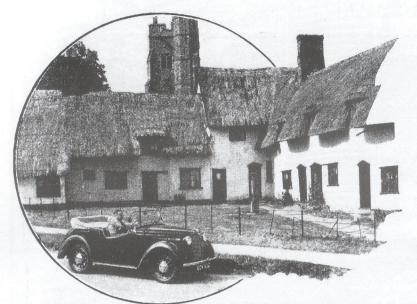
July 28th, 1939.

The Autocar

"THE AUTOCAR" ROAD TESTS

No. 1,298.—8 h.p. Austin Four-seater Tourer

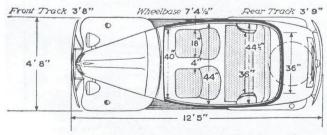


T is interesting to return to the Austin Eight, for since this model was first tested by *The Autocar*, at the time of its introduction five months ago, its success with the buying public has proved even greater than might have been expected.

An extended run has now been made on the open fourseater tourer, as distinct from the saloon previously. As a result, an even more favourable impression has been formed of this new Eight—it is so completely the efficient, practical and comfortable modern small car, not to mention the matter of economy. It is a striking example of the remarkable advance that has been made fairly recently in the smallest sizes of car.

So willingly and pleasantly does it perform that it is necessary to remind oneself that the engine is of not more than 8 h.p. No small Austin hitherto has given an allround performance in any way comparable. Yet the simple and straightforward design of side-valve engine is retained. The compression ratio, however, is quite high at 6.8 to 1, and must play a considerable part in extracting the utmost value from the fuel. There is not at any time a trace of pinking.

This is a thoroughly convenient size of car in modern



road conditions, big enough to take four people, and providing entirely satisfactory room in the front seats for both legs and elbows. There is an essential liveliness which renders it interesting to drive. It travels admirably at the speeds most owners employ—that is, around 40 m.p.h. and can be kept at 50 and over apparently indefinitely. At one or two points in the range above 40 m.p.h. the engine can be felt, but not unpleasantly.

Briskness of acceleration from a standstill is specially evident. Moderate use of the four-speed gear box takes the car quickly up to 40 m.p.h. or so. Second and third are useful gears, not too low in ratio for accelerating purposes. On the other hand, the engine is decidedly good on top gear, its minimum speed free from transmission snatch being as little as about 6 m.p.h.

The more a driver will use the gear lever, naturally the better the performance obtained as regards acceleration and maintaining speed up gradients, but there is no need, unless it is desired, to be constantly employing the gear lever in average country. The four-speed box has synchromesh on second, third and top, which works very satisfactorily, giving a practical certainty of quiet changing both upwards and downwards with only a single clutch-pedal depression.

Thus, probably 99 per cent. of the changing usually required is covered, the drop to first gear alone calling for double-declutching and this only at appreciable speed, as on the worst kind of hill. The gears are subdued, and their handling is pleasing. The lever moves lightly, but with a definite action, and is well within reach. Smooth starting from

is well within reach. Smooth starting from rest is secured without particular care, and the clutch, again, is light to control.

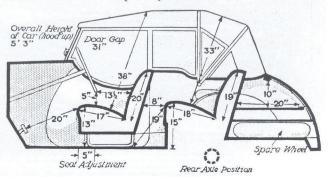
A thoroughly sound reserve of climbing power is sensed. Second gear will take the car up gradients as steep as are found anywhere except in the more notoriously hilly districts, whilst the ultimate climbing power available is indicated by the ready manner in which, with two up, the Austin restarts on the r in 4 section.

Heavy Load No Real Handicap

The whole control of the car is light, and it is a pleasure to handle due to this fact and to the good performance offered. During a test exceeding 450 miles in all, a day's run of 200 miles was made with a heavy three-up load. At no time was it necessary to hurry to cover the mileage entirely comfortably, in spite of many stops unconnected with the car itself. Also, it was particularly observed that the additional passenger weight as compared with one or two up was no real handicap.

A satisfactory general level is reached by the suspension, which, besides being soft enough to prevent appreciable movement being felt over any but really bad surfaces, is also pleasingly free from pitching and sufficiently firm for cornering at the speeds employed. The steering is highgeared, needing only two wheel turns from lock to lock. Light and practically unaffected by the road wheels, it has virtually no caster action.

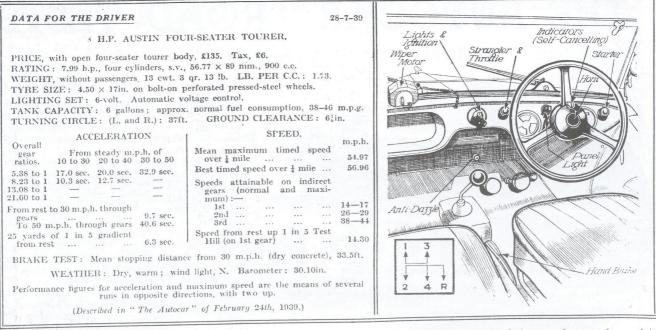
On so light and easily controlled a car the absence of caster action is not specially noticed, but whilst it is not



Seating dimensions are measured with cushions and squabs uncompressed.

The Autocar

"The Autocar" Road Tests



meant that the steering is vague, something would probably be gained in automatic sense of direction if caster action were utilised. In the sense of the car being deflected unduly suddenly by a slight turn of the wheel it is not undesirably "quick" steering.

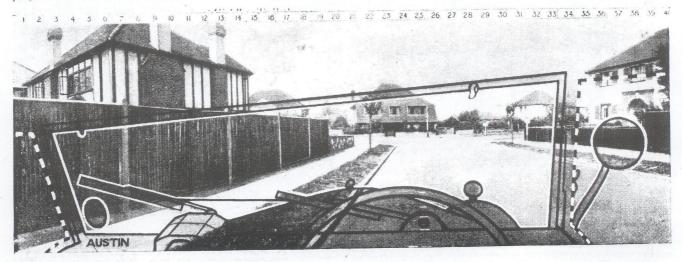
The Girling brakes behave admirably. A short-distance pull-up can be secured in emergency conditions, and they are very lightly applied, smooth-acting brakes, the use of which for ordinary purposes is often so unobtrusive as to be unnoticed by passengers.

All the seats prove comfortable for at least a three-hour spell without getting out. The back rests of the front seats are carefully shaped, providing good support, whilst the cushions do not cause an unnatural leg position. The steering wheel is mounted rather high, though at a good angle approaching the vertical. Actually, it makes for a quite comfortable driving position, and the driver's right arm naturally comes inside the body. Though not having the appearance of being so, the wheel has flexible spokes. The hand-brake lever can be reached without leaning forward.

This open tourer has two wide doors, the front-seat back rests hinging forward to let rear passengers in and out. The rear seats have a noticeably generous depth of upholstery in both cushion and squab. Foot wells are not employed. An external mirror gives a useful view behind. The windscreen can be folded flat on the scuttle, and it was thus that the maximum timed speed figure shown in the table was obtained, the speedometer then showing a highest reading of 61. With the screen raised, the best timed speed figure was 55.21 m.p.h., the speedometer reading not exceeding 60, so that not very much difference was made by putting the screen down. At 50 the speedometer was 3.3 m.p.h. fast, at 40, 2.6, and at 30 2.4 m.p.h.

The instruments are in particularly clear view, and well illuminated at night. The head lamp beam is useful. The horn note could well be stronger without becoming offensive, though there are now Ministry of Transport recommendations on this subject. The hood is raised and lowered about as readily as is common with the type. There are easily erected rigid side screens for protection in bad weather. These are stowed in a compartment formed by the hinged floor of a useful internal luggage compartment, which is reached by folding forward the seat squab. A tonneau cover is not provided.

External door handles would be an advantage, especially when the side screens are in use, but there is a tendency to-day to expect too much of the least expensive cars. A one-piece lift-up bonnet gives reasonable "top access" to the engine; its side panels are easily removable in addition. The engine soon pulls regularly from cold.



Good vision is obtained over the bonnet, forward and to the sides; the off-side wing can be seen. The windscreen has a thin frame which causes no material blanking of vision. The side screens are indicated; their transparent area is conveniently deep.

160