

1933 592 cc Matchless Model B Silver Hawk

What a fascinating display must have met the eyes of the visitor to the Olympia Motor Cycle Show in November 1930. Virtually every manufacturer had something new and exciting (New Hudson, for example, had completely revamped their range from head to toe), and there was not just *one* totally new British four-cylinder to be seen, but *two!* We met one of the new 'fours' earlier in this book, in the shape of the Ariel Square Four. Now meet its rival, the Matchless Silver Hawk which was, or so the makers claimed in their sales literature, 'unquestionably the most fascinating machine to ride that has ever been built. It combines the silence, smoothness and comfort of the most expensive motor car with a super-sports performance. On top gear alone the machine will run from as low as 6 miles per hour to over 80 miles per hour, while the acceleration given by the four-cylinder overhead-camshaft engine in conjunction with the four-speed gearbox must be experienced to be believed.'

That says it all, really. But for all its proclaimed virtues, the Matchless Four did not exactly take the world by storm, and after struggling on for a few seasons, it was quietly dropped from the range in 1935. No discredit to the bike itself, of course, but these were the Hungry Thirties, the years of the Great Depression and the money was scarce. There was possibly enough of a market to support one luxury four-cylinder model, but not two. In a head-on battle for sales, the Ariel Square Four won, and the rival Matchless Silver Hawk lost out.

Still, the Hawk was quite an imaginative design, and for all its resemblance to the Square Four it was actually a narrow-angle vee-four much in common with the same factory's Silver Arrow monobloc twin of the previous year. There was just one crankshaft set across the frame and, unusually, it had a centre bearing mounted in a plate — a feature that would be repeated a couple of decades later in the AJS and Matchless vertical twins:

A single overhead camshaft ran across the

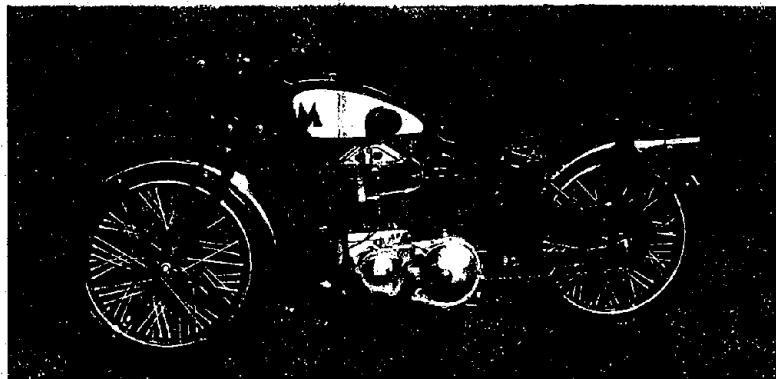
cylinder head, driven at the right-hand side by a substantial shaft and bevel-gear arrangement. Ignition was by dynamo and coil, the dynamo being driven by skew gearing from the camshaft-drive vertical shaft. The oiling system was dry-sump, with the oil carried in a pressed-steel tank at the base of the front-down tube, bolted directly to the engine's crankcase.

The frame was the one which also housed the smaller vee-twin, and featured cantilever rear springing in which the rear sub-frame pivoted in Silentbloc rubber-bonded bushes behind the gearbox. Two compression springs were mounted under the saddle, and damping was by friction discs, controlled by a knob. Brakes were coupled 8 in diameter, meaning that both front and rear drums came into operation if the brake pedal was pressed, but the handlebar lever operated the front brake alone.

In the years ahead, Matchless carried out very little development on the Silver Hawk, except that in its final period a foot gear-change was available to option at £1 10s extra, and it seemed almost as though they themselves had little faith in it. Perhaps they hadn't: when 'Torrens' of *The Motor Cycle* (editor Arthur B. Bourne) wanted to buy a new Silver Hawk in 1935, the makers advised him to go and buy an Ariel instead. Which he did.

Specification

Make Matchless **Model** Model B Silver Hawk. **Engine** 592 cc (50.8 x 73.02 mm bore and stroke) overhead-camshaft vee-four. **Tyres** 3.25 x 19 in front and rear (4.00 x 19 in at extra cost) wired-on. **Frame** Brazed lug tubular construction incorporating cantilever rear suspension. **Front forks** Matchless centre-spring girders. **Brakes** Interconnected 8 in diameter drums, front and rear. **Weight** 380 lb. **Wheelbase** 55 in. **Manufacturer** Matchless Motor Cycles (Colliers) Ltd, 44/45 Plumstead Road, Plumstead, London SE 18.



Above Primary drive was by a duplex chain incorporating a Weller spring-blade tensioner, within a massive cast-alloy casing.

Right This was the first appearance of the soon to be famous chromium-plated 'M' tank emblem; note also the polished edges to the mudguards.

Far right The sophisticated specification embraced a narrow-angle monobloc vee-four with shaft-and-bevel driven overhead camshaft.

Below Unfortunately, the imposing Silver Hawk had to battle for its share of the market against the Ariel Square Four — and lost out.

