method of motoring at over 100 m.p.h., but, of

course, you gamble on how long the crankshaft rollers will hold out—and to one of "30/98" leanings it's a big gamble. Yet how true that all the best things within reach of we mere humans entails a gamble, for certainly this is motoring in one of its highest forms.

A 2-litre Lagonda is a very stately carriage, but its clever camshafts resulted in a not so clever inlet tract, so that you really want a puffer, and early puffers that have run many, many miles are usually more a liability than an asset.

Of course, old man, a vintage Italian car is usually excellent—an O.M., or Itala, or Diatto, although the top cog is usually lowish, and you do not like buzz-boxes, do you? And the bore/stroke ratio of the Diatto is a little unfortunate if we still pay tax on bore×number of cylinders over 1613 after this bit of strife is over.

I think I should keep clear of the early, small French stuff because you can bet your lowest florin that a succession of exuberant English youths will have thoroughly worn-out the one you buy, although the twin-cam Salmson was the goods, and if you find an Amilcar Six you may as well stop looking. If you could get over the obsession that you must be able to do something pretty close to 90 m.p.h. a s.v. Aston-Martin would be considerably up your street, although I concede that screw-in (if not out) valve caps are a bit awkward and that if you want an Edwardian, why not get one? But these cars are so pleasant to drive, and having one now is to stamp you as quite someone in vintage circles—not that you can step over to Roland Smith and buy one.

It would be nice to have an even rarer motor-car, such as a "20/70" Crossley or a "19/100" Austro-Daimler, or a "22/90" Alfa-Romeo, or a Straker-Squire Six, but it's not much use buying an isolated example because you will need almost another whole car for spares, if only for peace of mind.

Mark you, an "Ulster" Austin Seven can teach you lots about fast motoring without ever going very fast, and it's deuced inexpensive to run. However, watch that some vandal has not changed the engine for a standard one with jet oiling and pause-between-them gears. And don't think there is any other *vintage* really small car, other than the Gwynne Eight and "8/18" Talbot which are tourers of the slower order.

The M-type M.G. Midget can be excellent, providing its body has not fallen asunder and it does not get water in its dynamo; but it isn't a vintage style of car, although it might be fun to fit a side-valve Morris Minor engine with 4-speed cog-chest.

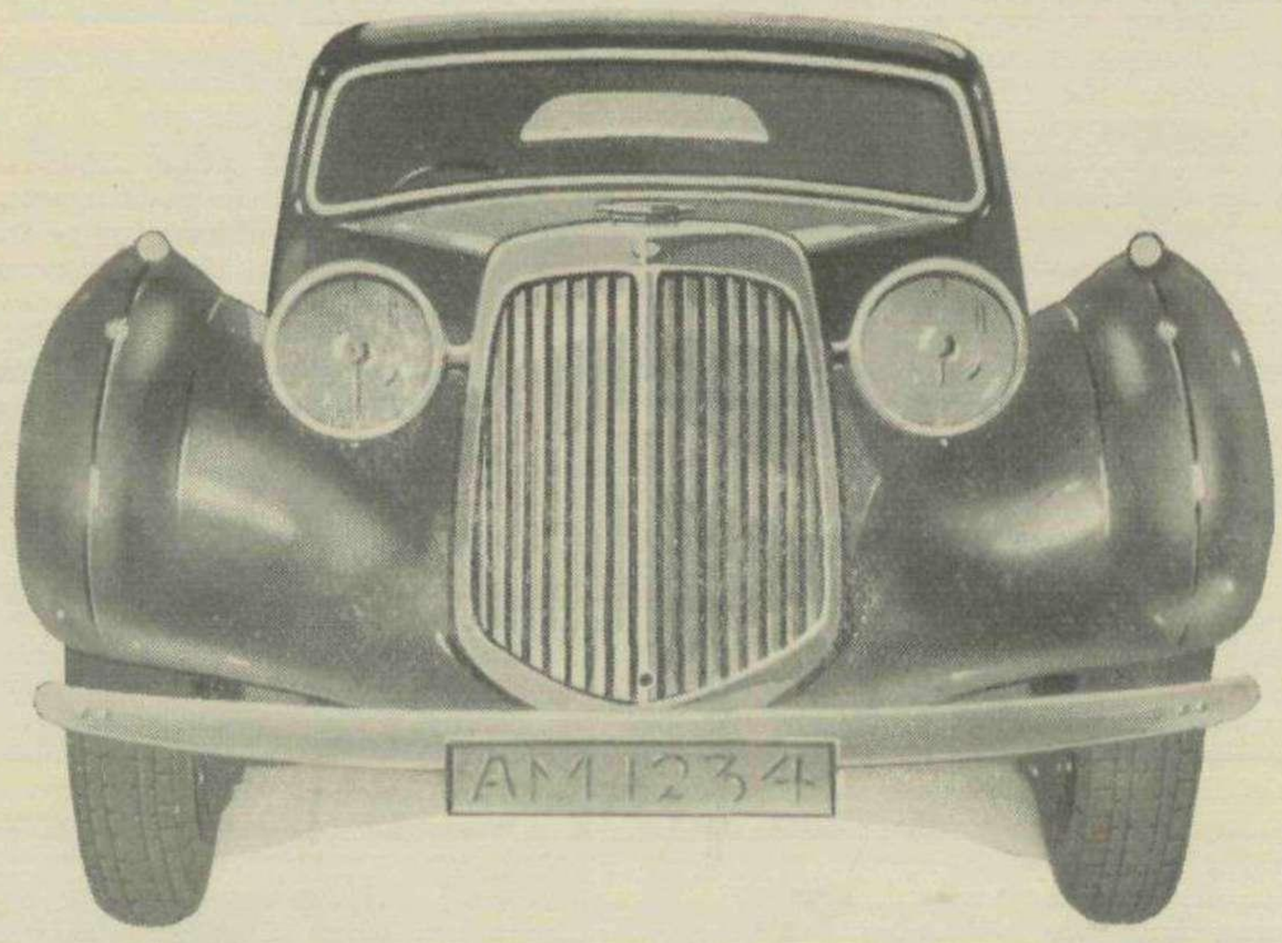
Another car, in quite another h.p. category, which I somehow never think of as quite vintage, although I cannot decide why, is the "Silver Eagle" Alvis. They go along more than somewhat, and those who have really motored them maintain that they dispose of 3-litre Bentleys and the shortest of "Lambdas" and things; they are probably referring to the 2-litre cars, of which very few were built. If you fancy something unusual, front-wheel-drive Alvis models can still be had, but they make an infernal noise when functioning without, it seems, going terribly fast, although the engine is awfully fascinating.

Well, John, old boy, I hope that these miscellaneous remarks will be of use to you and will help you to find just the very vintage car, instead of a buzzing little modern with synchromesh, which is so much like all the other buzzing little moderns with synchromesh that you have the utmost difficulty in deciding which one to buy.

Here's to your Castrol-R.

Sincerely,

MATTHEW.



"The great aim of culture, the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is, and to make it prevail"

Matthew Arnold

ASTON MARTIN LIMITED, FELTHAM, MIDDLESEX. Telephone: 2291

Letters from Readers

Sir,

Is it possible for you to enquire of MOTOR SPORT readers whether any official photographs or snapshots are available of a Shelsley hybrid called the Shipton Special ?

I should be pleased to cover any charges involved.

I am, Yours, etc.,

CONRAD SHIPTON
(Lieut. (A.), R.N.V.R.)

R.A.C.,
London, S.W.1.

[Please write direct. The Shipton Special comprised a "23/60" Vauxhall engine in a Coventry Premier chassis.—ED.]

* * *

Sir,

F/O A. M. R. Mallock's article in September's issue was extremely interesting to me, as I am at present rebuilding a 1931 Austin Seven. It started life as a saloon, but for some years now it has been undergoing various changes. I bought the chassis from a friend of mine who is now serving with the R.A.F. in India. He started rebuilding it by fitting a Morgan front axle and having the rear springs flattened. I had to refit the front axle as there was too much castor angle on it—the self-centering action being strongly in evidence even when pushing the chassis along! I believe that I am correct in saying that there should be no castor angle on the Morgan front axle, as the rearward offset of the centre-line of the stub axle from that of the king pins provides an effective castor angle of about 5½ degrees. The Morgan drag link and track rod have been replaced by those from a Morris Minor. This is a definite improvement on the original, as it now has ball-ended fittings. The steering box and column came from a Jowett.

I disagree with F/O Mallock's statement that it is not necessary to alter the transmission when fitting flattened springs. I found it necessary to pack the engine up half an inch at the rear and raise the chassis ball-joint two inches, in order that the crankshaft and propeller shaft would be in line for normal loading of the car. If this is not done a considerable loss in transmission efficiency will occur at the change in angle of the propeller shaft at the chassis ball-joint.

The engine has been completely rebuilt with one or two modifications. The oiling system is basically the same, but the Austin oil pump has been replaced by a gear-type pump from a Morris bolted to the timing case cover and driven from the camshaft. This necessitated doing away with the fan, but as I am fitting an oil cooler and a cleaner, I do not expect any adverse effects, either from overheating or bits of engine floating about in the oil stream.

The inlet manifold was opened up to 1 in. diameter to take two S.U. carburetters, also from Morris Minors, but I have abandoned this idea because of the inability to get larger sizes of needles. The engine ran very well up to about half throttle with these carburetters, but after that it went "fluffy," due to richness. I have now got a 26 F.V. updraught Solex carburetter fitted to Y-shaped manifold in place of the T-shaped Austin one. The engine at present is extremely critical on ignition advance.

During the few trial runs which I have made the steering seems to respond excellently, although I have yet to find out what it will be like in the "fifties." The body that I am fitting is a 2-seater Singer sports with a pointed back.

Hoping that these few notes will be of some use on an already much talked-of subject.

I am, Yours, etc.,

K. W. CAMPBELL.

Dursley, Glos.

* * *

Sir,

With reference to your article in the August edition giving details of the Aston-Martin with twin-o.h.c. engine designed by John Benson, it may interest readers to know that this car is still in existence. I first heard of the car from the garage manager to whom it was disposed of, and decided to take a run down to Lichfield to look it over. It was reposing in the stables of an old house, presumably Mr. John Benson's former residence, and after gazing with awe and wonder at the array of spare con. rods, crankshaft, 4-seater body, and sundry other bits and pieces, I went back to London and announced to the garage manager that I was satisfied, and would buy it.

The next problem was to transport it to London, and this was achieved with the aid of a 30-cwt. lorry and a gang of helpers, the car, spare parts, and even the old 4-seater body being loaded on board by means of a block and tackle, the stable doors having been removed from their hinges to form a ramp, and afterwards replaced.

On arrival in London, in the early hours of the morning, the major problem was how to unload the car, as we had, of course, no ramps to use. We persuaded a filling station hand to allow us to use his hydraulic lift, and by this means, and a short tow, finally got the car installed in my garage.

This was towards the end of 1938, and as the war was not so evidently imminent, it was decided to attempt to convert the car into a 2-seater for use in sprint events in the super sports class. A start was made on the reconditioning of the engine and chassis, all of which was dismantled and found to be in very good order, with the exception of the valve-timing gear, the ball races of which were in pieces, and were renewed. The big-ends and main bearings were in such good order that they were not interfered with. The single-seater body had been removed, and when the engine was reassembled, the instruments were mounted on a temporary panel and the engine started at the first push of the starter button. Except for a considerable amount of noise from the valve gear, the engine seemed to be particularly smooth.

It was not possible to run the car on the road as it was not taxed or insured, so work was commenced on a 2-seater body constructed of wood with a plywood skin, and at this time Gregor Grant, of the *Light Car*, who was a near neighbour of mine and a fellow Morgan enthusiast, brought along a photographer, it being Grant's intention to use the pictures in an article on the car, although its history was not then known to us.

At this point the war intervened, and all work on the car ceased, with the exception of fitting modern wheels and tyres, which considerably improved the appearance. Grant joined the Forces, I was working long hours, and had removed to another address, so the car was left in the garage at my old house, which was thoroughly blitzed, and it was not until the beginning of this year that the debris was sorted over and the car and what parts could be found moved to my home garage.

On Easter last, having some spare time, I cleaned up the engine and body, got the engine started without much difficulty, and drove the car for the first time. As the only available road was the drive of the flats in which I live, which is very narrow and winding, the experience was more exciting than enlightening. The acceleration of a blown engine on a 10-ft. pathway with lots of corners is not conducive to a study of anything other than the need of avoiding either homicide, suicide, or demolition.

That was the last occasion on which I had time to devote any attention to the car, and as I still have some of the original petrol in the tank, perhaps some kind reader would suggest a way of trying the car on some private road! I hope that the few facts which I have been able to give regarding this very interesting car will be of use to you, and assure you that any further queries or an inspection of the car would be welcomed.

I am, Yours, etc.,

J. A. ANDREWS.

Highgate, N.6.

* * *

Sir,

Re the 750-c.c. Thomas chassis. Since last writing to you I have had another look at it and also obtained a G.A. blue print, ¼-scale. I think I gave you the dimension incorrectly. The track is 3 ft. 6 in. and wheelbase is 7 ft. 6 in.

The torque tube is above and not below the seat and the front axle is above the springs.

The engine was to have been one half of the 1,500-c.c. straight-eight. I also

found two clutches. There are plenty of spares—axles, one gearbox (in pieces), one differential (built up), springs and all sorts of bits and pieces such as spring links and brake links.

The whole thing has always been carefully stored and is now in a private garage in almost perfect condition. There are only two wheels fitted and these were the spares from a Thomas-Aston-Martin hybrid ["Green Pea"?—ED.]. Also there is no body work, neither are there any drawings of it. All the blue prints are complete (about three sets). I do not think there is any danger of the car going for scrap, and it is not for sale. From the G.A. drawing it appears that the bottom of the crankcase is only 5¾ in. from the c.l. of the crankshaft. This gives a ground clearance of 6 in.

I am, Yours, etc.,
T. H. L. ARROWSMITH
(Sub.-Lt. (A.), R.N.V.R.).
H.M. Forces.

* * *

Sir,

With reference to the article in September issue of MOTOR SPORT headed "Brescia *versus* Type 40," and concocted from my notes, I have no objection to being re-written—but take the strongest exception to being misrepresented—especially on the following points:—

In my original notes on Brescia fuel consumption I added the proviso of "not using too much acceleration," quite a necessary point, you will agree.

If any doubting Thomas is inclined to think 42 m.p.g. from 1½-litres is *too* remarkable, I would point out that 40 m.p.g. was guaranteed at "touring speeds" with the 16 valvers, and the contemporary *Autocar* quoted Mr. Bugatti, claiming 43 m.p.g. from his 1½-litre cars and 48 m.p.g. was mentioned in one of the early '20s Show report.

I only wish I could demonstrate the fantastically small amount of throttle required to maintain 2,000 r.p.m. in top on ordinary going.

The other misrepresentation arises on the Type 40's acceleration. The original notes included the words, "at lower road speeds"—owing to lower gear ratios, etc. Obviously this refers to from rest to, say, 35–40 m.p.h. and not overall acceleration.

Your version gives the impression of a Type 40 accelerating quicker than a Ford V8—very unlikely, I think, especially in the higher range.

No hard feelings, but have an urge to keep out of the 90 m.p.h. T-M.G. class.

I am, Yours, etc.,
J. FAWCETT.

[We apologise to Mr. Fawcett for thus misrepresenting his claims.—ED.]

* * *

Sir,

I feel that the letter from Mr. A. F. Brookes in the September issue calls for a reply from me, not so much with a view to "developing the discussion" (which, incidentally, I also am enjoying) but to point out that our respective views are as opposed as Nazism is to Democracy. The Editor has hit the nail plumb on the head in his footnote, by stating that the discussion depends on "the indefinable qualities of cars, rather than the concrete." This has been my point all along. I rather suspect, as the Editor again surmises, that Mr. Brookes has driven mostly Britishers, and that his actual experience with continentals is virtually nil? Otherwise, I cannot conceive how on earth he could prefer the cars he mentions, particularly "in the 10-h.p. class," to their continental counterparts. I merely repeat that an "1100" Fiat is away ahead of them all—indefinable qualities, certainly; and concrete (performance figures) as well! For my part I have had actual experience over many miles of driving (though, thank God, not actual ownership!) with all the cars he mentions, except Jowett. If he has not already done so, I would like Mr. Brookes to gain experience of the Lancia "Aprilia," B.M.W. and Fiat. At present he is living in a fool's paradise in believing that his pet British 1½-litres are supreme: though I admit that the Riley 1½ "Sprite" series, of around 1937, was a grand little car.

I notice he has not challenged my views in the middle-priced large cars or the high-priced sports cars. Again, I have had considerable experience of British, continental and American. In each case, the British "aren't in it." There has recently been a great discussion in a contemporary on the same subject, started by some half-wit who wrote a lot of bunkum about the early "Lambda" and continental cars in general. I had to take a strong grip of myself to avoid joining that discussion which, however, was taken up by a host of people who pointed out that in the indefinable qualities, particularly, the British manufacturers are a long way behind. In nearly every case, intense patriotism is due to lack of experience with continentals. For our sake, that is probably just as well; but very regrettable.

Finally, I acknowledge the M.G. successes. I hope they were all scored over stiff foreign opposition in their respective classes. I also regret the error in my last letter about the M.G. success in the Mille Miglia—but I had recently seen somewhere that Taruffi easily beat M.G. opposition in a Mille Miglia event. Perhaps the Editor can say if this was ever so?

I am, Yours, etc.,
C. W. P. HAMPTON (Lieut.).
H.M. Forces.

[In 1934 we believe a Maserati won the 1,100-c.c. class of the Mille Miglia, in which category an M.G. Magnette competed. When we can get to our records we will give the facts in more detail.—ED.]

* * *

Sir,

I hardly feel it necessary to refute "Two-Point-Six" at length because you, Sir, have already dealt very fairly with his contribution to your October issue. Indeed, I could think of many more effective criticisms of vintage cars than he himself has done, for cheap sneers, coming from behind the camouflage of a *nom-de-plume*, never convinced anyone. Of solid reasoning it appears that "2.6" is incapable.

Even so, some of his comments are truly sparkling. Having confessed to a very reasonable distaste for discomfort "2.6" asks, "What's wrong with a 2.6 M.G., 2½ S.S., Riley Kestrel, B.M.W., and the like?" Now of these, one is universally admitted to be among the few that can give points to the vintage car on all headings—provided you can afford to buy it. Of the remainder, one has a negligible performance, one, at least, is diabolically uncomfortable, and two of them have exceedingly inferior road-holding and cornering characteristics.

From his general remarks "2.6" makes it apparent that quick, accurate steering and good controllability (horrid word!) are not within the scope of his understanding.

As to driving in blizzards, I speak subject to correction, but it is my belief that snow falls fairly impartially upon the occupants of S.S. and Bentley alike. One can, of course, have a saloon body on either.

I think it is generally allowed that the best modern cars are better than anything of the vintage era, although the very best of the vintage age can still hold their own on all important points. Even when the vintage car is surpassed on sheer performance, there remains the very solid appeal of value for money, durability, and accessibility, not to mention the more intangible factors of high cruising speed at low revs., accurate steering and good road-holding which appear to be as incomprehensible to the genus "2.6" as is caviare to the general.

To some extent, I think, the vintage-*versus*-modern argument is closely analogous to the "Anglo-Continental controversy," now equally rampant. On this subject a strangely fatuous outburst recently appeared in the *Motor* from the pen of Mr. S. Gordon Marshall.

In asking the question, "Why commend continental cars?" Mr. S. Gordon Marshall adds: "Let us be fair to ourselves."

As is well known, the English are divided into two classes: those who can see no good in English products, and those who can see no harm in them. "Let us be fair to ourselves" is the text almost invariably chosen by the latter class.

As usual, the truth lies between the two extremes. All the arguments are thoroughly hackneyed, but Mr. Marshall introduces some rather novel fallacies which ought to be dispelled. To begin with, he correctly states the dilemmas which confront a designer, and from among which one of a variety of compromises must be chosen. He then continues to the specious statement that "manufacturers who cannot hold their designers down to evolving models that meet with the public's approval very soon go out of business."

Now this is a very dangerous half truth, because it is not often that even the best of goods will sell without a powerful sales organisation and, conversely, a mediocre article will sell for quite a long time with a backing of good publicity and salesmanship. In certain cases this applies to British cars.

Mr. Marshall cites the relatively small sale of continental cars in this country as supporting his argument; he then tries to discover complicated reasons why British cars do not sell overseas! Once more, he overlooks the salesmanship angle. No continental make has a good sales backing in England, despite which such makes as Fiat and Citroen sell in

surprisingly large numbers. The British public also has a not wholly unfounded fear of spares difficulties, and low second-hand values attendant upon continental cars in this country

It therefore appears to be at least a possibility that some English cars may have been selling to some extent on salesmanship rather than on inherent merit ; but to decide that let us proceed to a dispassionate comparison, incidentally considering Mr. Marshall's arguments.

He seizes upon the Lancia " Lambda " as a basis for his comparison. Now, the " Lambda " was a clever design, and it had a deserved following over here, although there were several contemporary British cars which were more than an equal to it on balance. But all that was 15 or 20 years ago, so what possible bearing can it have upon an argument about current design ? Confining our attention to mass-production types, what is the position to-day ? Our engines are more than a match for their continental brethren so far as power output and most other important features are concerned. In weight and durability they are to some extent hampered by being bound to a high bore/stroke ratio, owing to the horse-power tax. But that is not their fault. In coachwork the life, finish, upholstery and general convenience of most popular English production jobs fully rival the continental equivalent, even if we have shown an unfortunate taste for bogus walnut and similar fripperies.

Wherein, then, lies this alleged continental superiority ? Solely, I suggest, in the all-important characteristic of good road-holding. Bad roads, dangerous mountain passes, and a purchasing public who are predominantly mechanically minded, has forced continental manufacturers to produce a family car which was at once capacious and comfortable, and yet handled more or less in the manner of a thoroughbred sports-car.

English motorists, by contrast, moved about rather slowly on billiard-table surfaces, and were not at all mechanically minded. Moreover, most of them had no experience of a car which handled properly, and therefore had no standard by which to judge the home product. But after the war our roads may not be quite so good, for a time at least, and a very large number of people will have become mechanically minded and widely experienced drivers.

So it behoves our manufacturers to consider whether the motoring public will continue to accept their recent standards of chassis design, which were inefficient, both from the point of view of personal comfort and safety. To combine transatlantic standards of comfort with good road-holding (particularly in a light car with a forward engine mounting), independent front suspension and a low centre of gravity are absolute necessities. In a small car front-wheel drive is a tremendous help in lowering the centre of gravity without decreasing headroom, as well as improving general handling. It may be an unfortunate necessity that i.f.s. increases tyre wear, but it is at least debatable as to whether that must necessarily be the case.

A recognition of these features has led to the production of such cars as D.K.W., Fiat, Citroen and Peugeot, to name the best continental " family " cars. If only we can add the self-evident excellences of these machines to the many admitted virtues of the equivalent British makes, we shall obviously have something to beat all comers ; and such a coalition is clearly possible of attainment.

But is it " being fair to ourselves " to pretend that there are no respects in which continental manufacturers are ahead of the home product ?

Once again, I think there is no doubt that British design has been retarded (in Mr. Marshall's own words) by " manufacturers holding down their designers." As Mr. Marshall also points out, when our designers are left to themselves they beat the world ; but if our motor manufacturers and sales departments go on " holding down their designers " it is at least very open to doubt whether they will not also " very soon go out of business."

I am, Yours, etc.,

CECIL CLUTTON.

R.A.F.

* * *

Sir,

I have read with interest a number of articles giving tentative designs for post-war sports cars, and felt that the point of view outlined herewith might provide interesting subject matter for your correspondence columns, and would like your opinion as to its suitability.

May I offer my hearty congratulations to Capt. Moon on his very fine article on a suggested design for a post-war high-speed 1½-litre.

I found it particularly soul-stirring and my enthusiast's blood fairly surged, but (and there is a very big but) are we not inclined to lose sight of several important facts directly relating to post-war motoring ? First, such cars as are being suggested now would cost a great deal of money to manufacture and a greater amount to buy, and the majority of these post-war enthusiasts will be those who, pre-war, were only in the position to purchase M.G. " Midgets," Singers, Morgan " 4/4s," and Austin Sevens, and keep them running, and those who have been added to the ranks of the enthusiasts by the advent of mechanised warfare.

I can state that I have met many who were pre-war non-competitors and even non-drivers who are now army drivers, and visualise themselves as post-war competitors. These are the fellows who are going to keep the wheels turning in Land's Ends, Exeters, at Brooklands and Donington, and all other venues. These are the fellows whose interests will bring competitive motoring home to the nation as a whole ; they will bring a new spirit and new ideas to the sport. At present they keep the wheels turning under conditions which may tend to make the pre-war trials seem " rather a tame affair." They will change Mr. and Mrs. Smith's point of view, change the opinion of the people from regarding a trial as a collection of madmen (who should be in custody) driving death-dealing killers up and down places where they should never have wanted to go anyway had they been sane. Mrs. Smith will fondly tell Mr. Jones that

READERS' SALES AND WANTS

To meet the repeated demands for something on the lines of the old Spare Parts Announcements, we have instituted a system of inexpensive advertisements. Each announcement must be limited to **twelve** words, plus the advertiser's sufficient postal address, and the charge will be 1s. 6d. per announcement, payable at time of posting.

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PAIR P.100 Headlamps, £4. 6-cylinder " Scintilla," £9. Write BM/WLTB, London, W.C.1.

1939/40 Fiat " 500 " 4-seaters. 11,000 and 13,000 miles. Both perfect; will sell one. Major Vigors, Fosse Bridge, nr. Cheltenham.

1929 F.N. Anzani O.H.V. Engine, 11.9, re-bored, clutch, propshaft, magneto rewound, £10. Offer. J. R. Normanton, Heathside Park Road, Hale, Cheshire.

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G.P. Salmson, 4.50×19 wheels, set of timing gears in new condition, speeds drive. R. J. Parkman, 37, Dalkeith Road, West Dulwich, S.E.21.

1939 low-mileage " 1100 " Fiat, " Aprilia," B.M.W. or Hotchkiss Ten. Price secondary importance. Major Vigors, Fosse Bridge, nr. Cheltenham.

Spares Section,

MOTOR SPORT,
21, CITY ROAD,
LONDON, E.C.1

her "Willy" got another medal for driving last Saturday.

Maybe this sounds a bit rough on the pre-war conception of the Sport, but that is what will have to happen if the Sport is to progress (unless, of course, the promise of a post-war nest egg for the Forces turns out to be £5,000 per year tax free).

However, this is wandering away from the point; the question is, who is going to persuade the manufacturer to put in the very necessary fine materials and labour, and a very large amount of money to make these cars available in sufficient quantities to make it a paying proposition at a popular price? Somehow I do not think it will happen. A few manufacturers of the Aston-Martin, Frazer-Nash, H.R.G. and Alta types will continue to build really rapid cars, but at a price. The bigger organisations will not entertain such a proposition. The result will be a few really well-built cars at a high price and large quantities of horrible little "get here, get there" motor-cars suited only for "perambulating." After all, we have already seen how the bigger organisations lean quite definitely towards a collection of steel pressings.

The result will have to be a very much revised idea of competitive motoring. Such classes as completely-standard production events, semi-standard production events (with limitations), and completely non-standard events, embracing everything that has four wheels and a steering wheel (tillers and tail plane assemblies barred). These will have to be included in major events at Brooklands and Donington (*a la* Talbot Ten race, 1938). Admitted, the mental picture of an assortment of Morris Eights, Standard Eights, Austin Eights, and other Eights all hurtling round the Campbell Circuit touching 57.83 m.p.h. on the Members' Banking and Railway Straight makes one feel a little ill, but I am quite sure we can get used to it. After all, we got used to the idea of nice soft springs with independent suspension.

Back again on the subject of the car itself and the old-fashioned or pre-war type of enthusiast. How is he going to get hold of a real car again, that is, if he has not hung on to his pre-war carriage and pair? It seems, therefore, that the only thing to do will be either to purchase a high-priced car (when and if available) or a worn-out thoroughbred, with a view to renovation, or in the third case, build a "hybrid" from new and old components, until he has the type of sports car he desires (then his troubles will start, when he tries to enter for some of our standard and semi-standard events).

I have been putting on paper ideas for my car for the past four years, only to scrap them as impossible. However, at last I am actually on the trail of the sort of chassis I have been looking for, and with this I hope to really get down to the job (no details until I actually own said chassis). The only snag is that I never seem to be able to find time to do anything else other than talk about what I am going to do; I believe most of the Servicemen find themselves in the same boat. Incidentally, some of our military vehicles (and I don't mean trucks) have some very novel and useful ideas put into them, and are a source of inventions (or copy).

In conclusion, may I say that, although I take somewhat a "wet-blanket" view of the probable nature of competition after the war, I most certainly do enjoy reading opinions of fellow enthusiasts like Capt. Moon, who, even in the stress of foreign service, has not forgotten a single detail of the sort of car he would like to see manufactured. Meanwhile, I congratulate MOTOR SPORT on keeping available for enthusiasts.

I am, Yours, etc.,
R. TRUSCOTT (S/Sgt. R.E.M.E.).
H.M. Forces.

* * *

Sir,

I intended to write this many moons ago, but the Army takes up a lot of time.

Anyway, I must congratulate you on keeping MOTOR SPORT going during the campaign, and now it is practically the only link with real motoring except for the odd Bugatti or Delahaye one sees out here.

For a short period, in my unit, we had a 1,750 "blower" Alfa-Romeo, which gave us the greatest fun; although of about '32 vintage, it was in quite good condition. Eventually, of course, it had to be handed in as captured material, as it was registered in Libya.

I now await the arrival of your August edition.

I am, Yours, etc.,
C. NORMAN JONES (Lieut.).
Airgraph,
B.N.A.F.

* * *

Sir,

Kindly note that you are guilty of an error that may offend our American friends, in stating "the *British* 125-h.p. Hall-Scott aero engine."

As a matter of fact the Hall-Scott is of *American* design and construction by Mr. Hall Scott, of San Francisco, U.S.A., and is similar to his famous marine engines, although it does follow Mercédès lines, which Mr. Hall Scott favoured then.

Mr. E. J. Hall also helped on the design of the Liberty aero engine, and I believe he is still active to-day on high-powered marine engines for sub. chasers.

For further information consult *Aerosphere* for 1939, page 361, by Aircraft Publications, Inc., 370, Lexington Avenue, N.Y. City.

I am, Yours, etc.,
ANONYMOUS.
Somewhere in England.

[We gladly publish this correction in fairness to our American allies.—ED.]

* * *

Sir,

Capt. Moon's design has many attractive features, not the least of which is the location of the main masses—engine and gearbox-final-drive unit—at the extremities of the chassis. This allows low pitching frequency without unduly soft springs.

I am not so sure, however, about the omission of a fan unless the car is to be confined to flat racing and touring. The average cooling system has a dual function: it acts not only in its accredited role of heat-dissipator, but also as a heat reservoir into which a good deal, though not an unlimited amount, of heat can be poured in times of stress, to be removed at leisure later by radiation. While this may be a fair compromise under promenading conditions with occasional short bursts, it is far from ideal. The ideal, surely, is a cooling system that copes with demands as and when they are made. Only with such a system can one hope to indulge successfully in prolonged blinds on the indirects, *e.g.*, intensive Alpinery. One solution is a huge radiator with a *really* effective thermostat that restricts circulation to about ½ gallon until the coolant in the head reaches working temperature. Another (I think, better) is forced draught cooling, whether directly on to finned heads or indirectly through a small radiator. The reduced "reservoir" that then becomes practicable means quicker warming up, less wear, less weight. And the same applies to oil sumps.

I am, Yours, etc.,
J. R. EDISBURY.
Bebington.

* * *

Sir,

I thought that my idea for drilling 100-odd holes in a new chassis for my Aston-Martin might be of some assistance to other enthusiasts, similarly placed, and deprived of mains electricity. Not being particularly enthusiastic about hand drilling, I unearthed an Austin Seven starter motor, reversed the direction of rotation, fitted a sleeve to the spindle to take the stem of a ½-in. chuck, and bent a double-ended handle to fit on to the original locating bolt. A 6-volt battery with starter switch in circuit completed the outfit, which drills over 30 holes per charge in a manner equal to any mains electric drill.

I am, Yours, etc.,
TERRY MCKAY.
Aberdeen.

* * *

Sir,

I offer no excuse for this, my first venture into print (I hope), except that some comments on the motor situation here may prove interesting.

The Sicilian appears to possess a decided preference for the Fiat, as one might expect. There are any number lying about loose, all, unfortunately, very effectively immobilised. Any transport in an undamaged condition has been commandeered, of course, and I have seen a "2.9" Alfa, Lancia "Aprilia," and a very rakish-looking Bianchi in use by Army personnel, in addition to the ubiquitous Fiat.

The most interesting vehicle to date has been an abandoned German Army Steyr. It was an air-cooled V8 of 3- to 4-litre capacity, with a heavily finned alloy block and steel liners. Other details include push-rod o.h.v., four-wheel drive and i.f.s. There was a cooling device rather like a wind-tunnel over the engine. The seat of government had been well and truly looted, even to the gear-lever knob, so no details are forthcoming.

I am, Yours, etc.,
D. IZOD.
H.M. Forces.

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Continued in next column

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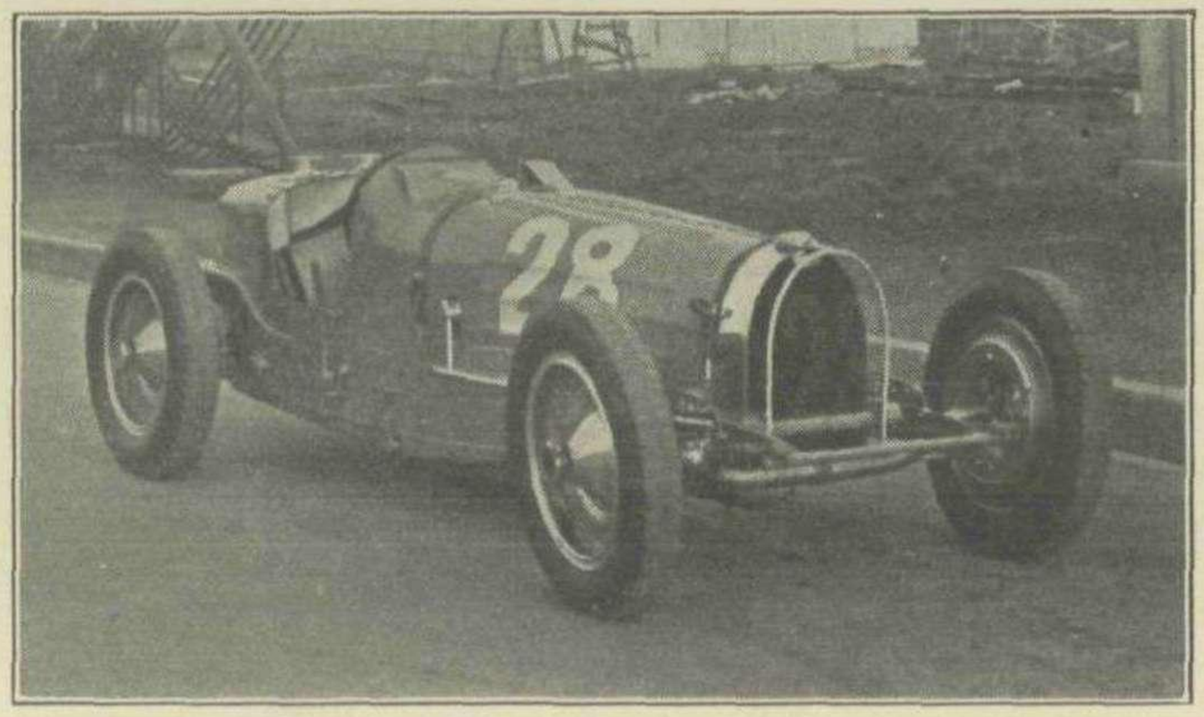
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RECENT MOTOR SPORT ROAD-TESTS

IN the issue of May, 1937, we published an Index of all the road tests conducted by this paper since it was founded, as *The Brooklands Gazette*, in 1924. From this Index we have been publishing extracts, but these did not embrace the tests published during the last six years. In order to make good this omission, we give below a revised selection, including tests published from May, 1937, to the present issue. Read in conjunction with the Index of May, 1937, it provides a reference to all the MOTOR SPORT tests—251 in all. Readers' accounts of their cars and technical descriptions of new models, moreover, are not included in this Index. Many of the issues concerned can still be supplied, at the prices given below. Please quote date of issue when ordering.

Make of Car	Issue
A.B.C. 11 h.p. 2-cyl. 2-seater	Feb. 1926
A.C. 2-litre, short-chassis, 15.7 h.p. 2-seater	July 1936
A.C. 2-litre, 16/40 h.p. 3-seater	Oct. 1927
A.C. 2-litre, 16/66 h.p. 4-seater	June 1934
A.C. "Ace" 16/80 h.p. 2-seater	July 1937
Alfa-Romeo, 1½-litre supercharged 6-cyl. Charles 2-seater (1929)	March 1934
Alfa-Romeo 1½-litre supercharged 8-cyl. "Zagato" 2-seater (1932)	July 1934
Alfa-Romeo 2.3-litre supercharged 8-cyl. "Zagato" 2-seater (1933)	Aug. 1936
Alfa-Romeo 2900B, Type 8C supercharged 2-seater (1937)	Jan. 1942
Alvis 6-cyl., "Silver Eagle" 4-seater coupé (1929)	Aug. 1931
Alvis 3½-litre saloon	Feb. 1936
Alvis Speed Twenty 4-seater	June 1932
Ansaldo 2-litre, 4-cyl., o.h.c. 4-seater	Sept. 1924
Aston-Martin Mark II, 11.9 h.p. 2-4-seater	Jan. 1935
Aston-Martin Ulster 11.9 h.p., T.T. 2-seater	Oct. 1935
Aston-Martin 11.9 h.p. 2-seater	Jan. 1930
Aston-Martin 1½-litre Ulster racing 2-seater	Aug. 1937
Aston-Martin 2-litre Speed Model 2-seater	May 1938
Aston-Martin 1½-litre Mark II, long-chassis 4-seater (1934)	Aug. 1940
Aston-Martin 2-litre streamline saloon	June 1942
Atalanta V12 saloon	March 1939
Auburn 30 h.p., 8 cyl. supercharged 2-seater	June 1935
Austin Seven Boyd Carpenter 2-str.	Sept. 1930
Austin Seven "65" 2-seater	Jan. 1934
BENTLEY 4¼-litre, 6-cyl., Park Ward saloon	June 1936
Bentley 8-litre "Special" 2-seater (1931)	April 1938 & Dec. 1940
Bentley 4½-litre drophead coupé	Aug. 1938
Bentley 4½-litre Mark V saloon	Feb. 1941
Bentley 3-litre "Blue Label" "Special" 2-seater (1928–9)	Feb. 1939
Bentley 4½-litre "Le Mans" 4-seater (1928)	Jan. 1942
Bugatti 2.3-litre 8-cyl., Type 43, supercharged 4-seater	May 1930
Bugatti 3.3-litre 8-cyl., Type 57 saloon	May 1934
Bugatti 3.3-litre Type 57 saloon	May 1939 & June 1939
Bugatti 3.3-litre Type 57C supercharged saloon	June 1939
Bugatti 3.3-litre Type 57 SC supercharged coupe	Aug. 1942
Bugatti 5-litre Type 46 saloon (1929)	April 1942
CROSSLEY 20/70 h.p., 4-cyl., s.v. 4-seater	Nov. 1925
Crossley Ten, 1,122 c.c. 4-seater	April 1932
Crouch Anzani 12/30 h.p. 2-seater	Aug. 1924
DAIMLER 2½-litre 18 h.p. saloon	June 1940 & Nov. 1941
Darracq 12/32 h.p., Weymann saloon	Sept. 1924
Delage 8-cyl., sports saloon	April 1930
Delage D8/180 drophead coupé	May 1938
Delahaye 3.5-litre "Coupé des Alps" drophead coupé	Aug. 1936
D.K.W. "Special" saloon	Feb. 1938
Dodge 25.3 h.p. "Custom Six" saloon	May 1938
EXCELSIOR 5½-litre, 6-cyl., super-sports test chassis	Sept. 1927
FIAT "Balilla" saloon	May 1934
Fiat "Balilla" 10 h.p. 2-seater	Jan. 1935
Fiat 6 h.p., Type 500 coupé	March 1937
Fiat "Balilla" 1,100-c.c. saloon	March 1938
Ford Eight "Anglia" saloon	Aug. 1940
Ford V8 "30" Estate car	Oct. 1938
GEORGES-IRAT 2-litre f.w.d. 2-seater	May 1940
HILLMAN Fourteen saloon (1939)	June 1941
Hotchkiss 3½-litre "Grand Sports" saloon	July 1939
H.R.G. 1½-litre, Meadows engined 2-seater	June 1937
H.R.G. 1½-litre Le Mans racing 2-seater	Dec. 1939
INVICTA 4½-litre saloon	Dec. 1929
Invicta 4½-litre Estate car	June 1941
LAGONDA 4½-litre 4-seater	May 1936
Lagonda 4½-litre 4-seater	Jan. 1934
Lagonda 4½-litre, 6-cyl. saloon	Sept. 1939
Lanchester Eighteen saloon	Feb. 1938
Lancia "Aprilia," Type 238 saloon	June 1938
Lea-Francis 1½-litre supercharged T.T. 2-seater (1929)	June 1934
Lea-Francis Fourteen saloon	Dec. 1938
Leyland Eight 2-seater (1927)	Feb. 1938
MERCEDES-BENZ 12/40 h.p., supercharged 2-seater	June 1925
Mercédès-Benz 33/180 h.p., supercharged 4-seater	Aug. 1927
Mercédès-Benz 2.3-litre saloon	April 1938
Mercédès-Benz 1.7-litre, Type 170V 2-seater	Feb. 1939
M.G. Midget "J1," 850 c.c. 2-seater	Sept. 1932
M.G. Midget "T" 2-seater	Jan. 1937
M.G. 14/40 h.p., 4-cyl., super-sports 2-seater	May 1927
O.M. 6-cyl., 2-litre 4-seater	Oct.-Nov. 1928
PEUGEOT "201" 4-cyl., 1,132 c.c. saloon	Sept. 1931
RAILTON 8-cyl. Cobham saloon	Sept. 1938
Riley Nine 4-seater	June 1931
Riley 16 h.p., 4-cyl., "Kestrel" saloon	June 1938
Rover Ten "Special" 2-seater	Aug. 1939
Rolls Royce Twenty, all-weather (1927)	March 1942
Rolls Royce "Phantom I," supercharged	Nov. 1942
SINGER Nine 4-seater	March 1933
Squire 1½-litre, 4-cyl. 2-seater	Aug. 1935
Steyr Type XII, 14/35 h.p., Weymann saloon	Aug. 1928
Stutz "Black Hawk," supercharged 4-seater	Jan. 1930
Stutz 5-litre, 8-cyl. 4-seater	Dec. 1927
Sunbeam 3-litre, 6-cyl. (twin o.h.c.) fabric saloon	Nov. 1927
TALBOT "90," Brooklands-bodied 2-4-seater	April 1931
Talbot "105" sports saloon	April 1934
Talbot 3½-litre saloon	March 1936
Talbot Ten "Rally" 4-seater	Oct.-Nov. 1936
Talbot "105" Vanden Plas 4-seater	Nov. 1932
Talbot Ten tourer	June 1938
Terraplane 29 h.p., 8-cyl. 4-seater	July 1935
Triumph 2-litre "Vitesse Six" saloon	April 1935
Triumph 10 h.p. "Gloria Southern Cross" 2-seater	June 1935
Triumph 10 h.p. "Gloria" saloon	Jan. 1934
Triumph Nine "Southern Cross" 4-seater	June 1932
Triumph Eight "Gnat" 2-seater	Aug. 1931
Triumph Eight, supercharged 2-seater	Dec. 1920
Triumph "Dolomite" 14/60 h.p. saloon	June 1937
VAUXHALL 20/60 h.p. "Hurlingham" 2-seater	Feb. 1930
Vauxhall 17 h.p., 6-cyl., "Cadet" saloon	Sept. 1931
Vauxhall Twenty-five saloon	Aug. 1937
WINDSOR 4-cyl., 11 h.p., "Special" 2-3-seater	Nov. 1926
Wolseley Hornet Swallow 2-seater (1933)	April 1934
Wolseley Hornet (12.08 h.p.) saloon	Sept. 1930

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