

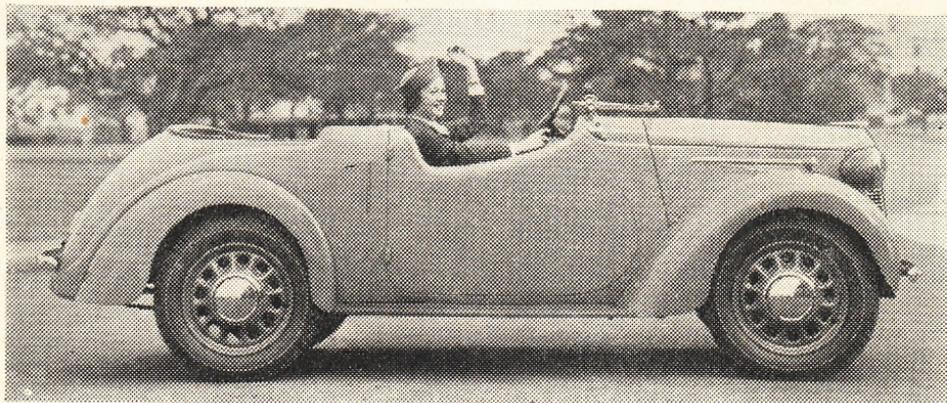
AUSTIN WASP.

Economy and Comfort.

FINE SMALL CAR.

The Austin Wasp, the eight horse power small car which replaces the famous Austin Seven, was taken recently for a test run, and gave an excellent account of itself in every phase of performance.

The car also is far smarter in appearance than any previous Austin model, having a new and modern design of radiator and a steel open body of an unusually graceful design, the cutaway sides being nicely curved, while the luggage compartment at the rear is semi-streamlined.



The Austin Wasp Roadster.

This body is actually made in the workshops of the Sydney distributors, who have laid down a complete plant for the purpose and devised some most ingenious methods of pressing out the panels without using the expensive and elaborate machinery usually considered necessary. The only wood in it is a strip along the top rail on to which is fastened the upholstery. The car is available as either a roadster or a four-passenger tourer, and, in both cases, a useful amount of room is available. Particularly is this so in the case of the roadster, whose rear luggage compartment probably is the largest for any light car on the market.

The body has a single panel windscreen, which can be folded flat on to the scuttle, and the instruments are grouped neatly in front of the driver.

LOW FUEL CONSUMPTION.

The car tested was the roadster, and the outstanding feature of its performance was the low petrol consumption recorded, 53.1 miles a gallon. This remarkable figure deserves some explanation. The car was driven on undulating roads, just as the ordinary driver would handle it, not to the limit of its speed all the time, nor with excessive use of the gearbox, but certainly not slowly, the car running at 40-45 m.p.h., except in the speed limit areas, and this pace, it will be admitted, is a reasonable cruising speed for a light car. There also were a number of speed and acceleration tests, so that the test was quite a fair one.

As some doubt was felt about this figure by the distributors of the car, another one—practically brand new—was taken out a few days later, and returned the same result. The figure is significant of the great improvement which has been made in carburettor design in the 1939 models, a point which has been emphasised more than once in these columns,

but about which doubt has been expressed by readers. Another 8 h.p. model tested some time ago achieved 50 m.p.g., and another distributor of light cars in Sydney recently received a commendatory letter from a customer pointing to the fact that he achieved close to 50 m.p.g. on a run to Newcastle and back. There was also the recent test run by still another light car to Brisbane and back, when approximately this consumption was recorded. Of all of them, however, the Austin figure is the best so far obtained.

In other respects, the performance of the car was excellent. The timed maximum speed was 60 m.p.h. The maximum speeds in the intermediate gears were 48 for third and 31 for second. Accelerating from a standstill to 50 m.p.h. occupied 24 seconds; from 10 to 30 m.p.h. in top gear, 13 2-5 seconds; in third, 8 2-5 seconds; and in second, 5 2-5 seconds. These show an excellent degree of liveliness for so small an engine. The brakes stopped the car from 30 m.p.h. in 28 feet.

COMFORT AND HANDLING.

In a light car, however, the road performance as expressed in figures is only one part of the story. Of even more importance is the manner in which the car handles on the road, the efficiency of its springing, its ability

to maintain in a usefully high cruising speed without distress, and its quietness of running.

In these important characteristics, the English manufacturers of light cars have achieved wonders, and the Austin Wasp, as the most recently designed of the type, is particularly good. To drive it is to realise the wisdom of the manufacturers in at last relinquishing the famous "seven." For some 15 years, with comparatively little change, the "seven" sold in its thousands in practically every country of the world, but the new "Wasp" is an infinitely better car. The whole vehicle handles more like a big car. The steering, for example, is particularly good.

CONVENTIONAL DESIGN.

Mechanically, the car is quite different from the vehicle it replaces. The four-cylinder engine is a side-valve type of 56.77m.m. bore, and 89m.m. stroke, the R.A.C. rating being 7.99 h.p., and the brake horse power 27 at 4,400 r.p.m. Both the crankshaft and the camshaft are supported in three main bearings, and the carburettor is a Zenith down-draught type with air cleaner and silencer. The clutch is a single-plate type, with spring drive, and the gearbox has four forward speeds with all but first fitted with synchro-mesh. The top gear ratio is 5.357 to 1. The drive to the rear axle is through a Hardy Spicer propeller shaft, with needle bearing universal joints, and the rear axle is a three-quarter floating type.

Suspension is by long semi-elliptic springs controlled by Luvax piston type shock absorbers, while all spring pins are the silent-bloc oilless type. An interesting feature is the mounting of the steering gearbox ahead of the front axle.

Brakes are the Girling type, in cast iron drums, with the pedal and the hand lever each working the complete set. Detachable pressed steel wheels are fitted, and these carry 5.00 by 17 tyres. The wheelbase is 88½ inches, the track is 45 inches, and the ground clearance is 8½ inches.