



No. 33 : 1939 Austin Eight Saloon

Price, new : £135.	Acceleration from rest through gears to 30 m.p.h., 9.6 sec.	Fuel consumption range : 35-40 m.p.g.	Speedometer reading : 14,452.
Secondhand : £395.	To 50 m.p.h., 34.4 sec. 20-40 m.p.h. (top gear), 17.9 sec.	Oil consumption : 1,000 m.p.g. approximately.	Car first registered April, 1939.

AFTER the experience gained in years gone by with the well-proved and justly famous Austin Seven it was not surprising that the handy Austin Eight was immediately successful upon its introduction in 1939. The model set out, in saloon and tourer form, to provide comfortable, economical and relatively brisk travel for up to four people, and it achieved its object admirably. The briskness is, in fact, one of the most surprising features of the car, borne out by a saloon version which was supplied for test by Elite Motors (Tooting), Ltd., 951-961, Garratt Lane, Tooting Broadway, London, S.W.17.

This car was finished in black externally and the condition of the cellulose was good. The interior was quite exceptional for its age, the head lining and carpets having the appearance of recent professional replacement. The facia and the trim panels showed wear, but the overall effect, assisted also by the clean rear seat and newly cloth-covered front seats, would not normally be expected or found in a pre-war car.

The engine was responsive and smooth, the car reaching 30-plus m.p.h. notably quickly and easily, and going on to a true 50 m.p.h. without stress. The oil pressure gauge indicated 15 lb at a tickover and 37 lb at 30 m.p.h. when the engine was hot. No fumes penetrated the driving compartment unless the car was really hot and being driven fairly hard. The four-speed gear box enabled the useful performance to be exploited when required. For town driving considerable flexibility was available on top gear, a smooth pick-up being possible from 12 m.p.h.

Light, Effective Controls

The steering was naturally light and pleasant to use, and no excessive play was noticeable on the road. The brakes were very good; for slowing down light pedal pressure produced immediate response, and for heavy braking there was plenty of power. The suspension provided comfortable travel on good roads and only mild up and down movement on the average non-arterial main road. The front spring dampers were weak, however, and rough or cobbled roads produced fairly considerable pitching.

A worthwhile amount of tread was left on all the tyres, and the spare was an unused remould. The battery appeared to be in good condition and the engine started remarkably well; even when it was cold a touch of the starter produced instant response. Instruments included an oil pressure gauge, ammeter, fuel gauge, speedometer with total and trip mileages, and an ignition warning light; all were working. Tools included a wheelbrace and jack.

Rattles were confined to the driver's window when in the fully lowered position, and the only source of driver annoyance was a worn steering wheel which made the driver's hands dirty in a short time. As on its introduction, the car remained a very practical and worthy vehicle.