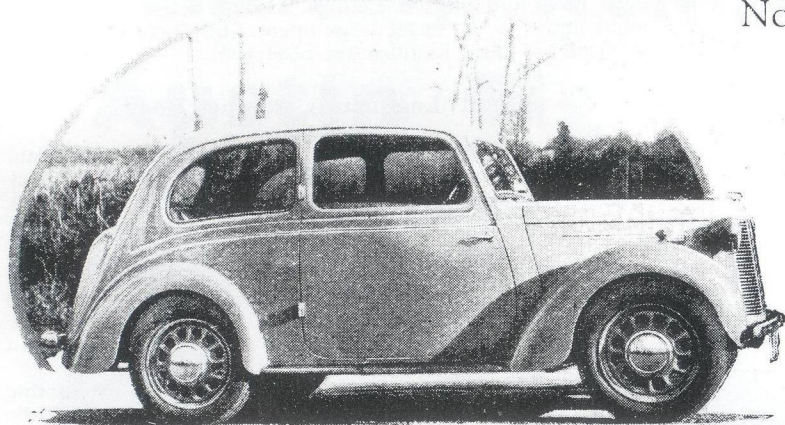


The AUTOCAR ROAD TESTS

No. 1,257.—AUSTIN EIGHT SALOON



ALIVELY interest is aroused by the announcement of an Austin Eight. At last, after some seventeen years, the famous Seven has disappeared. The new Eight is a totally different car in general design, whilst, as to appearance, an entire breakaway has been made from previous Austin practice.

In point of engine size the Eight is the same as the Big Seven, which, it will be remembered, came along some time ago as virtually an enlarged Seven. There are, however, internal engine differences in the Eight, apart from the major differences that exist between the two cars in other respects.

One of the most striking points about the new model is that, both to look at and to sit in, it suggests a 10 h.p. car rather than an 8 h.p. The wheelbase is 7ft. 4½in. against the 6ft. 9in. of the previous Seven. It is a shapely small car, from the modern rounded front, with chromium-plated bars and one-piece bonnet, to the clean-swept tail panel, where a roomy boot is incorporated. Also it is notable for a large area of side window, which gives a light-feeling interior and a particularly good view to back seat passengers, who thus do not feel shut in. It is the two-door sliding-head saloon which has been tested; there is also a four-door six-light model. A detailed description of the

new Eight appears elsewhere in this issue.

Its appeal is obviously in direct ratio to the comfortable and practical accommodation afforded for four people and the economical running that an engine of this size gives. It is thoroughly equipped, well finished and, a far from inconsiderable point, has behind it the name gained by Austin's for producing a sound type of car.

On the open road it travels comfortably at 40 to 45 m.p.h.—in other words, at the rate commonly employed by the majority of owners who use a car for pleasure—and will run up readily to over the 50 mark, proving capable of maintaining a speed close to its maximum without becoming bothered mechanically.

The engine is smooth and fairly quiet even when working hard, and provides a very pleasant form of "potter" motoring on leisurely occasions. The four-cylinder side-valve engine pulls willingly at low speeds, being able to get down to 7 or 8 m.p.h. on the level without snatch on top gear and, if the driver is not wanting to hurry specially, to hold on to top against the average main-road slope.

A Useful Third Gear

As might be expected, however, the gear box can be used to advantage to increase the low-speed acceleration and to maintain speed on hills. Third gear is valuable for the 1 in 8-9 type of gradient, whilst the usual 1 in 6½ hill, approached at 40 m.p.h., was taken confidently with two up on second gear of the four-speed box at about 17 m.p.h. over the steepest section. First is a low emergency ratio to provide a reserve on the steepest kind of hill encountered when touring, this being evident from the sure manner in which the Austin Eight restarted on the 1 in 4 test section.

For the recording of the performance figures weather conditions were not of the best, but, even so, the car displayed

DATA FOR THE DRIVER

24-2-39

AUSTIN EIGHT SALOON.

PRICE, with two-door four-light saloon body (with sliding head). £139. Tax. £6.
 RATING: 7.99 h.p., four cylinders, s.v., 56.77 x 89.0 mm., 900 c.c.
 WEIGHT, without passengers, 15 cwt. 1 qr. 14 lb. LB. PER C.C.: 1.91.
 TYRE SIZE: 4.50 17in. on bolt-on perforated pressed-steel wheels.
 LIGHTING SET: 6-volt. Automatic voltage control.
 TANK CAPACITY: 6 gallons; approx. normal fuel consumption, 38-44 m.p.g.
 TURNING CIRCLE: (L. and R.): 37ft. GROUND CLEARANCE: 6½in.

ACCELERATION			SPEED.	
Overall gear ratios.	From steady m.p.h. of		Mean maximum timed speed over ¼ mile ...	m.p.h.
19 to 30	20 to 40	30 to 50	Best timed speed over ¼ mile ...	55.73*
5.36 to 1	17.6 sec.	20.7 sec.	31.7 sec.	56.96*
8.23 to 1	10.4 sec.	14.8 sec.		
13.08 to 1			Speeds attainable on indirect gears (normal- and maximum):—	
21.60 to 1			1st	13-16
			2nd	23-26
			3rd	37-44
			Speed from rest up 1 in 5 Test Hill (on 1st gear)	13.58
From rest to 30 m.p.h. through gears	10.2 sec.			
To 50 m.p.h. through gears	38.9 sec.			
25 yards of 1 in 5 gradient from rest	6.8 sec.			

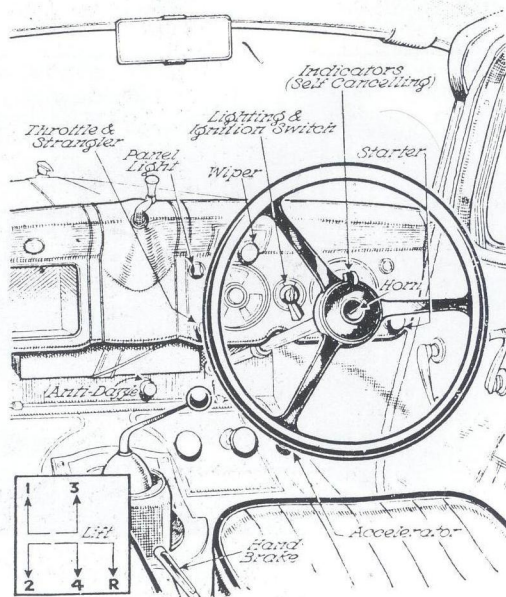
* Brooklands track not fully available.

BRAKE TEST: Mean stopping distance from 30 m.p.h. (damp concrete), 36ft.

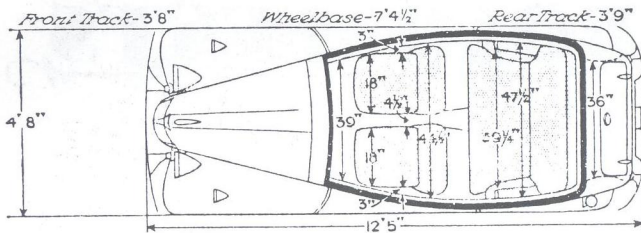
WEATHER: Mild, wet track; wind fresh, S.W. Barometer: 30.15in.

Performance figures for acceleration and maximum speed are the means of several runs in opposite directions, with two up.

(Described in this issue of "The Autocar.")



"The Autocar" Road Tests



a useful range of acceleration for its size and a maximum high enough for ordinary requirements. The speedometer was 1.6 m.p.h. fast at 30, almost exactly 2 m.p.h. at 40 and 2.3 at 50, whilst the highest reading shown when the speed was being timed over a quarter-mile was 61.

First impressions react favourably to the driving position. The driver and front passenger are supported and positioned comfortably by the shaped back-rest of the separate front seats, and the legs are placed naturally. The steering wheel is mounted quite low on a well-raked column and, although appearing to be of ordinary pattern, is flexible.

A long and thin, but not whippy, gear lever comes well within reach, and a new pattern of hand-brake lever is set at an angle in the space between the front seats, where it is instantly "found." Synchronesh is provided on second, third and top gears and functions admirably for either leisurely or quite quick changing. None of the indirect gears is conspicuously noisy. Very little use need be made of first gear when starting, the clutch pedal action is light, and the drive takes up smoothly for starting purposes without particular care being necessary.

Light but High-geared Steering

The steering is light and has some caster action, though not a great deal. It is high-geared, requiring only two turns of the wheel from lock to lock, but is not excessively "quick" in the sense that slight turning of the wheel abruptly alters the car's direction. It is also practically free from road-wheel reactions.

Half-elliptic suspension affords sufficient stability for the performance and provides a "ride" from which the worst of road-surface effects is removed. There is not much pitching tendency and such swaying as occurs if the car is cornered fast is not of a pronounced character. A decidedly bad by-way surface of a nature arising only when "off-the-map" ventures are made causes a noticeable amount of car movement, but hard shocks are not felt even in these circumstances.

As on the other Austin models, Girling brakes are used. On the Eight they provide a smooth and yet powerful

enough retardation. The car stopped in a straight line every time when the emergency tests were being made from 30 m.p.h., and a light pedal pressure gives the average degree of slowing down required. The hand brake holds securely on a really steep gradient.

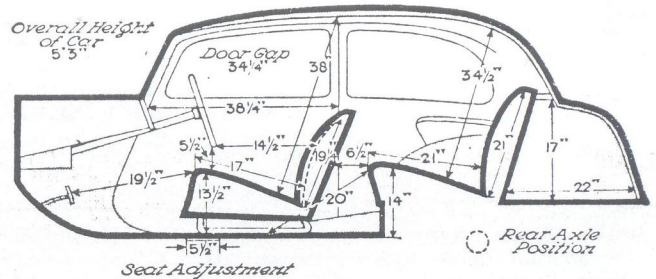
The instruments are of a particularly clear type, with light faces and black markings. In the left of the instrument board is the usual large open cubby hole of Austins. Well-placed door handles are observed.

Good Leg-room at the Rear

For the back-seat passengers foot wells are not sunk into the floor, there being adequate leg-room, with toe space beneath the tubular framework of the front seats. A generously deep back-seat squab by small-car standards is a valuable feature.

There is a sun-glare visor for the driver, who can operate the rear-window blind without getting out, and the sliding roof is of the centre-locking type. Only a single wind-screen-wiper blade is fitted. The electric motor is in an accessible position under the bonnet.

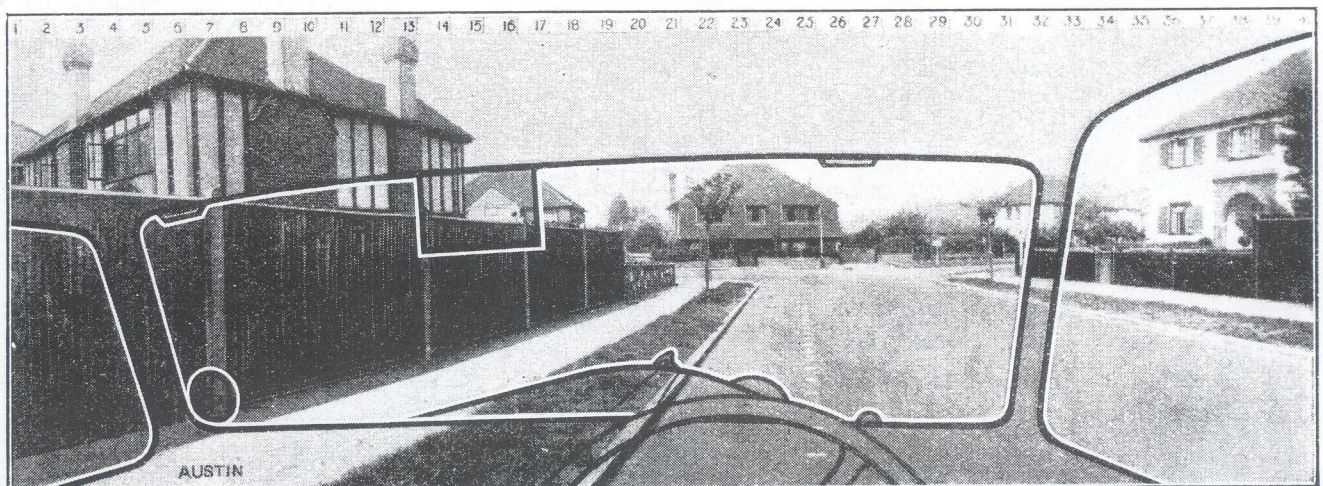
A new feature is that the bonnet opens up in one section from the front; there is a safety catch, and a strut can be hinged up to keep the bonnet in the raised position. Sufficiently good accessibility is given to the dipstick and oil filler and to the various other items that need normal routine attention, the arrangement in this respect appearing to be rather better than is often the case with this new form of



Seating dimensions are measured with cushions and squabs uncompressed.

bonnet. Also, after two accessible nuts have been detached, the side panels are removable to allow more extensive attention. The battery is placed in a convenient position under the bonnet.

The spare wheel is reached when the luggage locker lid is opened, being under a shelf which forms the floor of the main compartment. The tools, including the jack, are underneath the wheel; the jack is applied to the bumper brackets and is of a quick-acting, ratchet-operated type.



Although as regards "top height" the windscreen is shown to be shallow, it permits an excellent view close to the car at the sides, the bonnet not being obstructive. Also, the screen pillars are not thick. Neither wing is seen from the driving position.