

CHARLES DEANE TRIES OUT THE

SPORTS AJS

By raising the compression ratio of the standard AJS Sceptre or model 16, whichever you like to call it, Associated Motorcycles have produced a sports 350 which is equal to, if not better than, many standard 500 singles.

In fact, if it were not for the smaller cylinder size, one could quite easily mistake it for its bigger brother. It has the same large 4½-gallon capacity fuel tank, same 7 inch diameter front and rear brakes, same duplex frame and in practically every other way is identical to the bigger model.

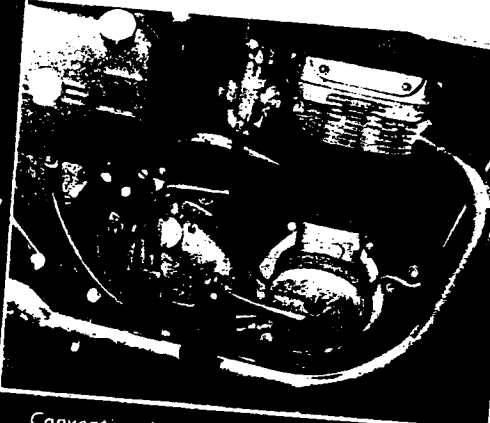
First impressions always count a great deal when one is considering buying a machine, and after only travelling a few miles on the Sceptre Sports, I felt completely at ease.

The gearchange was positive, the clutch—light in use, and the brakes—marvellous! The figure in our chart will show exactly how efficient they were.

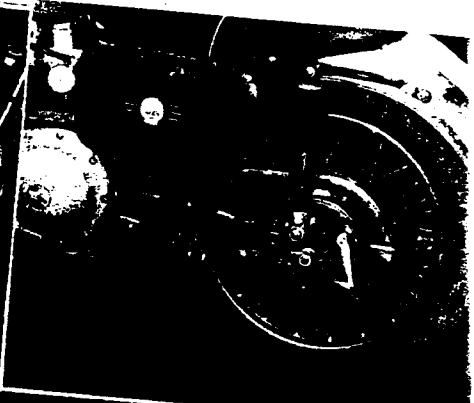




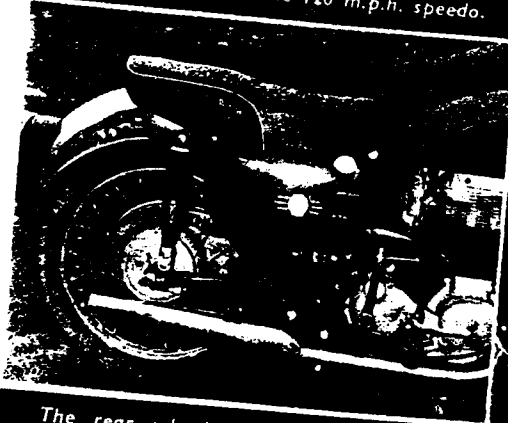
The extremely neat and careful layout of the controls on the Sceptre Sports handlebars. Note the 120 m.p.h. speedo.



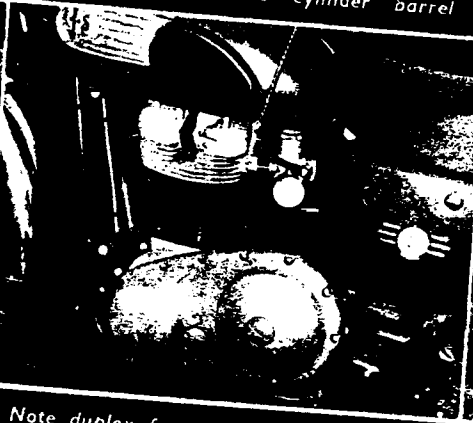
Conventional engine and gearbox layout with the pushrods now enclosed in the tubes cast into the cylinder barrel



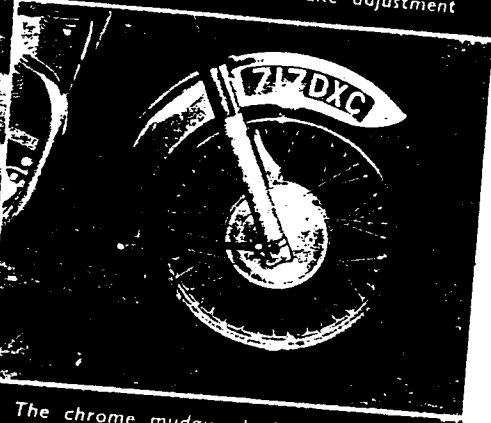
The rear suspension is fully adjustable and the toolbox is large and contains a fine toolkit. Note brake adjustment



The rear wheel is quickly detachable leaving the sprocket in place. Oil levels are clearly marked on the tank



Note duplex frame to front of engine. This gives much improved handling at speed. Alternator in the chaincase



The chrome mudguard closely hugs the front wheel and gives a very clean look to the unit. Note width of brake

From 30 miles-an-hour, they could stop 382 pounds of machinery, plus a 135-pound rider in 30 feet.

Handling of the Sceptre Sports is also one of its good points. The duplex frame, which is now used on all the large capacity AMC motorcycles, coupled with the adjustable swinging arm rear and tele-draulic front suspension, gives hairline steering at all speeds up to maximum. Handling in traffic was also quite reasonable, although being on the small side, I found the weight of the machine rather a handful as the saddle is a little too far from the ground. I could only just stand on tip toes when astride the bike.

Although the Sceptre Sports has an 8.5 to 1 compression ratio, starting was simplicity itself. A valve lifter is fitted to ease the engine over compression, after that it was just a matter of tickling the carburetter, three-quarter closing choke, turn on ignition and one prod on kick-start. Nine times out of ten, the motor would start first time. One minor complaint here, is that anybody could do just that—there is no ignition key or steering lock fitted. Therefore, I had to find some other method of thief-proofing the machine.

The handlebar layout on the Sceptre is also very good. Every single item—dip-switch, horn button, choke control, light switch and ignition switch (on headlamp) fell readily to hand. On no occasion was

I caught out and fumbling for one of the controls. This, believe it or not, is quite unusual on sports machines—British manufacturers always manage to tuck vital controls in some out-of-the-way place!

Compared with other single-cylinder machines, the Sceptre Sports has good acceleration, although the silencing could be greatly improved to allow for the larger throttle openings, which brought about a healthy crackle from the exhaust.

Happy Anywhere

When using a road test motorcycle, it receives the same treatment as most other machines on the road. I ride to and from the office every day, to the motorcycle club or local gathering place for motorcyclists one or two evenings a week, and at weekends I cover a few hundred miles touring the countryside.

This I think gives a motorcycle a fair test and with the Sceptre Sports, I found that I could cruise at a steady 70 miles-an-hour two up, providing traffic conditions allowed. Maximum speed in the prone position was just over 80-miles-an-hour.

The gearchange on the Sceptre, as I mentioned earlier, was nice and positive. The gear ratios themselves were also carefully spaced—in first gear it was possible to trickle along at a fast walking pace, with the engine just ticking over, while

second gear brought 50 miles-an-hour on to the speedo in just eight seconds. 75 m.p.h. was possible in third gear and 84 m.p.h. in top. Although the engine would drop down to about 28 m.p.h. in top gear, it wasn't really happy below about 35 m.p.h. and third gear was the most sensible gear for cruising about town.

Lighting on any machine is very important, and the Sceptre is fitted with the same lighting equipment as the larger AMC models. It is very efficient and on main beam gave a light powerful enough to enable cruising speeds in the upper fifties. The dipped beam also worked well, and as I mentioned earlier, the dipswitch could be easily operated—with a flick of the left thumb.

The general finish of the machine is excellent, with a nice deep dual-seat for comfortable touring, and chrome mudguards and dropped handlebars to give a sporty appearance. Basically, I think it is a good example of a fine British single-cylinder motorcycle.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Top up battery	1½ mins.
Adjust brakes	½ min.
Adjust tappets	4 mins.
Check points	1½ mins.
Adjust chain	1 min.
Remove and replace rear wheel	10½ mins.