

1930 MODELS ON
THE ROADThe 990 c.c.
Matchless
and Sidecar

The "X/2" in London traffic.

WHEN a big twin is marketed at a price so low as that of the 990 c.c. side-valve Matchless, a prospective purchaser finds himself almost unconsciously searching for points in which the machine has been skimmed; directions, in fact, in which either longevity or road performance has been sacrificed to low-production cost. No matter how closely the Matchless is scrutinised, whether it be on the score of appearance, detail work, or general construction, there can only be one answer—a thoroughly sound, good-looking job with a de luxe specification; and, as was proved by an extended test of an "X/2," or standard model, and sidecar, the performance in no way belies the first impression.

Essentially the machine is of the sports type so far as its capabilities are concerned, but allied with these traits are the pleasant manners and docility of the so-called "woolly tourer." For example, the machine will trickle along at 13 to 14 miles an hour on its top gear of 4.6 to 1, and accelerate away again smoothly and effortlessly, and no matter

whether it is travelling at 15 or 50 miles an hour, there is none of the clatter or whirring so commonly associated with a sports engine. Only in one respect did the machine fail to gain absolutely full marks from the touring standpoint, and that was on the score of easy starting. Carburation on the machine tested was not quite perfect; three or four good kicks were normally required to start the engine from cold, and there was a slight flat spot in the throttle range.

Nevertheless, the acceleration was extremely good, so much so that the engine deserved the title "super-sports," and certainly not that of "standard"—a view

which was more than confirmed when the machine was used for long-distance, fast touring. At 40 m.p.h. the engine is idling; at 50 it has not begun even to be fussy, and it is not until the machine attains a speed of roughly 55 m.p.h. that the engine gives any real impression of being "at work." Fifty miles an hour is, in fact, a comfortable cruising speed, while the maximum obtained in ordinary, not particularly favourable conditions was 58 m.p.h., so to the sporting sidecarist the "X/2" is a joy to handle.

From these facts it will be realised that the machine is

SPECIFICATION.

ENGINE: 85.5 x 85.5 mm. (99) c.c. Matchless vee-twin four-stroke with side-by-side valves.

TRANSMISSION: By chain; $\frac{1}{4}$ x 0.305 in. and 1 x $\frac{1}{2}$ in., front and rear respectively.

LUBRICATION: Dry Sump.

GEAR BOX: Sturmey-Archer three-speed. Ratios: 4.6, 6.1, and 11 to 1.

CARBURETTER: Amal two-lever.

BRAKES: Internal expanding, 6 in. front and rear.

TYRES: 27 x 4 in.

PRICE: Solo (with Lucas lighting, instrument panel, speedometer, chromium-plated wheels and 27 x 4 in. tyres), £71 2s. 6d. Sidecar outfit (complete as tested), £89.

MAKERS: Matchless Motor Cycles (Colliers), Ltd., Plumstead, London, S.E.18.

capable of really high average speeds. It is, indeed, almost deceptive in this respect, for the exhaust is so exceptionally quiet, even on full throttle, that unless the driver is constantly glancing at his speedometer he tends to maintain a higher speed than he imagines to be the case. Another feature which aids and abets good averages is the general comfort of the machine, which, incidentally, was fitted with the optional 27 x 4in. size of tyre. Although the riding position is such that the majority of the driver's weight is upon the saddle, and little is taken by the footrests, the Matchless can be driven hard on rough secondary roads without any discomfort; and the passenger, too, in the standard touring sidecar, is particularly well insulated from road shocks. The steering of the machine is light, safe, and sure, and there is neither wheel wobble nor side drag.

Hills can be tackled either fast or slowly. Ordinary main road climbs can be zoomed up at forty to fifty, or they can be approached at half that speed, the driver maintaining his desired gait by steadily opening up as the hill steepens. And if, after a slow-down owing to traffic or a blind bend, rapid acceleration is desired, there is a very useful second-gear performance available, the maximum on this gear of 6.1 to 1 being slightly over 40 miles an hour.

On Alms Hill.

The engine appeared to have more than enough power for any hill that an ordinary mortal is ever likely to encounter, for at the Cannons on Alms Hill, the machine, after being purposely slowed down to a walking pace, accelerated hard.

The descent of this well-known 1 in 4 trials hill provided a good test of the brakes. The coupled brakes, with the driver "standing" slightly on the pedal, held the machine perfectly at the Cannons, the steepest part; hand-operation of the front brake, although a very useful means of applying additional pressure on the brake shoes when rapid retardation was required, was, by itself, insufficient to hold the machine on a 1 in 5 to 6 gradient.

While admirably smooth and progressive in action, the

brakes were not so powerful as might be expected in view of their 8in. diameter; the reason for this appeared to be the position of the pedal, which is so placed that the pressure a 5ft. 11in. driver can exert when seated is small.

A number of other hills in the Chilterns and in Surrey, among them Kop, Lewknor, Maiden's Grove, the Box Hill goat-track, and White Downs were climbed, but none of these provided anything in the way of a test for the Matchless.

The gear box was reasonably silent, and the clutch smooth in take up; a certain amount of lag seemed to be present in the control mechanism, caused, perhaps, by bends in the operating rod, and for a perfect change from second to top gear it was found desirable to let in the clutch slightly as the gear control was eased home—a procedure that became automatic after a few miles.

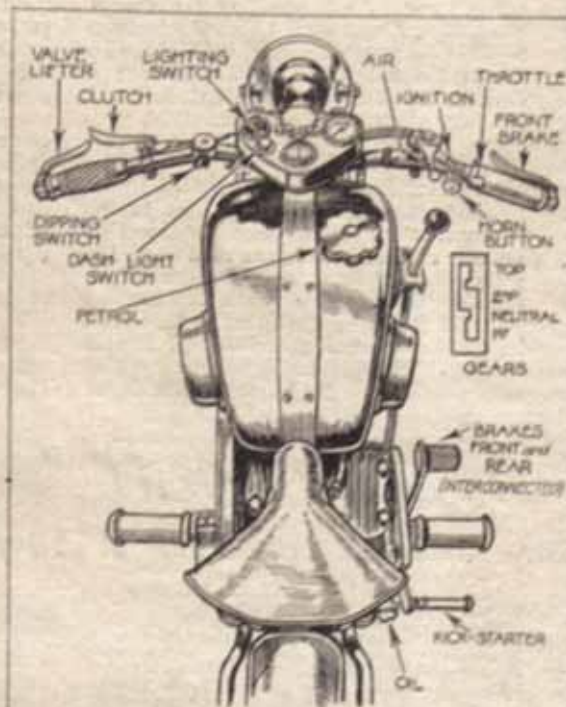
An illuminated instrument panel was fitted to the machine under review, and proved a boon on night runs, the illuminated speedometer being most interesting and valuable.

Fuel Consumption.

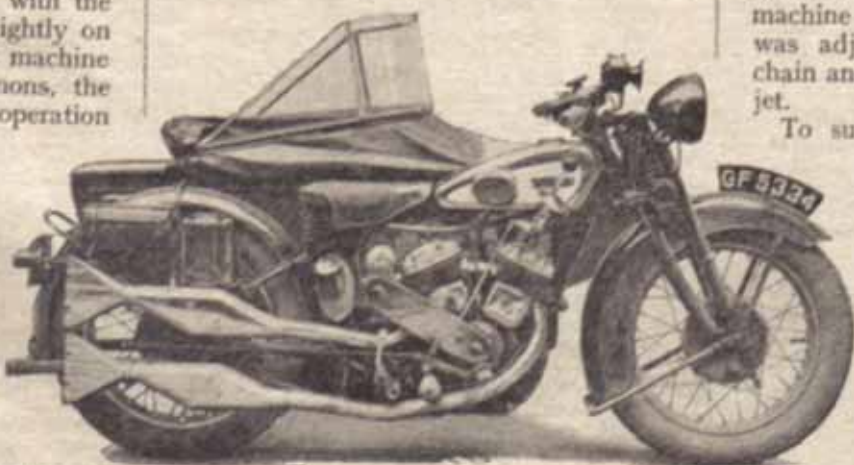
Fuel consumption with a laden sidecar worked out at approximately 55 miles a gallon at an average speed of rather over 30 m.p.h., on cross-country going that entailed hard driving; oil consumption was a little under 1,000 miles to a gallon.

A point that will particularly appeal to the hard driver is the way in which the machine stands up to wide-throttle work. Although the engine was purposely thrashed, no drying up or decrease in power occurred, and in the many hundreds of miles covered the only maintenance work required to keep the machine in perfect condition was adjustment of the rear chain and clearing out the pilot jet.

To sum up, the Matchless standard twin and sidecar is a very fascinating, fast outfit, with excellent touring manners and an all-round performance that can only be described as exceptional; it is one that should keenly interest the enthusiast as well as the ordinary man.



Control plan of the Matchless.



The 990 c.c. Matchless has a compact symmetrical appearance.